

# Government Administration and Elections Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-254

AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE RISK-LIMITING

**Title:** AUDITS WORKING GROUP.

**Vote Date:** 3/15/2024

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/4/2024

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

As recommended by the risk limiting audits working group, this amended legislation aims to implement a system of risk-limiting audits to ensure accuracy of elections outcomes, outlining the procedures and manner such audits should be conducted.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Stephanie Thomas, Secretary of State, Supports:

Urges favorable passage with proposed changes provided. Adopting a system of risk-limiting audits would ensure the accuracy of election outcomes and provide voters with further confidence. The creation of a pilot program in advance of the municipal election in 2025 would allow time to test and train election officials before full implementation in 2026. Requests also that the timeframe of the audit included in Section 2 be updates so that municipal audits are conducted not earlier than the 5<sup>th</sup> day after municipal elections rather than the 15<sup>th</sup> day as written.

### NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Chrissa Laporte, Verified Voting Senior Policy & Technical Associate, Supports:

The proposal would allow for successful implementation of RLAs in Connecticut, which would provide strong basis for public confidence in election results. Suggests improvements, particularly recommending the requirement of a pilot program, and reducing the requirement for a range of contests to be audited to require instead that the state offices only be audited to a risk limit in 2026. Further recommendations include exempting contests that are

"uncontested", and the postponement of the requirement to audit US House and General Assembly contests already subject to recanvass.

Cheri Quickmire, Common Cause in CT Executive Director, Supports:  
Risk limiting audits can help prevent and address issues including ballot polling, ballot comparison, and batch comparison. RLAs can offer another layer of protection and give voters more confidence in the elections.

Liz Iacobucci, Common Cause Election Security Program Manager, Supports:  
Risk-limiting audits provide strong evidence that an initial election outcome is correct, and a path to correcting an outcome that is not correct. RLAs have been recommended by federal agencies and advocacy groups across the political spectrum. Common Cause believes the bill is a significant step forward for the state of Connecticut and suggests a few adjustments. Particularly, a pilot first implementation model to be held during 2025, which has worked well in Colorado, Georgia, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

Dr. Alexander Russell, UConn Center for Voting Technology, Supports:  
Strongly advocates for the adoption of risk-limiting audits but requests the inclusion of a pilot. Connecticut is in a favorable position to carry out risk-limiting audits, particularly for two reasons. First, the state developed a "transitive tabulator", which enables the state to perform more efficient RLAs than currently possible in states that use voter-facing tabulators. Second, new tabulators will be deployed in time for the initial RLA called for in the bill which support features to provide additional reduction in the work involved in the proposed audits. As RLAs require new equipment, training, and procedures, it is recommended that a pilot be undertaken in 2025 and begin full implementation in 2026.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

Dr. Linda Dalessio, Opposes:  
Opposes the bill as written; risk limiting audits are flawed in the research, stating that it is a violation of both state statute and federal law for the University of Connecticut to have the election management system known as GEMS or run any audits, as they are not certified by the EAC.

Luther Weeks, Opposes:  
Generally, favors the concept of risk-limiting audits, but opposes the bill as it is insufficiently detailed. As written, it does not provide guarantee of transparency, lacks enforceability, and does not provide funds to plan and implement RLAs. RLAs involve detailed technical and computational issues, and more work is needed with input from RLA experts. All details should be captured in laws and regulations, and a complete prototype would serve as a valuable test.

## **GENERAL COMMENTS:**

Sue Larsen, ROVAC Legislative Committee Chair, General Comments:  
ROVAC is not opposed to new ways of demonstrating election accuracy. However, several questions are unanswered regarding the implementation process, regarding whether they will

replace the current audit, when the process would take place, ballot security issues and the costs, etc. The state and the public need time to absorb changes before undertaking another.

**Reported by: Lindsay de Brito**

**Date: 3/21/2024**