

Risk-Limiting Audit (RLA) Communications Guide

You don't need to be a math expert to talk about risk-limiting audits. Use our messaging guide to talk about RLAs to your constituents, the press, and other key stakeholders.

Basic Terminology:

- **Tabulation audit** - Provides a routine check on the accuracy of the tabulation of votes by manually comparing voter-verifiable paper ballots to the computer-reported results.
- **Risk-limiting audit** - A specific type of tabulation audit that checks a random sample of voter-verifiable paper ballots. RLAs can give strong assurance that the reported outcome is what a full hand count would find.
- **Risk-limiting audit pilot** - RLA pilots help election officials learn how to prepare for RLAs in larger elections, and show the general public that the process is observable and transparent.
- **Risk limit** - The “risk limit” describes the chance that the *audit* is wrong. For instance, a 5% risk limit means that if the election outcome is wrong, the chance that the audit will mistakenly confirm it is 5% or less. We usually avoid these specifics with a general audience.
- **Recount** - A full recount means counting all of the ballots, while an audit only entails counting some of the ballots. Post-election audits that detect errors can lead to a full recount if the outcome is in doubt.
- **Sample size & margin of victory** - Close contests, where the winner’s margin of victory is small, require looking at larger samples of ballots to check the outcome.

Who Else Endorses RLAs - A Non-Exhaustive List:

- American Statistical Association
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- U.S. Senate Select Intelligence Committee
- U.S. Election Assistance Commission
- Brennan Center for Justice
- Common Cause
- League of Women Voters
- Presidential Commission on Election Administration

RLA Keywords:

- Gold standard
- Statistically sound
- Efficient
- Cost-effective
- A tailored approach

What *can* you say about an RLA?

- An RLA provides *solid evidence* that the reported election outcomes are correct.
- An RLA can also trigger a full hand recount if the sampled ballots do not match the reported outcome.
- An RLA promotes *public confidence* in election outcomes and public confidence in our democracy.
- An RLA checks that the ballots were counted accurately.
- RLAs are transparent and observable by the public.
- An RLA is a *tool* for election officials.

What *can't* you say about an RLA?

Because RLAs rely on the ballots, they can only do so much. They can't do the following:

- Establish that the voting system is inherently secure and reliable.
- Confirm that voter intent was recorded accurately.
- Show that voters were not disenfranchised.

Read more about audits and RLAs at:

www.verifiedvoting.org/audits

<https://verifiedvoting.org/audits/whatisrla/>

Questions? Feedback?

Contact Verified Voting Communications Officer Corrie Emerson at corrie@verifiedvoting.org.

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