Verified Voting

February 4, 2026

The Honorable Linda Chaney
Chair
House Government Operations Subcommittee
Florida House of Representatives
Via email

RE: Verified Voting Recommendations for House Bill 991

Dear Chair Chaney and Committee Members,

On behalf of Verified Voting, I submit these comments on House Bill 991. Verified Voting is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization with a mission to strengthen democracy for all voters by promoting the responsible use of technology in elections. Since its founding by computer scientists in 2004, Verified Voting has advocated for voter-verified paper ballots and routine, rigorous post-election audits to check the accuracy of computerized voting systems.

Nearly all U.S. votes today are counted by computerized voting systems. While rare, such voting systems have produced outcome-changing errors through hardware, software, and procedural problems. Well-designed and properly performed post-election tabulation audits provide solid public evidence for the initial tabulation outcome when it is correct — and an opportunity to correct the outcome when it is not. The public must also have confidence in the outcomes and how the election was conducted. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine recognized in their 2018 consensus report that, "Election audits are critical to ensuring the integrity of election outcomes and for raising voter confidence."[1]

As written, this bill would weaken the post-election tabulation audits in Florida by fully replacing the current manual audit option with an electronic audit. The current audit statute allows election officials to conduct either a manual audit or an automated audit, but this bill would remove that option.

In addition to detecting errors (whether accidental or intentional) and documenting accurate counts, good tabulation audits can deter hacking, malware, and fraud. Electronic audits that rely exclusively on technology, with no manual examination of ballots, partly confer some of these benefits, but also open avoidable and dangerous security holes.

Researchers from the University of Michigan tested the use of independent equipment to rescan and audit ballots, as proposed in Florida. They found "that image audits can be reliably

[1] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2018. Securing the Vote: Protecting American Democracy. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/25120.

defeated by an attacker who can run malicious code on the voting machines or election management system…. These results demonstrate that post-election audits must inspect physical ballots, not merely ballot images, if they are to strongly defend against computer-based attacks on widely used voting systems."[2]

Even if election administrators believe that electronic audit systems are adequately secure, audits should address the concerns of voters who are even more skeptical of "machines checking machines" than security experts are. Manually examining some ballots can bolster public confidence by providing direct evidence that the electronic audit system performed as it should. For this reason, **we recommend that any post-election audit examine physical paper ballots in addition to using machines for the audit.** We strongly suggest revising the bill so that it would require some of the physical paper ballots audited by use of electronic machines to receive an additional manual review.

While we recommend that no post-election audit should be conducted using machines unless also paired with some manual examination of ballots, we would also note that this bill would require post-election audits to be completed prior to certification. We would support this change, especially since audits completed prior to certification allow any corrections to be made to results should there be any discrepancies.

We stand ready to discuss this proposed legislation further, so that Florida's audit practices support justified public confidence in election outcomes.

Respectfully submitted,

C.Jay Coles
Deputy Director of Legislative Affairs

[2] Bernhard, Matthew, Kartikeya Kandula, Jeremy Wink and J. Alex Halderman. "UnclearBallot: Automated Ballot Image Manipulation." *International Joint Conference on Electronic Voting* (2019). https://mbernhard.com/papers/unclearballot.pdf.