Audits and Recounts in 2026:

A State By State Summary

Audits and recounts are two different post-election processes, but both are designed to build confidence in our elections—they help demonstrate that the winner won and the loser lost. Audit and recount laws vary by state and several states are expected to have close contests in November's election. The table below summarizes important information about audit and recount laws in Alaska, Arizona, California, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin.

For more information, read Verified Voting's blog outlining the differences between audits and recounts. Visit Verified Voting's Audit Law Database and Recount Law Database to learn even more about the laws, timelines, regulations, and procedures in all fifty states.

Audits

State	Audit type	Contests audited	Completed before results finalized?	Can the audit expand to a full hand count?	Is the audit binding on the outcome?[1]	Audit counting method
Alaska	One precinct audited in each state house district that accounts for 5% or more of votes cast in that district	All contested candidate contests on the ballot, in addition to one randomly selected ballot measure and judicial retention contest (if applicable)	Yes	Not statewide. Only to a full hand count in each district	Normally can alter totals but not outcomes	Hand count
Arizona	2% of precincts or two precincts (whichever is greater), and 1% of early votes or 5,000 early ballots (whichever is less)	Up to five races[2]	Yes	Not statewide. Only to a full hand count in a county	Binding only if it results in a full hand count	Hand count

1 An audit is binding when the results of the audit become the official results.

2 Contests include one statewide ballot measure (if applicable), one statewide office, one US Senate or US House of Representatives contest, one state legislative office, and one county race, in non-presidential election years.

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State	Audit type	Contests audited	Completed before results finalized?	Can the audit expand to a full hand count?	Is the audit binding on the outcome?	Audit counting method
California	1% of randomly selected precincts in each jurisdiction and in one additional precinct for each race not included in the initial selection of precincts[3]	All contests	Yes	No	No	Hand count
Georgia	Risk-limiting audit[4] (RLA)	Top contest, all federal contests, and a selection of statewide contests[5]	Yes	Yes	No guidance on whether the audit is binding	Hand count
Michigan[6]	Randomly selected precincts for county level auditing and additional precincts for auditing of statewide contests; RLA pilots[7]	Countywide and statewide contests	No	No statutory guidance	No	Hand count
Nevada[8]	Tabulators: From 2% of voting machines or at least three devices, whichever is greater; for smaller counties, 2% or at least one device, whichever is greater, and a ballot-level random sample audit[9]	Tabulators: One randomly selected state or federal contest and one county contest, along with an additional randomly selected race[10] Ballot-level: One randomly selected state or federal contest and county contest	Tabulators: Yes Ballot-level: No statutory guidance	Tabulators: No Ballot-level: No statutory guidance	No guidance on whether either audit is binding	Tabulators: Hand count or by rescanning ballots Ballot-level: Hand count and ballot images[11]

3 Excludes provisional ballots and applies to ballots cast by the semiofficial canvass (the Thursday after Election Day). Alternatively, officials may conduct a two part manual tally of 1% of precincts and 1% of mail ballots. See Cal. Elec. Code § 15360.

4 A risk-limiting audit (RLA) manually examines a sample of paper ballots to provide statistical confidence that an incorrect election outcome is not certified.

5 Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, and Attorney General are always audited if they appear on the ballot. An additional statewide contest is also selected.

6 Michigan's audit statute authorizes but does not require a post-election audit.

7 Administrative pilots which are conducted after the election results are finalized.

8 Nevada has two audit requirements: a post-election certification audit of electronic tabulators and a ballot-level random sample audit. The tabulator audit exclusively checks ballots cast in-person on ballot marking devices on Election Day and during early voting. The ballot-level audit checks randomly selected mail ballots and a mix of paper ballots and ballot images cast by in-person voters. Nevada became a universal mail balloting state in 2022.

9 Nevada's second audit was previously categorized as an RLA (and is referenced in state statute and rule as such), however, the review of ballot images, instead of paper ballots, for votes cast on in-person scanners fails to meet the manual examination requirement of an RLA.

10 State contests are defined to include both statewide and state legislative contests for both audits.

11 Nevada's ballot-level audit is conducted through a mix of hand counts and a review of ballot images. Mail ballots are examined by hand, while ballot images from ballots cast in-person are reviewed.

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State	Audit type	Contests audited	Completed before results finalized?	Can the audit expand to a full hand count?	Is the audit binding on the outcome?	Audit counting method
New Hampshire	Ballots from eight tabulators are rescanned using "audit equipment," with 2% of ballots from each device or 50 ballots, whichever is greater, examined by hand	All contests on the ballot	Yes	Yes	Yes	Mix of machine and hand count
North Carolina	Hand-to-eye manual counts of two samples[12] in each county	Top contest on the ballot, which is U.S. Senate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Hand count
Ohio	Counties can choose between an RLA, a percentage-based audit, or another state-approved method	At least three contests chosen by the Secretary of State	Yes	Yes	Yes	Hand count
Pennsylvania[13]	2% of ballots or 2,000 ballots (whichever is less) and an RLA	2%: all contests are audited RLA: at least one statewide contest	Both: Yes	2%: No guidance RLA: Yes	No guidance on whether either audit is binding	2%: By rescanning ballots or by hand RLA: Hand count
Texas	1% of Election Day polling locations and 1% of early voting locations or three of each location (whichever is greater) in addition to an RLA	1%: up to three contests and up to three ballot items RLA: at least one statewide contest	Both: no statutory guidance	Both: No guidance	No guidance on whether either audit is binding	Both: Hand count
Wisconsin	10% of reporting units statewide (the number of reporting units per municipality is capped depending on the municipality's size)	Gubernatorial contest and three other contests	No statutory deadline[14]	No	No	Hand count

12 In practice, a sample might be an Election Day precinct, an early voting site, or all of the county's absentee ballots.

13 Like Nevada, Pennsylvania has two auditing requirements: a statutorily required 2% or 2,000 ballot audit and an RLA, which is mandated by a Department of State directive.

14 In practice, prior to state certification on December 1, though audit timing could shift later if any statewide contests are eligible for a recount.

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Recounts

State	Automatic recount?	Requested recounts?	Deadlines for requests[15]	Completion deadline	Recount counting method
Alaska	Yes but only if vote is a tie	Any defeated candidate may request a recount. Voters may also request a recount.	November 28 (for Governor/Lt. Governor) November 30 (for other races)[16]	Within 10 days	Primarily by retabulation, though some ballots are hand counted. A hand count is also conducted of ballots from one precinct in each house district.
Arizona	Yes, if vote margin less than 0.5%	No	N/A	No completion deadline in state law	Mix of hand counting and re-running the ballots through the voting machines
California	No	Governor may order a recount for any statewide office or state ballot measure for contests decided by the lesser of 1,000 votes or 0.015%. Any registered voter may also request a recount.[17]	December 9th - five days after the 31st day of an election	No completion deadline in state law	Ballots are recounted by hand, if ordered by the Governor. Voters may choose between hand counting or retabulation.
Georgia	Yes, the contest for Governor will go to an automatic recount if there is a vote margin of 0.5% or less	A candidate may request a recount in any contest with a margin of 0.5% or less	Automatic: November 12 - within two business days after county certification Requested: November 26 - within two business days after state certification	Automatic: counties reimbursed for costs if completed before state certification Requested: No completion deadline in state law	Automatic: hand count Requested: rescanning, after testing with a hand-counted sample of ballots
Michigan	Yes, if vote margin is 0.1% for a statewide contest or ballot measure	Any defeated candidate may apply for a recount	November 25 - by 5 pm the second day after the state canvass of votes	30 days after the deadline for filing petitions	Re-running the ballots through the voting machines and/or by hand counting. The method is chosen by election officials.
Nevada	No	Any defeated candidate may apply for a recount	December 1 - within three business days after the certification of results[18]	Within five days of the start of the recount	Re-running the ballots through the voting machines

15 The listed recount request deadlines relate to statewide contests. In some states, the deadline to request a recount of a county-level contest may differ from the one listed in the table.

16 These deadlines are subject to change based on the conclusion of the state review.

17 California law does not expressly allow candidates to request a recount; however, they may file one as a registered voter. Election officials may also request a recount under certain circumstances. See Cal. Elec. Code § 15610.

18 Deadline for statewide offices.

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State	Automatic recount?	Requested recounts?	Deadlines for requests[15]	Completion deadline	Recount counting method
New Hampshire	No	Any candidate may request a recount if the margin separating the defeated candidate from the presumed winner is 20% or less	November 6	No completion deadline in state law	Hand count
North Carolina	No[19]	Any defeated candidate may apply for a recount if the specified close vote margin is met for their contest[20]	November 17 - by noon on the second business day after the county canvass	No completion deadline in state law	Re-running the ballots through the voting machines and hand counting only for ballots that cannot be retabulated
Ohio	Yes, if a vote margin is 0.25% or less in a statewide contest or 0.5% in other contests	Any defeated candidate may request a recount of their contest. Any five voters may request a recount for a ballot question or issue	Within five days of the relevant jurisdiction's certification[21]	Within 10 days of the receipt of and order of automatic recount or a request	5% of ballots hand counted then rescanned. If the totals match, all ballots are rescanned. Otherwise, hand counting continues up to a full count if totals remain different
Pennsylvania	Yes for statewide contests, if vote margin less than or equal to 0.5%	No candidate-requested recounts, but voters may request a recount	Varies by county, and is five days after a county completes its vote computation	For automatic recounts by November 24. For voter-initiated recounts, no set deadline.	Hand counting and re-running the ballots through the voting machines
Texas	Yes but only if vote is a tie	Any defeated candidate may request a recount[22]	At the latest, by December 10[23]	No completion deadline in state law	For automatic recounts (in the case of a tie), the counting method used in the original election. For recounts by petition, either hand counting or re-running ballots through voting machines. The method is chosen by the petitioner.
Wisconsin	No	A vote margin of less than or equal to 0.25% entitles a candidate to a taxpayer-funded recount. A vote margin greater than 0.25% but no more than 1% entitles a candidate to a paid recount.	At the latest, by November 20[24]	Not more than 13 days after the order directing the recount	Hand counting and re-running the ballots through voting machines. The method is chosen by election officials.

19 If election officials discover substantial errors while conducting a requested recount, statute requires a subsequent automatic recount.

20 For contests under the jurisdiction of the State Board of Elections, the specified close vote margin for a nonstatewide contest is 1% of the total votes cast, or in the case of a multi-candidate contest, 1% of the votes cast for those two candidates; for a statewide contest, the close vote margin is the lesser of 0.5% of the votes cast or 10,000 votes.

21 For statewide contests, within five days of state certification. For contests appearing in more than one county (but not statewide), within five days of the most populous county's certification. For contests appearing in only one county, within five days of that county's certification.

22 There are no required grounds for a recount of an election where electronic voting systems were used. However, if an electronic voting system was not used for the original vote count, a close vote margin or certified counting errors are required as grounds for a candidate recount petition. For further details, see Tex. Elec. Code § 212.034.

23 The petition deadline could be earlier depending on the date of the state canvass. The petition deadline is 3 business days after the state canvass, which can occur as early as November 21 and as late as December 7.

24 The recount petition deadline is three business days after the last county "determining the election for that office" completes its canvass. Wis. Stat. Ann. § 9.01(1). If all relevant counties submit their canvass reports earlier than required, the recount petition deadline might be earlier.