

# Government Administration and Elections Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-1232

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE RISK-LIMITING

**Title:** AUDITS WORKING GROUP.

**Vote Date:** 2/28/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 2/7/2025

**File No.:**

**Disclaimer:** *The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

There has been a growing concern about transparency and discrepancies within elections. A Risk-Limiting Audits Working Group was established in 2021 to study and report on the possibility of implementing a system of post-election risk-limiting audits. This bill would seek to implement the recommendations of the working group to limit the errors and increase confidence in election results.

### Substitute Language:

The substitute language changes the effective date from "January 1, 2026" to "from passage" in Section 1, Line 1. In Section 1, Lines 37–38 changes the prescribe date for the Secretary of the State from "January 1, 2027" to "March 1, 2026" These changes follow the feedback from the Secretary of the State's office. Section 3, Lines 293–294 adds ballot counters for early voting and same day registration at the behest of the Secretary of the State's comments. Section 3, Lines 314–316 allows the Secretary of the State to adopt regulations.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

#### Stephanie Thomas, Secretary of the State of Connecticut:

In 2021 a task force was authorized to investigate and test post-election risk-limiting audits. The pilot program has been completed and a report was issued to this committee in 2022. There was a bill in 2024 that did not move forward despite being bipartisan. This bill will have

the same fiscal impact as the previous bill. I urge favorable passage with these proposed changes:

Although the bill requires the creation of a ballot manifest for polling place ballots and central count absentee ballots, subsections requiring the creation of ballot manifests for early voting and same day registration ballots should be added as well as a section allowing my office to propose regulations.

In lines 35-37, it says that the Secretary of the State has to prescribe instructions and procedures by 1/1/2027, but the first election with Risk Limiting Audits is 2026. The date should be changed to 1/1/2026.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **Alexander Russell, UConn Center for Voting Technology:**

We strongly advocate adoption of risk-limiting audits. They provide a cost-effective means for checking an election and are transparent. RLAs can provide confidence and detect tabulation errors, incorrect reporting of tabulator's errors, and centralizes aggregation errors. They lead to more trustworthy and transparent elections. It appears that on line 37 the date should be Jan 1, 2026, instead of Jan. 1, 2027.

### **Chrisse LaPorte, Deputy Policy & Strategy Director, Verified Voting:**

As a nonpartisan nonprofit organization, we support risk-limiting audits. RLAs are tabulations designed to efficiently confirm that election outcomes match hand count ballots. RLAs are recommended by the American Statistical Association, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. We suggest reconsidering the requirement to audit U.S. House and General Assembly contests because of a close vote or tie, as this would result in a full hand count that would be challenging. We noticed that you have RLA's starting in 2026 but instructions are not required until 2027.

### **Sue Larson, Chairman ROVAC Legislative Committee:**

The current audit procedure includes 5% of the polling districts in the state and the tabulators are audited for accuracy. Connecticut elections have been proven accurate, fair, and transparent. Our organization agrees that risk limited audits are a viable option but the time is not appropriate to start this program. The new tabulators that have been purchased are more capable than previous models. With new early voting and centralized voting the system has undergone major changes. The bill needs to reflect that the new tabulators do not have memory cards.

Lorayna Hinton and Anonymous also support the bill.

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

### **Linda Dalessio:**

Currently Americans do not have trust in our elections. There have been no audit records or certification records in the past several years making our elections illegal per federal and state statute. RLAs require infrastructure for storing and retrieving paper ballots and a voter-verifiable paper record of each vote and rely on accurate reliable electronic systems. If these systems

are compromised or malfunction the audit can be compromised. There needs to be specialized training to avoid errors.

**Luther Weeks, Executive Director, Connecticut Voters Count:**

RLAs require detailed technical and computational issues. They are not as simple as marks on a ballot. We need the detailed rules and regulations. Included in my testimony are details of robust laws for RLAs.

**David Mederios** also opposes the bill.

**Reported by: Pamela Bianca**

**Date: March 4, 2025**