*Welcome to LLA Reports, a podcast produced by the Louisiana Legislative Auditor’s office. This podcast is intended to be an oral representation of the written report it highlights and is primarily for the use of the Louisiana Legislature.*

This is Chris Magee. I’m the Data Analytics manager for LLA Performance Audit Services.

This episode of LLA Reports focuses on our new report titled “Election Integrity.”

We conducted this audit, in part, in response to House Concurrent Resolution 81 of the 2021 Regular Legislative Session. That resolution directed the Legislative Auditor to evaluate the Louisiana Department of State’s elections processes and procedures.

The purpose of the audit was to determine whether existing controls related to election integrity are sufficient.

Overall, we found that the Department of State – or DOS – has procedures and practices in place to ensure election integrity. However, we identified additional ways DOS could strengthen its activities and suggested revisions to the state Election Code that the Legislature may wish to consider.

Specifically, we found that DOS conducts data matches as required by federal and state law and conducts additional activities to help ensure the accuracy of the voter registration list.

However, DOS could further improve the accuracy of the voter registration list by annually conducting the data match that identifies registered Louisiana voters who are registered to vote in another state or who have obtained a driver’s license in another state.

In addition, we found that DOS implemented a cure process in calendar year 2020 to help voters ensure that information on their absentee affidavits was complete. That process helped contribute to a reduction in the percentage of absentee ballots rejected.

State law could be clarified, however, so that absentee affidavits with missing information are handled consistently across all parishes.

For example, we observed that one parish rejected all absentee ballots for the November 2021 election where the affidavit was missing the mother’s maiden name. The other two other parishes we observed did not present absentee affidavits missing the mother’s maiden name for a vote by the Parish Board of Election Supervisors.

We also found that while DOS has implemented some Election Assistance Commission guidelines related to pre-election testing of voting machines, it could improve its process by ensuring DOS staff and/or election officials consistently verify test results, document the verification, and review the documentation.

While DOS procedures for testing voting machines state that the test results should be verified, we found inconsistencies in the two parishes where we observed the test process. The test results were reviewed by election officials or members of the Parish Board of Election Supervisors in one parish but not in the other.

In addition, we found that 130 – or 55.3 percent – of 235 test vote reports for voting machines for the November 2021 election were not signed by election officials or the Parish Board of Election Supervisors. That means it was unclear whether the test results were reviewed.

DOS also conducts post-election verification activities to ensure the number of votes cast does not exceed the number of eligible voters and matches actual voter turnout.

However, Louisiana’s current in-person voting systems do not produce a voter-verified paper record, which prevents DOS from conducting post-election tabulation audits. In addition, DOS does not conduct post-election tabulation audits of absentee ballots, which do produce a voter-verified paper record.

State law requires that any new voting system procured by DOS must have an auditable voter-verified paper record. Once a new system is implemented, DOS will be able to perform post-election tabulation audits for all voting methods.

Additionally, we found that DOS’ Elections Compliance Unit received 501 election-related complaints during fiscal years 2017 through 2021. The most common type of complaint was related to campaign practices.

DOS could improve its complaints process by consistently categorizing complaints, tracking the status of complaints, and making this information available to the public.

As a result of our audit, we developed six matters for legislative consideration and five recommendations.

Among the matters for legislative consideration, we suggested the Legislature require a supplemental annual canvass to help ensure the accuracy of the voter registration list, require registrars of voters to present all incomplete absentee affidavits to the Parish Board of Election Supervisors, and add criteria to the state Election Code on whether the Parish Board of Election Supervisors should accept or reject incomplete absentee affidavits.

In addition, we suggested the Legislature include requirements in the Election Code that test vote results be verified, that the party responsible for conducting the verification be specified, and that the verification be documented and reviewed.

We also suggested that the Legislature require DOS to develop and implement post-election tabulation audits on voter-verified paper records, and that legislators extend the period between primary and general elections to give DOS adequate time to conduct post-election tabulation audits.

Among our recommendations, we recommended that DOS conduct its data match to identify Louisiana registered voters who register to vote in another state or obtain a driver’s license in another state each year to ensure it makes timely updates to the voter registration list.

We also recommended that DOS ensure test vote results match expected results by verifying the results, documenting the verification, and reviewing this documentation.

We recommended as well that DOS establish policies to require formal documentation and review of its post-election verification activities and establish policies to conduct post-election tabulation audits of voter-verified paper records.

Finally, we recommended that DOS consistently categorize complaints, track the status of complaints, and make this information available to the public at least annually.

As part of its response, which is included in the report as Appendix A, DOS agreed with all five of our recommendations.

*We hope you found this podcast informative, and that you’ll follow future episodes of LLA Reports.*

*This podcast was created as part of the audit report just discussed and is intended primarily for the use of the Louisiana Legislature. Both the full report and the podcast can be found on the LLA’s website at* [*www.lla.la.gov*](http://www.lla.la.gov)*.*

*Thank you for listening.*