



Georgia Audit of Presidential Race Will “Build Confidence” Says Secretary of State

Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, a Republican, said that the audit of all the ballots in the presidential contest will “build confidence” in the ultimate outcome of the razor-thin close race in his state between President Donald Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden.

Raffensperger explained to reporters that the audit is part of a recently passed Georgia election law in which the secretary of state, an elected official, chooses one race on which to conduct an “audit” as a way of checking that the voting machines worked properly. He said that he chose the presidential contest this time because of the “national significance of this race and the closeness of this race.”

Raffensperger has come under fire from Georgia’s two Republican U.S. senators, David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler, who each face a run-off election on January 5. Presently, Republicans have 50 seats in the Senate to 48 for the Democrats. Democrats would have to win both run-off elections to tie the Republicans’ total. If that happened, and Biden is sworn in as president on January 20, then Kamala Harris would be vice-president. Under the U.S. Constitution, she would be able to break that deadlock as “president of the Senate,” turning control of the Senate over to the Democrats.

Perdue and Loeffler contend that Raffensperger failed to prevent voter fraud, which gave Biden a 14,000-vote lead over Trump and forced the two Republican senators into run-offs. (In Georgia, if no candidate gets a majority of the vote in the general election, a run-off election is held a few weeks later.) The two senators are particularly upset about allegations of irregularities in the Atlanta metropolitan areas, and have called upon Raffensperger to resign.

Raffensperger has rejected their accusations, and retorted, “That is not going to happen. The voters of Georgia hired me, and the voters will be the one to fire me.” Raffensperger added that he is likewise disappointed about the outcome of the presidential race, and that the two Republican senators did not



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Written by [Steve Byas](#) on November 13, 2020

win outright on November 3. He said that they should be more concerned about their run-off election than his status. (Of course, if their allegations are correct, then they have a legitimate concern about voter fraud adversely affecting the January 5 run-off contests).

In the disputed Georgia results, Biden leads by less than 0.3 percent out of nearly five million votes cast. Under Georgia law, a recount can be held any time the margin between the candidates is under 0.5 percent. The audit is not technically a “recount,” but it will be used to certify the final results. Post-election audits are now routine in Georgia, mainly to make sure the voting machines are working properly. Under the audit, paper ballots are checked against the results produced by the voting machines. While voting machines are used in Georgia, the machines are scanning and counting paper ballots. Unlike some states, this leaves a paper record that can be used in a recount, or in this case, an “audit.”

Ordinarily, not all the ballots are actually recounted by hand in an audit. Instead, a “sample” of ballots are counted, and once election officials are confident that the outcome is correct, they stop the process. In this case, however, Georgia will be examining every ballot, largely because the race was so close. “When you have five million votes and the margin is so close, 14,000, if we pulled out 10,000 votes, all of a sudden it could say, well this is the person that won. We pull out 100,000 and this is the person that won. If we pull out a million, this person won. And that’s why mathematically you have to do a full, hand-by-hand recount of all because the margin is so close,” Raffensperger said.

At the end of the audit, the Trump campaign — or the Biden campaign — could still ask for a recount after the results are certified. State officials have said that they had already discussed doing an audit of the presidential contest in Georgia before Republican officials in the state requested it.

The audit began this morning at 9 a.m. Eastern Time, and counties must complete their work by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m. No interim tallies will be announced. Representatives from the Democratic and Republican parties will be allowed to watch the process.

One official with the secretary of state’s office, Gabriel Sterling, predicted that there will be a slight difference in the outcome by the end of the process.

Nationally, a switch of less than 50,000 votes in three states would have swung the election to Trump, even with all of the disputed votes that have been cast.

Will this recount in Georgia help to detect the vote fraud that many Republicans have claimed took place in Georgia? Yes and no. Any voting-machine irregularities or tampering could be detected by a hand recount. Illegitimate ballots and/or ballot-stuffing would not necessarily be detected, however. If there was widespread physical ballot-tampering or ballot-stuffing, the Trump campaign may have to resort to other measures to discover it rather than this recount. That being said, Georgia’s recount is a positive development, as it will likely discover any tampering of voting-machine results via malicious software.



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