

Georgia Hand Counting: Detrimental for Democracy

SUMMARY

Three weeks before early voting begins, the Georgia State Election Board today voted to approve [new rules](#) that will require election workers to hand count all ballots on election night. While they will not have to tally results by hand, hand counting the number of ballots overall takes longer, costs more, and the results will be less accurate.

This comes one day after the attorney general's office [issued a memo](#) to the board chair stating that the last minute changes "very likely" exceed the Board's statutory authority and even seem to conflict with existing laws governing elections. The memo further warns that "the Board risks passing rules that may easily be challenged and determined to be invalid."

Our network is monitoring the situation and creating a cost analysis for this new ruling, which at the low end, is estimated to be more than \$1.5 million for staffing alone.

At this point, lawsuits challenging the approved rules are likely to follow.

KEY POINTS

- Hand counts lead to errors. We all care about an accurate count – that's true regardless of political party. This is something we have to get right, and hand counting is simply not the answer.
 - [Studies have shown](#) hand counting produces more errors than machine hand counts.
 - Machine counting eliminates human error, human fatigue, and most importantly – especially in the political climate Americans are experiencing right now – human bias. Unnecessary hand counting has the potential to turn an unbiased process into one that could easily sway the results of an election.
- Modern vote-counting systems are accurate and secure.
 - They are subject to extensive security protections and accuracy checks.
 - They have to meet strict requirements to be certified for use in an election.
 - Modern vote-counting systems are tried and true – the Department of Homeland Security [deemed](#) 2020, the last presidential election, as the most secure election in U.S. history. We expect nothing less in 2024.
- Hand counting is slow and time consuming.
 - Though many expect election results on election night, the reality is, many states take days or even weeks after the election to count ballots – and rightfully so. States that allow for mail ballots to be postmarked by Election Day are one example. However unnecessary delays, like hand counting ballots following an election, lead to uncertainty and makes room for unfounded claims of fraud.
 - On Election Day, election workers typically show up to the polls in the early hours of the morning and do not conclude their work until late at night. Adding the task of tallying thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of ballots, has the potential to add days onto the certification process.