

Frequently Asked Questions: About Observing

Has this been done before? The Coalition has been observing post-election audits since November 2007. In the fall of 2010, seventy-five volunteers observed close to fifty audits. Our original program was inspired by similar observations conducted by volunteers in Minnesota. Today, volunteers observe audits in several states including California, Colorado, and Florida.

What are the benefits to observers? Past participants indicate the greatest benefit is the opportunity to participate in democracy and the election process. Participants will gain a greater appreciation for the election process and the work of election staff. You will have pride from contributing to election integrity in Connecticut.

Are there any costs to observers? Observers are responsible for their transportation to and from the audit; in a few cities parking or public transportation; and the training conference call is an out-of-state toll call.

How many volunteers are needed? We would like to have a minimum of two observers at each town counting session. To fully cover the audits we will need at least 50% more observers beyond those who signed-up for last November.

What time commitment is expected of volunteers? We ask volunteers to commit to being at one audit counting session and to call in to one one-hour conference call training. When you sign-up, you tell us which days you will agree to be available to participate in the audit. You will also specify the distance you are willing to travel to an audit. You provide dates when you can be available to be in another town between 9:00am and 9:00pm.

How long will the audit counting sessions actually last? The sessions will vary in length. It depends on the number of votes to be counted in each municipality and the number of election officials counting. Expect sessions to last from five to eight hours. We request that volunteers commit to being available for at least one day. The sign up form asks you to list dates when you can be available - the more dates you specify the more likely we will be able to provide the opportunity for you to participate and the more of the audit sessions we will be able to observe.

How can I sign up? Sign up is available at <http://www.CTElectionAudit.org> starting a few weeks before each major election or primary. At other times we provide a sign up for those interested in being reminded by email when sign up is available for future observations.

How are the municipalities and districts to be audited selected? After the election, the Secretary of the State holds a public random drawing to select 10% of the districts in the

election to be audited. Many towns will not have districts selected. Larger towns may have three or four districts selected. Typically forty to fifty municipalities will be selected; the random drawing determines the actual number.

When and where will the audits be conducted?

The registrars in each town decide the date, time, and place of the audit. By the law the audits counting sessions can start fifteen days after the election and continue for one or two weeks. The Coalition will work with the Secretary of the State's Office and contacts the registrars to determine the dates, times, and locations of the audits.

Can I observe the audit session in my own city/town? Yes, but not as a Coalition observer. All audits are open to the public, so you can certainly attend the audit in your town if you are available and your town is selected. The coalition's goal is to have at least two observers who are not residents of the municipality being audited, to add to the objectivity and perception of objectivity of the feedback obtained. Remember, most towns will not be selected for audit.

How far will I have to drive?

When you sign-up you will specify the distance you are willing to travel. We estimate the distance from your town to the audit - we may ask you to go a little farther if nobody else is available, but will not expect you to agree. The more dates you can be available and the farther you are willing to travel, the more likely we will be able to find an audit for you to observe - and the more likely we will be able to cover all the audits after the election.

When will I find out my assignment?

Our goal is to have all the dates, times, and locations of the audits as soon as we can. Although the audits are public, there are no advanced notice requirements in the law. The Secretary of the State's procedures require three days' notice. We will be asking the registrars involved to provide dates well in advance of the audit. We will notify you as soon as we can, but sometimes we have only a short notice. We will understand if you cannot attend an audit on short notice, or something important has come up after you signed up.

When will the training be held and when will I receive the Observer's Kit? We will hold several one hour conference call training sessions in the last few days before the audits begin - some will occur during the day and some in the evening - if you miss the your session, just call into one of the other sessions. The Observer's Kit will contain an audit report form with instructions, a copy of the code of conduct, and a copy of the official audit procedures. We will finalize and make the kit available several days before the training sessions begin. We will also be mailing name badges to observers to arrive before the observations begin.