

# Risk-Limiting Audits

**How can we be sure the outcome of an election is correct with high certainty?**

**Perform a Risk-Limiting Audit!**

**What is a Risk-Limiting Audit?** A risk-limiting audit (RLA) is a procedure for manually checking a sample of ballots or voter-verifiable paper records from an electronic voting device that will have a large, pre-specified chance of correcting an erroneous election outcome

**Why Risk-Limiting Audits?**

- Risk-limiting audits are practical and inexpensive compared to other election costs
- Risk-limiting audits can confirm correct outcomes very efficiently
- Risk-limiting audits accommodate a wide variety of voting systems
- Risk-limiting audits can greatly reduce the need for recounts and election contest litigation.
- Risk-limiting audits can yield extensive information about voting system accuracy

**Does My State Already Use Risk-Limiting Audits in Elections?** Colorado and Rhode Island are currently the only two states with risk-limiting audit laws that apply to state and federal elections.

**How Can I Be an Advocate for Risk-Limiting Audits?** Contact your state legislators, secretary of state, and local elections officials and educate them on risk-limiting audits. Contact organizations such as your local League of Women Voters and ask for their support. If you live in Washington State, learn more [here](#).

## Common Risk-Limiting Audit Questions

**How many ballots get counted in a RLA?** The number of ballots in the initial sample depends on various things, including the margin of victory in the contest: the narrower the margin, the larger the initial sample.

**How many contests can a RLA audit?** Risk-limiting audits can be conducted for any number of contests in a single election, often using a single sample for greater efficiency.

**What if the election outcome is incorrect?** If the reported outcome is incorrect, then the audit usually will lead to a full hand count that reveals the correct outcome.

**When does a RLA stop?** By design, once the audit finds strong evidence that the reported outcome was correct, it can stop.

**Will RLA's delay election results?** Risk-limiting audits can begin very soon after the election – in some cases even before all the votes have been counted. The audit results should be available before an election result is certified.

**Can you show me an example of RLA language in state law?** Check out Colorado's [here](#).

**Is there software to perform RLA's?** Yes. Colorado is currently working with [Free and Fair](#) to provide open source RLA software.

## Sources

<https://www.stat.berkeley.edu/~stark/Preprints/evidenceVote12.pdf>

<https://www.stat.berkeley.edu/~stark/Preprints/RLAwhitepaper12.pdf>

<https://www.stat.berkeley.edu/~stark/Preprints/gentle12.pdf>