



Iowa Caucus Controversy – Both Caucuses Should Be Audited

In the aftermath of the close results in Monday's caucuses, the [Des Moines Register](#) has called upon the Iowa Democratic Party to audit the results of its caucuses. The *Des Moines Register* added:



Too many accounts have arisen of inconsistent counts, untrained and overwhelmed volunteers, confused voters, cramped precinct locations, a lack of voter registration forms and other problems.... Too many of us, including members of the *Register* editorial board who were observing caucuses, saw opportunities for error amid Monday night's chaos.

The Sanders campaign has complained of being denied access to the paper records of the votes at the caucus locations. The Sanders campaign has reportedly been in contact with its precinct captains to get whatever records they can obtain to reconstruct the caucus results so that it can compare them to the official results.

The Democratic Caucuses can still be audited, even though much of the voting was conducted via voting by standing rather than by marking paper ballots. Voting by standing has been an American tradition since colonial times. By that method, the supporters for each candidate gather in groups, and the numbers of voters in each group can be counted at the official time. The results of such voting can be audited in a number of ways. If there were paper records kept, and hopefully those present verified the counts at the time of voting, the paper records can be compared to the official totals to be sure they were reported and recorded accurately and honestly. In case the paper records were lost, video recordings of the announcements of the totals could also be used to audit the results. These caucuses were held in public locations. In cases where photos were taken of the voters standing in their respective camps or corners, it may even be possible to recount the precinct votes. In caucuses that were held in buildings with video security, such recounts are probably very easy.

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Both Democratic candidates agree the votes in their caucuses were very close and an accurate recount might change very little in terms of awarded delegates. Political pragmatism aside, any process that selects delegates to political conventions that nominate candidates for president should be run accurately and honestly and have results capable of being audited.

Audit the Republican Caucuses Too

The New American attended the Republican caucus in Harlan, Iowa. While most of the problems noted by the *Des Moines Register* in the Democratic Caucuses were not evident at the Republican Caucuses in Harlan, there were opportunities for error or fraud, particularly by county chairmen.



Written by [Kurt Hyde](#) on February 5, 2016

The following is from the notes taken by this author:

The precinct vote counts were done with transparency. The paper ballots were collected, and three people from each precinct did the vote counting while in sight of the precinct members. No ballots left the room until after they were counted.

The precinct results were given to the county chairman, who kept them on a tally sheet that he had in a manila envelope. The county chairman told me in advance that I would not be allowed to see the tally sheet. I asked him if there were any requirements for publicly displaying the results, and he said no. I asked if there were any document retention requirements for the tally sheets, and he said there was none. The only document requirement was for him to give a copy of his tally sheet to someone from the state party headquarters for their audit. He expected that in a few days.

According to the county chairman, the precinct chairs traditionally retain the original ballots even though they have no requirement to retain them.

The disturbing part of the Republican Caucuses is that there's no paper trail connecting the precinct results to what the county chairmen report. That's a very dangerous opportunity for error or fraud. Hopefully, the county chairmen have resisted, and will continue to resist, this temptation until this security weakness is fixed.

Another security weakness on the Republican side, which was pointed out in a previous article in this publication, is that the county totals are transmitted in a secure fashion. This is public information and making it available to the public at all times is the best form of security.

It is possible to do recounts and audits of the Republican Caucuses in Iowa because of the witnesses to the vote counts and the precinct chairs who, acting in good faith as dedicated lesser magistrates, voluntarily retained the paper ballots even though there was no requirement to do so.

The New American has contacted the Donald Trump campaign headquarters, asking if they intend to press for an audit or a recount of the Iowa Caucuses. As of press time, they have not yet responded.

Both Caucuses Should Have Some Degree of Auditing

It is possible to perform reasonable audits in both the Democratic and Republican Caucuses. The necessary information to accomplish them does exist or could be reconstructed if an audit were to start soon.

Apologists for some of the shortcuts in accuracy and ability to audit the Iowa Caucuses say these aren't elections. They're only caucuses. But they are more than just popularity polls. There is a certain amount of delegate selection and that affects the nominations of presidential candidates. The news media is portraying the results of the Iowa Caucuses as a significant and accurate measurement of voter sentiment for other Americans to use while deciding who their choices are for president. If the American people are taking these caucus results seriously, shouldn't those conducting the caucuses be taking their jobs equally seriously?



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