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**Election 2020 report gives a little something for both sides**

*By WisPolitics.com*

A highly anticipated new report from Wisconsin’s nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau seems to have given ammo to both 2020 election critics and defenders.

The audit bureau found no widespread fraud in the 2020 election but highlighted a series of issues the state Elections Commission and lawmakers could address.

That includes suggesting the Elections Commission should promulgate administrative rules if it believes municipal clerks should be allowed to fill in missing information on absentee ballot envelopes or to use drop boxes.

Republican lawmakers have argued the commission overstepped its authority in allowing clerks to add missing information to absentee ballot envelopes and could block any guidance the agency issued through the administrative rules process.

GOP state Sen. Kathy Bernier, a former county clerk, said the report didn’t find any “sizable or organized attempt at voter fraud” but that “election administration at both the state and local level was sloppy and consistent procedures were not followed.”

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, argued the report “proves why further investigation is necessary and it is imperative that Justice Gableman continues to look into what led to these violations in election law.”

“We have heard from voters all over the state that want to make sure their vote counts and these violations are not acceptable,” Vos said.

Democratic members of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, however, said the report showed the 2020 election was “free, accurate, fair and secure” and it was time to put to rest the falsehood that the election was stolen. They also called for increasing resources for training, technology and staffing for elections.

“It is irresponsible, and simply untrue, for Republicans to continue insinuating that the 2020 election wasn’t administered appropriately,” the Democratic lawmakers said. “There was no fraud. The election administration was carried out with integrity and accuracy. End of story.”

The highly anticipated LAB review found a series of issues with the election such as a handful of voters who may have died before the election but their absentee ballot was still counted; felons who may have voted even though their sentences hadn’t been completed; and four voters who may have cast two absentee ballots.

The Elections Commission stressed the review made clear the 2020 vote totals were accurate and “no processes were identified that could have changed the outcome, and that no evidence of widespread fraud of any type was discovered.”

The commission also expressed disappointment that LAB didn’t share a draft of the report before it was published, saying it had identified errors that could’ve been addressed before it was released.

The LAB noted that while it typically shares draft reports with the audited entity, the agency didn’t this time to protect the confidentiality of the report ahead of its release. The LAB said it contacted 179 clerks and sharing a draft with so many individuals would’ve risked a leak. It also noted the Elections Commission administrator has limited authority without the governing board’s involvement and the commissioners can only meet in closed session for

specific purposes. Responding to an audit isn’t one of them.

The Elections Commission didn’t identify the errors in its statement, and an agency spokesman said the commission wasn’t ready to release a list yet.

Altogether, the LAB made 30 recommendations for the Wisconsin Elections Commission and highlighted 18 issues the Legislature could consider.

“We’ll continue to review the full report in detail to determine our response,” Administrator Meagan Wolfe said. “And we’re anxious to use this opportunity to look for ways to improve the administrative functions that are so critical to carrying out elections.”

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