SECRETARY OF STATE PROPOSES RULES FOR ELECTION AUDIT TRANSPARENCY

(ATLANTA) – Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger is asking the State Elections Board to pass a rule setting forth procedures to publicize the time and location of post-election audits.

He also noted that the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency announced this week it is investing in the auditing tool that Georgia used to audit the Nov. 5 Cartersville municipal election. Georgia made history by being the first state in the Southeast to pilot a risk-limiting audit of an election.

"Audits are an important part of the new, secure paper-ballot voting system because they give the public confidence in how the election was conducted and the integrity of the results," Raffensperger said. "Just like the public is notified of the time and location of pre-election logic and accuracy testing of voting equipment, audits after elections should be similarly public."

Post-election audits of Georgia elections are a security feature of the new voting system that relies on paper ballots and is currently rolled out. The transition was authorized by the General Assembly through House Bill 316 which also required post-elections to be completed in public view.

Risk-limiting audits use statistical sampling to confirm election results. This method helps identify potential hacks, malfunctions, or other interference in the voting process. Election administration and security experts agree that risk-limiting audits are the "gold standard" of post-election audits in an era when election security is paramount.

These audits will provide an added layer of election protection to increase voter confidence that the reported winner is the actual winner.

To prepare for statewide post-election audits in 2020, the Secretary of State's Office is partnering with VotingWorks and the Center for Election Innovation and Research, national non-partisan organizations that have experience with election audits in multiple states. Arlo, the auditing tool used in Georgia's risk-limiting audit, was recognized Thursday by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).

THE FOLLOWING IS FROM THE CISA PRESS RELEASE:
"Heading into 2020, we're exploring all possible ways that we can support state and local election officials while also ensuring that Americans across the country can confidently cast their votes," said CISA Director Christopher Krebs in a press release issued by his office. "At a time when we know foreign actors are attempting to interfere and cast doubt on our democratic processes, it's incredibly important elections are secure, resilient, and transparent. For years, we have promoted the value of auditability in election security, it was a natural extension to support this open source auditing tool for use by election officials and vendors, alike."

The auditing tool, known as Arlo, is open-source software provided free for state and local election officials and their private-sector partners to use. Arlo provides an easy way to perform the calculations needed for the audit: determining how many ballots to audit, randomly selecting which ballots will be audited, comparing audited votes to tabulated votes, and knowing when the audit is complete.

"We're very excited to partner with CISA to develop Arlo, a critical tool supporting the implementation of more efficient and effective post-election audits. Because Arlo is open-source, anyone can take it and use it and anyone can verify that it implements audits correctly," said Ben Adida, Executive Director of VotingWorks.

The Georgia Secretary of State is the state's chief election officer and has the mission to help ensure secure and accurate elections. County election officials run the actual elections and handle voter registration.

Georgia is a leader in election innovation and access with automatic voter registration through the Department of Driver Services, three weeks of early voting – including a Saturday, and no-excuse absentee voting. It is the top state in the number of motor voter registrations and in the last election cycle experienced record registration and a record increase in turnout.