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**National Voter Registration Day Statement by Mark S. Earley**

September 28<sup>th</sup> is National Voter Registration Day, a nonpartisan civic holiday dedicated to celebrating our democracy. As your Supervisor of Elections, I encourage every eligible person to take this opportunity to register to vote. If you are already registered, but you have moved or changed your name, now is the time to update your voter registration record. It's easy to register or update your information – visit [RegisterToVoteFlorida.gov](https://RegisterToVoteFlorida.gov) to get started.

But more than simply encouraging voter registration, I want to take the opportunity provided by this holiday to discuss the current rhetoric surrounding elections. Across our nation we are seeing a flood of election disinformation that continues to undermine the foundations of our democracy. To baselessly attack the legitimacy of our elections is to attack America itself.

Last week my office received an email claiming to have proof that Florida's 2020 General Election was hacked, and that Former President Trump should have won Florida by a dramatically larger margin than what was reported. The "proof" is a widely distributed spreadsheet purportedly showing IP addresses of county voting systems and numbers of votes that candidates did and should have received. This claim is easily disproven: the IP addresses are for our public web server, and the "attack" was simply someone in Virginia looking at our public web page on election day. More to the point, our voting system is isolated from the internet, so this entire claim is baseless and has been refuted multiple times.

Though I know these claims are false, I believe the person who sent the email has good intentions and cares about the integrity of our elections. I share that sentiment. At the Leon County Supervisor of Elections Office, election integrity is our number one goal.

That is why my office conducts a 100% audit of every election. We double-check every vote, on every ballot, from every voter, to ensure that the election results are accurate. We perform this audit using a separate counting system from the regular voting equipment. Both the voting system and the audit system are certified by the Florida Department of State and are tested before and after each election. Even if someone were somehow to compromise the voting system, the audit would quickly reveal the problem. The audit of the 2020 General Election proves that the results were accurate and correct. In Leon County, the agreement between the two systems was 99.99809%. And remember – all voting in Florida is done using a paper ballot. If there is ever a problem or a close election, we rely on the paper ballot to uncover the truth.



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Besides the certification and testing of voting and auditing equipment, there are layers of security and procedures that maintain the integrity of our elections. We conduct extensive maintenance on the voter registration list every year to ensure that only eligible voters are registered. And before someone can even be added to the voter rolls, we verify their identity. When voters vote in-person they must show ID to cast their ballot or cast a provisional ballot that is only counted after we verify their eligibility.

Voting-by-Mail has similar safeguards. We only mail out ballots when a voter has requested one. Ballots are sent by-non forwardable mail, so they only go to the address on the voter's request. When we receive the ballot back, we don't remove it from the envelope until after we have confirmed that it was returned by the voter through signature verification.

All this activity takes place in a public environment. Poll watchers, many of them lawyers appointed by political parties and candidates, observe in-person voting. We only open and count Vote-by-Mail ballots during public meetings which anyone can attend. Nearly every record related to the election, including ballots, is a public record open to inspection or copying by any person.

This is the truth about election integrity. Our elections are secure, and the results can be trusted. Instead of looking at social media rife with unfounded rumors and wild allegations, voters should turn to a trusted and nonpartisan source for information. To help stem the tide of misinformation, my office has authored a guidebook that explains election safeguards and why we can all trust election results. You can read it at [LeonVotes.gov/Trust](https://www.leonvotes.gov/trust).

On this National Voter Registration Day, I encourage voters to educate themselves on the truth about election integrity. Our democracy depends on it.

Mark S. Earley

Leon County Supervisor of Elections

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