**We Can Count on Our Canvassers—Here’s Why!**

**By Jan A. Miller, Proud Benzie Dem**

In 2021, the Benzie Dems recruited me to apply for a position on the County Board of Canvassers.

“What’s a canvasser?” I asked. Soon, I would know. I was welcomed to the team—two Republicans and two Democrats—and joined our own Pete Brown as the second Dem.

Canvassers, according to my half-inch-thick procedural manual, perform many vital election-related duties. We examine and certify vote counts from primary and general elections, conduct recounts, inspect ballot containers, and resolve any claims about malfunctioning voting machines and defective ballots (Remember those hanging chads?).

This April County Clerk Dawn Olney summoned us to the Government Center, in Beulah.

As an aside, I want to commend Dawn, who’s just announced her retirement after 35 years of service to Benzie County. Dawn performs her Clerk duties in an extremely competent, professional manner, and I’m grateful she’s been our leader.

She had called us in to to inspect ballot containers from Benzonia, Blaine, Crystal Lake, Gilmore and Lake Townships, as well as the City of Frankfort. We opened and closed the metal bins, checked that they were secure, confirmed their approved locking systems and foam linings, and then passed or rejected them. The containers that passed muster by the four of us were marked “approved” by attaching seals (similar to airline luggage tags) with our signatures, guaranteeing that they’d been duly inspected and were safe and secure for storing ballots.

We also inspected zippered canvas bags also used for ballot storage. At all times, the townships’ elections officials were in the room with us, guaranteeing a fully transparent operation. Each official left only after working with us as we checked and approved their jurisdiction’s containers.

I offer all this excruciating detail about this one, particular Board of Canvasser activity to show how a bi-partisan group, working together in the same room, inspect every aspect of election security, one piece at a time. On this day, our single job was guaranteeing the security of our different townships’ ballot containers. We’ve now sworn, under oath, as four individuals, that those containers are good to go. And really, it’s kind of a sobering thought: Our neighbors, exercising their precious voting rights, are depending on our guarantee. If any container is found to be defective later, officials will be able to trace the problem straight back to us, using our signatures. Talk about your sacred duty…

So, this is exactly the kind of precautions that our county—and every county in Michigan, following electoral law—took leading up to our 2020 presidential election. In fact, every board of canvassers in every state and territory in the U.S. did much the same thing, certifying the results of the election and passing on their findings to their respective secretaries of state.

What more can be said of the 2020 vote? Here’s a big one: On November 12, 2020, six days after the vote, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)issued a joint statement, along with a number of other agencies and organizations that partnered with CISA for that election, who are listed at the end of this article.\*

What did they conclude? Well, among other things, first and foremost they said, **“The November 3rd [2020] election was the most secure in American history.”**

After that statement was issued, VOX, a news and opinion website, noted that it directly contradicted then-President Donald Trump, who made – and still makes – baseless allegations of widespread voting irregularities and fraud. Those allegations fly in the face of the care, thought, precision, and transparency that county Boards of Elections provide with their work.

As VOX says on its web site, Trump’s false claims and his “big lie” are often bolstered by right-wing media and Trump’s allies in the Republican Party. But they have yet to point to any evidence. But, no matter how fact-free they are, repeating such falsehoods undermines overall faith in the safety and security of U.S. elections.

Consider the myriad, done-in-the-same-room procedures we and other Boards around the state and the country take—so many security measures that are just like the ones we four humble public servants in Benzie County took when we inspected all those ballot containers. Add to that, across our nation, the almost countless pre-election tests, state and federal certifications of voting equipment, paper records of every vote and the ability to fully recount when necessary.

All of that, and much more that we could tell you, makes this joint statement on the 2020 election not only believable but rock-solid certain for me, because I’ve seen it with my own eyes:

*“There is no evidence that any voting system deleted or lost votes, changed votes, or was in any way compromised We have the utmost confidence in the security and integrity of our elections, and you should too.”*

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\* (Nov. 12, 2020 joint statement by) The Election Infrastructure Government Coordinating Council (GCC) Executive Committee from CISA, represented by then-Assistant Director Bob Kolasky; U.S. Election Assistance Commission Chair Benjamin Hovland; National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) President Maggie Toulouse Oliver; National Association of State Election Directors (NASED) President Lori Augino; and Escambia County (Florida) Supervisor of Elections David Stafford – and the members of the Election Infrastructure Sector Coordinating Council (SCC) – Chair Brian Hancock (Unisyn Voting Solutions); Vice Chair Sam Derheimer (Hart InterCivic); Chris Wlaschin (Election Systems & Software); Ericka Haas (Electronic Registration Information Center); and Maria Bianchi (Democracy Works).

https://www.cisa.gov/news/2020/11/12/joint-statement-elections-infrastructure-government-coordinating-council-election