

# Local election officials detail process to stop misinformation while boosting faith

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(WXYZ) — Michiganders are once again making their voices heard in city and county government through the 2021 election.

After last year, local election officials are working to stop misinformation while also boosting faith in the election process.

It was a year ago where protests were held at the TCF Center in Detroit where absentee ballots were counted. They were fueled by false claims of election fraud by supporters of former President Donald Trump, believing the process was rigged.

"On a personal level, it is impactful. It's unfortunate. This is not what we signed up for," Detroit City Clerk Janice Winfrey said.

The Big Lie prompted threats against Winfrey, who ended up taking firearms training because of it. She's seeking re-election on Tuesday.

There was also an infamous red wagon from one of our own Channel 7 photographers. In that wagon, our photographer was wheeling news equipment, not mystery ballots as the website falsely claimed.

One way newly-elected Macomb County Clerk Anthony Forlini thinks he can assure voters of election integrity is an audit of the county's servers, where local municipalities send their results.

"Everything I'm doing is about the future," Forlini said.

There were claims in Macomb County – where Trump got more than 53% of the vote – that the server was somehow hacked.

"There was modeming of results before. I ended that as of this election. The results will not be modemed," Forlini said.

"Were there any reports that the modem used in the 2020 election was somehow compromised?" I asked.

"No, there wouldn't be until I get that information," He responded.

The audit is costing more than \$16,000 and should be completed in the next week or so.

Since Tuesday's election results won't be modemed over, they'll be transported on the USBs, which Forlini said could delay results, but he feels will boost trust.

Accounting errors don't prove fraud, but they sometimes happen. In November 2020, in the City of Detroit specifically, out-of-balance tallies added another layer to election doubt, even delaying certification.

But the city's August primary, Winfrey said, showed real promise.

"We balanced our absentee counting boards 100%, first time ever in Detroit's history," Winfrey said.

That's something Winfrey hopes carries over to this election, too. This year, the city has trained about 3,500 poll workers, compared to around 10,000 for the presidential election a year ago.

The expected turnout on Tuesday is right around 15%.

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