



State of Tennessee

Justin P. Wilson, State Comptroller

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Poor Planning and Mistakes in the Redistricting Process Led to Election Errors in Shelby County

Shelby County's administrator of elections failed to properly plan for redistricting, which led to errors in the August elections, a report by the Comptroller's Division of Investigations has revealed.

Federal, state and local legislative district boundaries must be updated every 10 years to account for population shifts reflected in new data from the U.S. Census Bureau. However, for several months, the Shelby County Commission was stalemated on approval of a plan for redistricting at the local level.

In January, the county's administrator of elections initiated a process for redrawing the county district lines based upon a plan that had been discussed by the commission, but not approved. The county's elections staff continued work on that process until mid-May, still with no commission-approved plan in place.

The administrator did not order redistricting work to resume until mid-June, less than a month before the start of early voting. When the work resumed, the county elections staff began preparing ballots based on the existing district boundaries – an alternative that could have been chosen much earlier in the process.

During early voting in August, voters complained about receiving incorrect ballots. At the request of the Tennessee Secretary of State's office, the Comptroller's office launched its investigation, which found:

- The administrator showed poor judgment by directing all of his staff's redistricting efforts toward one plan that had not been approved instead of preparing for contingencies.
- The administrator halted all work for four weeks instead of preparing to use existing district lines, which was a viable alternative that may have reduced the error rate in the

August elections.

- The Shelby County Election Commission failed to provide adequate supervision or oversight over the administrator or the redistricting process.

The election commission's staff was unable to identify and correct ballot errors in a reasonable and timely manner without considerable assistance from state officials and other outside parties.

“It is imperative that all citizens throughout our state have the utmost degree of confidence in our electoral process,” Comptroller Justin P. Wilson said. “The mistakes made in Shelby County during the August elections simply cannot be allowed to happen. The Shelby County Election Commission needs to take immediate corrective action to make sure similar problems do not occur in the November elections.”

To view the report online, go to: <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/ia/>

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