

How to Request a State Audit of Local Government

compiled by the *Missouri Volunteer Movement*

website: <http://www.missourivolunteermovement.com/>

Information about **petition audits** can be found on the Missouri State Auditor's website:

<https://www.auditor.mo.gov/auditinfo/petition>

The rules for petition audits apply to any **tax district** within the state of Missouri.

When we use the word "tax district", we mean things like a school district, fire district, ambulance district, police district, water & sewage district, or a city, a public university, a county, etc. Any public group that collects or receives taxes can be audited by the state.

To petition for a state audit, someone who lives within the tax district must fill out a **request form** and send it to the State Auditor. The request form can be found here:

https://www.auditor.mo.gov/sites/default/files/form-petition-audit-request_0.pdf

You do not have to live in the tax district in order to be involved in a petition audit. Anyone from Missouri can circulate petitions or request an audit.

The person who initially requests the audit does **not** have to live within the tax district. They will be recorded as the *initial requestor*. This is the person that the State Auditor's Office will contact about the petition, to find out what the problems are and where to look.

Once the state auditors know what they will be investigating, they will figure out an estimated cost for performing the audit. They will then send that information, along with a petition form for signatures, to the initial requestor.

You will need to collect signatures from registered voters living within the tax district that you want investigated. The number of signature is equal to a fraction of the total votes cast within the district during the last election for governor.

Circulating a petition audit requires that you know two things:

1. The physical boundaries of the tax district (e.g., know the city limits if you want a city government to be audited).
2. The number of votes cast by the tax district in the last election for governor.

Unfortunately, this second part can be a problem, because votes for governor aren't published according to their tax district. Votes are shown by *county*.

So, unless the tax district that you want investigated is at the *countywide level*, you'll probably have to contact your County Clerk. Hopefully, they will have the information you need. By law, they have to provide it to you if they have it (see the Sunshine Laws regarding public records). They can charge a fee, but it must be at the actual cost of providing the record – no profit-taking is allowed.

If the County Clerk does *not* have the information that you need, then you'll probably have to guess. I'd recommend the following method:

1. Find the number of votes cast for governor by the county – or counties, if the district crosses county lines. This should be easily found on the website of the County Clerk(s).
2. Find out the voting-age population of the county (people who are 18 and older). Census records will show this, and even extrapolate to the current year. An Internet search should be able to turn up this information.
3. Divide the number of votes cast by the county, by the voting-age population. This is the county's **VAP** (voting-age population) **turnout**.
4. Find out the population of the tax district. A little digging on the Internet will turn this up, or you can ask your local government officials.
5. Multiply the population of the tax district by three-fourths (75%) to find the number of people of voting age.
6. Multiply the county's VAP turnout (from Step 3) by the voting-age population of the tax district (from Step 5).

This answer should give you a *rough guess* about the number of votes cast by the tax district.

So, for instance, if your county had a VAP turnout of 40% in the last gubernatorial election, and the tax district that you want to audit covers a population of 10,000 people of voting age, you can estimate that about 4,000 people voted in that tax district ($10,000 * 0.4 = 4,000$).

Once you know, or have guessed, the number of votes cast in the tax district, you can use the chart below to find out the number of signatures that you will need:

The minimum number of signatures required can be determined using this table:

No. of votes cast in last election for governor	Required no. of signatures
Below 1,000	25% of registered voters
1,000 to 4,999	15% of actual votes (200 minimum)
5,000 to 49,999	10% of actual votes (750 minimum)
50,000 or more	5% of actual votes (5,000 minimum)

Like all petitions, we recommend that you get **50% more** than the minimum number of signatures required. This will ensure that one or two bad signatures won't ruin your entire petition.

You must submit the signed petition forms within **one year** of the initial request. The signed petitions must be sent along with a submission form, which can be found here:

<https://www.auditor.mo.gov/sites/default/files/form-petition-submission.pdf>

Even though anyone may request an audit, only a resident of the tax district may actually submit the petition signatures. This person will be recorded by the state as the *chief petitioner*.

If all of the paperwork is deemed valid, the state will perform an audit as requested. It may take some time, however, for the auditors to assemble and actually get to work. This usually takes no more than a month or two. The audit itself also takes some time, anywhere from three to six months. If there's a lot of corruption or criminal activity involved, the audit could take up to a year or more, but this is rare.