



WARREN COUNTY REPUBLICANS
For Team America

A Report on the 2024 General Election in Warren County

**By The WCRCC Executive Committee of
The Warren County Republican Party**

November 30, 2024

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Introduction

Background

According to the Iowa State Association of County Auditors, a County Auditor is the Commissioner of Elections for that county. In that role:

The Commissioner prepares and supervises the printing of ballots and/or programming of voting machines as well as orders all election supplies. The Commissioner conducts schools of instructions, according to law, for all precinct election officials and is responsible for their employment on election day. The Commissioner also prepares and monitors the processing of all absentee ballots in order to aid voters who will not be voting at the polls on election day.¹

In 2023, long-serving Warren County Auditor Traci VanderLinden retired and the Board of Supervisors appointed David Whipple as the Interim Auditor. The Warren County Democrat Party initiated a petition that resulted in a special election for the position of Interim Auditor on August 29, 2023. Whipple lost that election to Democrat Kim Sheets, who had been the Deputy Auditor under VanderLinden. Sheets ran unopposed in the 2024 General Election and was elected Warren County Auditor for a four-year term.

During Whipple's short tenure as Interim Auditor he identified and sought to address many problems with how the Warren County Auditor's Office had been managed under VanderLinden.² In preparing for the August 29th special election Whipple initiated many improvements in how the election was to be conducted, with the focus being on transparency and ensuring public trust in the results of that election and future elections. We are pleased to see that Auditor Sheets has continued with many of those improvements.

However, there was one improvement that Sheets did not continue. On the night of the August 29th special election, Whipple invited Steve Kirby, the Chair of the Warren County Republicans, and Jim Culbert, the Chair of the Warren County Democrats, to be at the Auditor's office as the voting machine thumb drives were being brought in. Both Chairs were there when the first thumb drive arrived, and they witnessed that thumb drive and the subsequent thumb drives from all the voting locations being removed from inside their respective zippered bank-type bags that had been locked by the respective precinct election officials before leaving the voting location. The Chairs witnessed each thumb drive being put into a computer, with the total votes from that particular thumb drive displayed on the computer and compared with the total votes on the printout that had also been included in the corresponding locked bag. After all of the thumb

¹ https://www.iowaauditors.org/about/auditors_responsibilities/

² See "Warren County: Voting Machines and Thumb Drives Missing, and More!" *The Iowa Standard*, August 1, 2023, <https://theiowastandard.com/warren-county-voting-machines-and-thumb-drives-missing-and-more/>; and "Time for New Eyes in the Warren County Auditor's Office – Here is Why," *The Iowa Standard*, August 13, 2023, <https://theiowastandard.com/time-for-new-eyes-in-the-warren-county-auditors-office-here-is-why/>.

drives were inserted into the computer, each Chair received a print-out of the total votes. For some reason, Sheets did not continue with this approach to heightened electoral transparency in the 2024 General Election.

The 2024 General Election

Warren County residents want to take pride and have trust in how our elections are administered. For that reason, the Warren County Republicans and some of our candidates monitored various aspects of the 2024 General Election. In doing so, a number of problems were identified:

- 1) A voter received a pre-marked Absentee Ballot;
- 2) 10 voters were not able to vote for certain candidates on Election Day due to incorrect ballots;
- 3a/b) Voters received incorrect Absentee Ballots;
- 4) A letter from the Auditor's office appeared to replace representation by Republicans, members of the largest political party in Warren County, with Libertarians, members of the smallest political party in Warren County, while Democrats were being ensured representation.

The details of these findings are in the body of this report.

A copy of this report will be sent to the Warren County Auditor and other Warren County officials, the Republican Party of Iowa, various media outlets, and various members of the public.

Submitted by the WCRCC Executive Committee on behalf of the Warren County Republican Party.

Chair: Steve Kirby
Co-Chair: Mike Vanderpool
Treasurer: Rita Fromm
Secretary: Patty Alexander
gopofwarrencounty@gmail.com

1. A Pre-Marked Absentee Ballot

A Norwalk resident received his Absentee Ballot in the mail. The envelope containing the ballot was sealed. When he opened the envelope he found that his ballot had already been marked for Christina Bohannon. As shown in the photographs below, the ink used to mark that vote had bled through to the other side of the ballot. No other candidate's name had been marked. The Norwalk resident made a report about this to the Norwalk Police Department.

Precinct Official's Initials

OFFICIAL BALLOT
General Election
Warren County, Iowa
Tuesday, November 5, 2024
Norwalk 7
03200

INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS

Using blue or black ink, completely fill in the oval next to your choice like this: ●

Write-in: To vote for a valid write-in candidate, write the person's name on the line provided and darken the oval.

For United States Representative District 1

Vote for no more than One

● Christina Bohannon DEN

○ Mariannette Miller-Meeks REI

2

ary: Provides that the lieutenant
or will act as the governor if there
temporary disability of the governor.
provides that the lieutenant
or or lieutenant governor-elect
the governor or governor-elect in
e of the resignation, death, or
ent disability of the governor or
r-elect thus creating a vacancy

2. Disenfranchising Some Indianola Voters

On November 5th at about 8:25 AM Steve Kirby was advised by one of our Central Committee members that he had just voted at the Indianola 1 voting location and the voting machine was having trouble reading ballots. He said that some ballots were going through and some were not. He noticed one of his neighbors putting her ballot into the voting machine a number of times, and each time the ballot was rejected. He saw her place her ballot in the storage bin on the back side of the voting machine, and she left the location. He said that his ballot went through the machine with no problem. He said he had been told that the Auditor's office had been contacted about this. He later confirmed that the only person helping his neighbor was the precinct election official standing by the voting machine.

At about 8:42 AM Steve was told that a poll watcher had reported that the problem at the Indianola 1 voting location was that some folks were getting Norwalk ballots; those Norwalk ballots were being rejected by the voting machine. Those rejected ballots were being placed in the storage bin on the back of the voting machine. The poll watcher later estimated that about a dozen ballots were subsequently removed from the storage bin of the voting machine. Steve called the general number for the Auditor's office to discuss this matter, but no one answered the telephone.

At about 11:35 AM Steve received a call from the Central Committee member's neighbor, who was mentioned above. She said that when she put her ballot in the voting machine it was rejected. She tried again and it was rejected again. She was told by a male precinct election official to put her ballot in a box on the back side of the voting machine. She did so and left the location. She said she remembered that State House Representative Brooke Boden's name wasn't on the ballot. A Norwalk ballot would not have Boden's name on it; an Indianola 1 ballot would have Boden's name on it.

Steve made repeated calls throughout the day to talk with Auditor Sheets about Norwalk ballots being used at an Indianola voting location, but she never returned his calls.

On November 6th Steve emailed a Freedom of Information Act request to Auditor Sheets asking about the problems at Indianola 1. On November 8th Sheets responded. She explained that some Norwalk Precinct 7 ballots had been included in the equipment box for Indianola Precinct 1. The matter was eventually discovered and the unmarked Norwalk ballots were removed from the Indianola location. The Norwalk ballots that had already been marked by Indianola 1 voters were removed from the storage bin on the voting machine. In response to the question asking if there was any way of identifying and contacting the Indianola voters who had voted with those Norwalk ballots, Sheets wrote:

Voters were asked by the Precinct Chair to wait and 7 voters waited, spoiled their ballots and voted the correct ballots. Ten voters, according the [sic] Ballot Record and Receipt & Seal Verification Log, did not wait to vote the correct ballots. Once those voters chose to leave, there was no way to identify who they were and contact them.

This response from Sheets seemed to imply that ten voters were advised by the Precinct Chair that each of those ten had used an incorrect ballot and had been asked by the Chair to wait in order to vote with the correct ballot. But instead of waiting, those ten left. However, based on the observation of our Central Committee member of the problems his neighbor was having trying to vote and the statement from that neighbor, this is not an accurate claim. We know for a fact that at least one of those ten voters was allowed to leave the location without being contacted by the Precinct Chair and advised that she had used an incorrect ballot.

In response to the question about who had retrieved the marked Norwalk ballots from the storage bin, Sheets wrote:

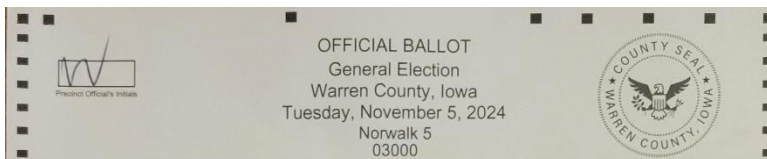
A bipartisan team retrieved the ballots from the storage bin and at the direction of the Secretary of State's Office, the team remarked the choices on the correct ballot using the remaking [sic] procedures that the ASVP Board uses, skipping the races that they obviously couldn't have marked because they didn't appear on the ballot they were given.

On the Norwalk 7 ballot the candidates for State House and County Supervisor were not the same as on the Indianola 1 ballot. So ten Indianola 1 voters were not able to vote for the candidates who were to represent them in the State House and in the Warren County Government.

3a. Incorrect Absentee Ballots

A husband and wife living in the county area received their absentee ballots in the mail. They marked their votes and mailed the ballots back to the Auditor's office. After mailing the ballots they started discussing the candidates and realized that a candidate for county supervisor that they wanted to support was not on the ballots they had marked. They went into the Auditor's office and spoke with Auditor Sheets. She confirmed they had received the wrong ballots. Sheets told them that when her office received their Absentee ballots, those ballots would be spoiled and the correct Absentee ballots would be mailed to them. They later received the correct Absentee ballots in the mail and voted with them.

A husband and wife living in the Indianola 4 Precinct received their absentee ballots in the mail. The wife received a ballot for Indianola 4, but the husband's ballot was for the Norwalk 5 Precinct (see photograph below). The husband subsequently went to the Auditor's office and exchanged the Norwalk ballot for the correct Indianola 4 ballot.



According to an October 21, 2024, press release by the Auditor's Office, two voters had received incorrect Absentee ballots. Auditor Sheets confirmed that one of those voters was the Indianola 4 resident mentioned above. She was unable to provide any information about the other voter other than saying that voter's ballot was "voided in the system" and a new ballot was sent to that voter.

Unfortunately, there will be no way of knowing how many other Warren County voters possibly received the incorrect Absentee Ballot and voted with them anyway.

3b. Incorrect Ballot Issued at Satellite Voting Location

On October 23rd there was a Satellite Voting location on the Simpson College Campus. During that day the daughter of Spencer Waugh, the Democrat State House candidate on the ballot, went in to vote. She was given a ballot, but she noticed that her father's name was not on the ballot, when it should have been. She pointed this out to a precinct election official who replied by assuring her that she had the correct ballot. The daughter went ahead and voted and placed her sealed ballot envelope in the metal ballot box. She then contacted her father, who contacted Auditor Sheets.

Sheets came to the location and determined that a precinct election official had transposed the ballot numbers, resulting in Waugh's daughter receiving an incorrect ballot. In front of witnesses, Sheets retrieved the daughter's incorrect ballot from the metal ballot box and the daughter was issued the correct ballot.

4. Wording on the "Availability Letter for Absentee Team"

The Auditor's Office mailed out letters asking if individuals would be interested in working on the Absentee Team on November 4th and 5th. According to this letter (see photograph below), the Absentee Team consisted of:

Absentee Team consists of:

- Taking an oath
- Teams of two – Democrat & Republican or Libertarian
- Opening all the affidavit envelopes
- Taking the ballot out of the secrecy
- Unfolding the ballot
- Making sure ballot is marked correctly
- Sort ballots from write ins to no write ins
- Put ballots in to be counted – All ballots must be counted by 10pm on election day

So according to this letter, the Absentee Team would consist of “Teams of two.” Each of these teams would be made up of either a Democrat and a Republican, or a Democrat and a Libertarian.

The Iowa Secretary of State’s Office had shown that as of October 1, 2024, the active party registration totals in Warren County were:³

Active Republicans: 13,260

Active Democrats: 8,514

Active Libertarians: 204

We contacted the Auditor’s office with this information and asked why each of the teams of two was guaranteed to have a Democrat, while a Republican, representing the largest political party in Warren County, could be replaced with a Libertarian, representing the smallest political party in Warren County? We were assured that it was not meant to say that a Democrat would always be a member of a team of two, and the wording would be changed in the future.

It is interesting to note that the official 2024 General Election Absentee Team consisted of two Independents, six Republicans, and thirteen Democrats.

³

<https://sos.iowa.gov/elections/pdf/VRStatsArchive/2024/CoOct24.pdf>