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OP-ED

Here's why our election results take time

By Sharon Krawiecki and Kevin McCauley

In Bristol, unofficial results for the Nov. 6 election were entered into the secretary of the state's Election Management System and posted on our website on election night, letting candidates and the public all know who won and who lost in all races and whether the eight questions on the ballot passed or not.

Yet some news outlets have questioned why it takes so long to get a "final count."

This is why:

Final results are not just one total number for each candidate. We must record each individual's vote total cast on each individual line from the computer tally tape. It takes time to correctly count each and every vote for all candidates and their cross endorsement lines on the ballot. Then we must total their corresponding hand counts (these are votes on ballots not read by the tabulator that must be looked at individually).

In Bristol, this means gathering results from nine precincts plus Election Day registration and absentee ballot counts, which brings the total to 11.

We recorded the votes for the gubernatorial ticket of Ned Lamont and Susan Bysiewicz on the Democratic line, Lamont and Bysiewicz on the Working Families Party line, Lamont and Bysiewicz unknown votes (these are the votes when a voter fills in both bubbles for a cross-endorsed candidate, which counts as one vote, unattributed to a political party). That's a total of 33 tallies from the 11 counts. Then we repeated those same three tallies for the Republican candidates Bob Stefanowski and Joe Markley. Then we added votes for Rodney Hanscomb and Jeffery Thibeault of the Libertarian Party, Mark Stewart Greenstein and John Demitrus from the Amigo Constitution Party, Oz Griebel and Monte Frank from the Griebel Frank for CT Party and, finally, the certified write-in candidates Lee Whitnum and Jacey Wyatt. Each of those tallies then had a hand count that must be entered. That's hundreds of tally totals for the gubernatorial race from the nine precincts plus absentee and Election Day registrations.

Hundreds more tallies were added for voting on the U.S. Senate, U.S. House, state Senate and House races, secretary of the state, treasurer, comptroller, attorney general, judge of probate and registrars of voters. We also had eight ballot questions.

We began entering the absentee and Election Day registration results into the secretary of the state's Election Management System as soon as they became available at the close of polls. Then, as the moderators brought their results from each of the polling locations we entered those tallies. We recorded all our tallies as unofficial results on the secretary of the state's system by midnight. At the same time we entered the results into a more user friendly excel spreadsheet that we created for Bristol voters and posted that on our website.

Early Wednesday morning we began the count again. Each tally tape and tally sheet is re-examined to be sure each number is correct and each and every hash mark and hand count is recorded. Those hash

marks and hand counts are votes on ballots that have not been properly filled out by a voter, but must be counted and recorded the same as a ballot read by the tabulator.

We posted revised numbers for our final count into the secretary of the state's system and uploaded those numbers into our spreadsheet and posted it on our website by 4:30 p.m., which was 19 hours after the polls closed. Tally tapes, tally sheets and the official voter lists were then turned over to the town clerk for certification.

It is the duty of the Bristol registrars of voters office to ensure federal, state and local elections are conducted timely, responsibly and with the highest level of professional election standards. This is intended to earn and maintain public confidence in the electoral process, which extends to the accurate counting of each and every vote.

Sharon Krawiecki is Bristol's Republican registrar of voters and vice chair of the Hartford County Registrar of Voters Association of Connecticut. Kevin McCauley is Bristol's Democratic registrar of voters and secretary the state registrars association.