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Secretary of State Holds Successful Summer Study Meeting

(Pierre, S.D.) – The South Dakota Secretary of State office held their initial Summer Study meeting on Wednesday, June 21, 2023. The group discussed South Dakota election processes and established clear expectations for post-election audits, with a focus on discerning feasible applications to the elections process to enhance public transparency and accountability.

Twenty individuals participated in the study. Jennifer Morrell from The Elections Group led the discussion as the facilitator. She emphasized the importance of establishing trust in elections, equipment, and staff, while ensuring the results of the group align with SB-160, which takes effect July 1.

The main objectives of election audits were laid out and attendees were introduced to four types of post-election audits: fixed-percentage audits, risk-limiting audits, transitive audits, and hand-count audits. Most members favored the transitive audit, while the second popular option was fixed-percentage audits. Members divided into groups to discuss the design of transitive and fixed audits. An in-depth discussion followed. Points that were repeatedly touched on were staffing, cost, and consistent practices.

“I support our county auditors in running our elections with integrity. We are looking for the best post-election audit that fits our diverse state population in South Dakota,” emphasized Secretary Johnson. “A transparent and robust election audit process is crucial for maintaining public trust in our electoral system. Through this summer study, we will bring solutions that enhance confidence in our elections.”

The group did not take any action and will work on drafting ideas at the next meeting on Thursday, July 20, with a goal of keeping South Dakota issues in mind and bring trust back to our elections. Any legislation brought by the group will go through the South Dakota Board of Elections and the South Dakota State Legislature, which are public meetings.