



**STATE OF MINNESOTA**  
Office of Minnesota Secretary of State  
Steve Simon

January 31, 2022

Crow Wing County Board of County Commissioners  
County Administrator's Office  
Historic Courthouse  
326 Laurel Street, Suite 13  
Brainerd, MN 56401

Honorable Commissioners:

This is a response to the Crow Wing County Board resolution dated January 4, 2022 (received on January 25, 2022) requesting that the Office of Secretary of State "undertake a full forensic audit of all election material and data" related to the 2020 election in Crow Wing County.

We appreciate the delicate balancing act that you've attempted as you seek to address the concerns of some of your constituents. On the one hand, you've acknowledged that you continue "to have faith in the 2020 election results as valid and reliable." (Crow Wing County Attorney Don Ryan has said much the same thing.) On the other hand, you've recognized that some of your constituents hold sincerely held beliefs to the contrary.

Part of Minnesota's consistent election integrity stems from our outstanding local election administrators, including in Crow Wing County. Our local administrators do much of the hard work of running a successful election. To name only a few examples of their work, they purchase and test election equipment, they order ballots, they hire and train election judges, they run the absentee balloting process, they handle ballot security, and they count the votes. They do so in an ethical, principled, competent, and non-political way. Consistent with Minnesota law, Crow Wing County administrators already engaged in a thorough post-election audit and a post-election review after the 2020 general election – with results showing no irregularities and no cause to suspect misconduct. Our office has reviewed their work, and has found it to be professional, legal, and precise.

There is no legitimate reason to second-guess the integrity of the 2020 election in Crow Wing County. The county has already done its duty with great skill, and the system worked as it was designed – and as the public has every right to expect. Our office will not engage in a vague and impossibly broad search for unspecified misconduct (i.e. “a full forensic audit of all election material and data”) based on anyone’s gut feeling, hunch, or belief – no matter how sincerely held. For those who claim to have actual evidence of potential wrongdoing, the proper place to share that evidence is a law enforcement agency.

The 2020 general election, which took place almost fifteen months ago, was fundamentally fair, accurate, honest, and secure across Minnesota. Nearly eighty percent of Minnesotans showed their confidence in our system by showing up to vote – making our state #1 in America in voter participation (for the third time in a row). We should all be proud of that. Other states envy our record.

The administrative success of the 2020 election suggests that there’s cause for continued optimism about democracy in Minnesota and in America. But in the short-term, we have serious challenges. The most dangerous challenge is the spread of disinformation about our election system. Too many people have been misled by the deceptions of those with a political or financial motive to corrode confidence in our democracy. Meanwhile, foreign adversaries not only cheer our disunity – but actively encourage it by helping to spread lies about our election system through multiple channels. It’s all so poisonous, and it needs to stop. I believe it will stop – if enough of us stand up to it.

I know you are doing your best to try to serve the public. Thanks for your service to Crow Wing County and to Minnesota. As always, I hope you’ll feel free to let me know how our office can be a resource for you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Simon". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Steve" and "Simon" being capitalized and prominent.

Steve Simon  
Minnesota Secretary of State