

POLITICS

AG Dana Nessel joins call for audit of Democratic convention results



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Lansing — Three Michigan Democrats, including Attorney General Dana Nessel, are calling for an audit of their party's April 19 convention results, citing problems with the way votes were submitted and counted at the gathering of thousands of party members.

Over the weekend, state Sen. Sylvia Santana appealed her narrow loss in a race for a seat on the Michigan State University Board of Trustees and said the state Democratic Party's leadership didn't enforce a rule requiring people to be in person at the meeting to vote.

The 53-page filing from Santana's campaign contended there were "material errors" in the convention's vote-counting process and requested an audit of all the results by an outside firm. According to unofficial numbers, [previously obtained by The Detroit News](#), Santana finished in third place by about 15 votes for the second of two nominations for the MSU board.

The submission from Santana, a Detroit Democrat, put a brighter light on concerns from some in the party about how the electronic voting system, involving attendees' personal cellphones, functioned at the convention. Santana's campaign said it reviewed location data for devices used in voting and found more than 200 votes were cast remotely, from outside Detroit's Huntington Place convention center.

"Petitioners learned that members were voting from as far away as Montenegro and Antrim County during the convention," Santana said in her filing.

More: [Michigan Democrat says she broke rules, voted in convention from home](#)

Last week, Cathy Albro, a Democratic former U.S. House candidate from Antrim County, [told The Detroit News she was able to cast her vote](#) in the Detroit convention through the electronic voting system from her home in northern Michigan.

Michigan Democratic Party convention rules required members to be present at the convention at the time they voted in order to participate. If those 200 votes weren't counted, Santana would win by 50 votes, her campaign argued.

The unofficial results, reviewed by The News, showed [incumbent MSU Trustee Kelly Tebay](#) coming in second place, 15 votes ahead of Santana. According to the unofficial numbers, incumbent Trustee Brianna Scott of Muskegon finished in first place with about 38% of the vote. Tebay and Santana each got about 31%.

Santana's filing goes to the Michigan Democratic Party's Appeals Committee. She requested an audited recount in all the convention races to "ensure voter confidence in the election results."

That would include, if honored, the races for the party's nominations for attorney general and secretary of state. Under the current results, Washtenaw County Prosecutor Eli Savit won the attorney general nomination with about 59% of the vote, while Oakland County Prosecutor Karen McDonald received about 41%.

In the race for [secretary of state](#), Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II got about 58% of the vote, while Ingham County Clerk Barb Byrum received about 22% and Shkreli, a former state lottery commissioner, got about 20%, according to the unofficial numbers.

In a statement Monday, McDonald endorsed Santana's call for an audit. It's critical that every voter and every campaign have confidence in the vote, McDonald said.

"After reviewing the results of the MDP Endorsement Convention, it became clear that votes were incorrectly recorded, people voted who were not onsite, and some votes were not recorded at all," McDonald said.

More: [Leaked records show Democrats lined up behind UM board challenger](#)

Attorney General Dana Nessel raises convention vote integrity questions

Nessel, Michigan's top law enforcement official and an influential Democrat in the state, endorsed the call for an independent audit on Monday afternoon.

Nessel said the electronic voting system didn't correctly attribute her votes. Nessel's vote for attorney general was initially attributed to Savit, according to unofficial records reviewed by The News. However, Nessel actually abstained from voting in the race, according to a spokeswoman.

"There's a substantial and documented difference between voting on a third-party mobile phone application at a partisan convention and the long-established, decentralized process utilized by over 1,600 bipartisan clerks each election," Nessel said Monday.

Other candidates have until the end of the day on Monday to submit their own appeals.

Derrick Honeyman, spokesman for the Michigan Democratic Party, declined to comment on Santana's filing until the deadline passed.

Santana's submission said the party hadn't "fulfilled its responsibility of running a procedurally fair and transparent convention that complies with its own rules and regulations, thereby making it difficult — if not impossible — to honor the results of the convention."

Santana's appeal also said 302 people who cast votes were not on the party's master voting list and 208 voters shared a phone number with at least one other voter, including six members attached to a single phone number

"This means that one person had the ability to cast multiple votes," Santana's appeal said.

Santana's team also cited 16 instances of people's votes being recorded incorrectly and included an affidavit from longtime party member Rochella Stewart of Detroit, who said she received six different access codes for voting at the convention.

Stewart signed her affidavit under the penalty of perjury. It also said she was concerned about whether her vote "was actually counted."

The list of about 6,600 convention voters previously obtained by The News didn't include Stewart's name. It wasn't clear why.

Lawyer Melvin Butch Hollowell, former corporation counsel of the City of Detroit, filed the appeal on Santana's behalf.

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