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## A statement from the Pierce County Auditor

### Regarding the release of partial social security numbers of Pierce County voters to a single individual:

First let me say that I am incredibly sorry that this happened. People are understandably upset, I am too. Members of my family were among the 463,110 voters who received notices this week.

I'd like to address some of the concerns our office has heard since we sent our notice:

- On Dec. 20, 2022, a Pierce County voter—an individual just like you or me—made a routine public records request for voter contact information. We get these kinds of requests all the time.
- We made a mistake and sent them the wrong file.
- This was not a data breach. The Auditor's Office was not hacked. You as individuals were not targeted.
- This was a regrettable human error by one of our staff members who accidentally released a file containing the last two, three or four digits (it varied) of some registered voters' social security numbers.
- Though voter registration data is tightly controlled, state and federal laws require us to release some information such as name and address.
- The staff member realized their mistake immediately and then the Auditor's Office immediately reached out to the requestor to ask that they delete the information as thoroughly as possible from their email and their computer.
- The requester, who did not ask for social security information and indicated they did not want to be in possession of it, cooperated and complied immediately.
- This kind of mistake has never happened before, and the Auditor's Office staff immediately took steps to ensure it would never happen again. We have put in place a number of protocols including a change to our systems that will hide personally identifiable information such as partial social security numbers. We're also now requiring that a second staff member double check every public records request to ensure no personally identifiable information is inadvertently included.

- There was a delay between the release of the information to that single Pierce County resident and the Auditor's Office notice to voters because we wanted to make sure we fully understood the size and scope of the situation. Because of this, it took time to find a vendor who could handle such a large mailing due to short staffing over the holidays.

The Pierce County Auditor's Office fills hundreds of public records requests every year and it is important that we get it right every time. We made a mistake and for that we are incredibly sorry. We have taken steps to ensure it does not happen again.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Linda Farmer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Linda Farmer, APR  
Pierce County Auditor