

Elections 101

Election Administrator Certification



WASHINGTON
Secretary of State
Elections Division

Revised 9/5/2024

Purpose

The Elections 101 (E101) manual is a support tool and reference guide for the E101 course. Reviewing the manual, or any training videos is not considered equiviant to a complete training.

E101 orients new administrators and personnel to:

- 1) Their role and duty to common elections values and rule of law
- 2) The breadth of election law
- 3) The expectation and skills required to identify applicable laws and execute policies compliant with them.

E101 **does not**:

- Does not contain answers to all elections questions or topics.
- Does not replace law, rule or court rulings.

How should the manual be used?

Generally, as a reference guide: a starting point for investigating and identifying correct election practices. It is **not** the law but should point/orient you in the proper direction for further research or basic answers.

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Chapter 1, Section 1

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Chapter 1, Section 2

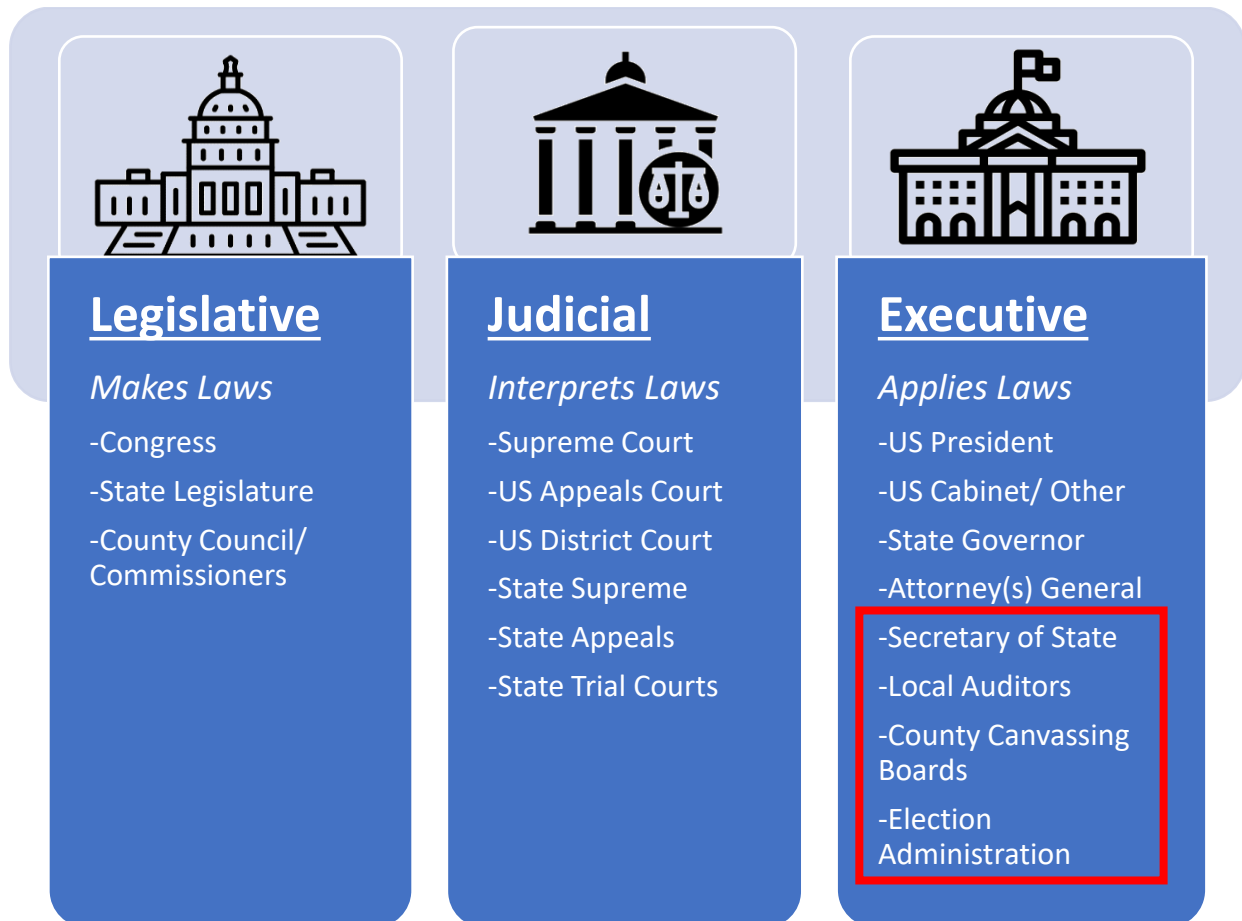
The Role of Elections

The foundation of American democracy starts with the vote. This begins with you! Legislative, judicial and executive branches of government all spring both directly and indirectly from the people through the vote.

It is our solemn duty to apply election law without personal or partisan bias, ensuring equal opportunity and treatment under the Constitution of the United States, state law, federal and local court decisions.

We conduct our duties within the executive branch of government. We carry out laws adopted by the state and federal legislative branches of government and interpreted by the judicial branch (courts).

Our duty is to the law, never one person(s).



How do the three branches of government apply to me?

Understanding, navigating and applying a three-branch system is critical to applying the law and the will of the voter, ultimately. It is also critical to avoiding lawsuits and informing the public of your action with transparency. Review the outline of the three branches above and the “Elections Law” section later in this chapter, when engaging this scenario.

Example Scenario: A voter appears at your county to protest, asking,

“Why did you take out the 30-day residency requirement for voter registrations?? [RCW 29a.08.020](#) states that the oath state a resident live in Washington ‘at least 30 days immediately before the next election’. You are violating the law!!”

Questions: What will you say? Is the voter right? Did you ask the proper questions when you printed/provided your voter registration forms?

Finding the Answer: Ask yourself some simple questions to get answers.

- Is the law quoted accurate?
- If accurate is this law in effect?
- Has the law been changed pending new legislation? (legislative branch)
- Has the law been the subject of court action/interpretation? (judicial)
- At what level or jurisdiction (county, state, federal) has any action been taken on it?

Answer:

Election staff /auditor- “Let’s see the RCW you are referring to. I think this may have conflicted with other US constitutional laws and/or had a court ruling. Have you checked those other branches for references? (no). Okay—Let me get the details for you.

Ah yes, it looks like this law was found to conflict with the federal Voting Rights Act of 1970, and the 1st and 14th amendments of the US Constitution by the US District Court.”

Concerned voter- “This should only apply to federal elections then, right?! Right!!”

Staff/auditor- “Not necessarily and not according to the US District Court interpretation.”

Concerned voter- “You should know better! This is wrong. You are wrong”

Staff/Auditor- “The voter’s system of government includes the authority of the court to interpret. This process is the law. I am not above it. And this is the court interpretation. Further court decisions or legislation may change, but this is my duty to the voter right now.”

The Roles of Election Personnel

Assistants and Deputies

Whether full time or part time, each county auditor appoints assistants or deputies ([RCW 36.22.220](#)).

- **Staff checking ballot signatures or manning deposit sites must take an oath** regarding the discharge of their duties)(WAC 434-250-100, 434-261-051)
- **At least two deputies or assistants must receive Training** (general and specific) within 18 months of undertaking responsibilities ([RCW 29A.04.540](#))
 - General training can include Elections 101 or comparable county training.
 - Specific training are those detailed duties and procedures at the county level.

Our Oath

Oaths may vary by county. Specific wording is not prescribed. An oath template and suggested wording can be found at the back of this manual. Further templates may be found through the [National Association of Elections Officials](#).

County Auditors must take an oath of office when elected before an authorized officer and affirm to faithfully and impartially discharge their duties ([RCW 36.16.040](#)).

Training

Each county must have at least two staff trained in the administration or conduct of elections within 18 months of assuming their responsibilities.

- General training can include Elections 101 or comparable county training.
- Specific training are those detailed duties and procedures at the county level.

Though not a requirement of the 18 month training requirement for every staff member, auditors' offices are required to have no less than two Certified Elections Administrators. (see 'Elections Administrator Certification')

Election Administrator Certification

RCW 29A.04, RCW 36.22, WAC 434-260

State law requires at least two certified election administrators on staff in each county.

Initial Certification Requirements:

- Complete the OSOS mandatory certification course (Elections 101) within five years prior to the date of application. *Note: E-101 does **not** qualify toward training hours for initial certification*
- Two years of service as an election administrator in a state or county elections office during the three years prior to the date of application.
- Take and pass the written elections administrator exam.
- Participate in at least 40 hours of conferences and workshops during the five years prior to the date of application.
 - At least 30 of the required 40 hours must be election-specific training.
 - At least 20 hours must specifically address Washington state elections.
 - Training must include attending the Washington State Elections Conference.
 - Up to four hours may be for observing election procedures in other county election departments.
 - Up to two hours may be for participating in elections panels or committees.
 - Up to 10 hours may be for professional development courses, subject to approval by the county auditor or elections director.
- Have a high school diploma or equivalent.

Certification Renewal

Administrators must submit for renewal every two years. Applicants for renewal certification must meet the following requirements during the renewal period (January 1 of an even-numbered year to December 31 of the following odd-numbered year):

- Continuous service as an election administrator in a state or county elections office.
- Participate in at least 40 hours of conferences and workshops.
 - At least 30 of the required 40 hours must be election-specific training.
 - At least 20 hours must specifically address Washington state elections.
 - Training must include attending the Washington State Elections Conference.
 - Up to four hours may be for observing election procedures in other county election departments.
 - Up to two hours may be for participating in elections panels or committees.
 - Up to 10 hours may be for professional development courses, subject to approval by the county auditor or elections director.

Applications for renewal must be submitted by December 31 of odd-numbered years.

Training Opportunities & Resources: <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/administrators>

Election Laws

State Constitution

The State Constitution consists of 32 Articles. Each Article is denoted by a Roman numeral.

Example: Article VI

Articles are divided into Sections. When referring to a specific section, you will see either:

- Article VI, Section 4, or
- Art. VI, Sec. 4, or
- Art. VI, § 4

Articles I, II, III, IV, VI, VII, XI, XIV, XXII, and XXIII all contain provisions related to elections.

State Statutes

The official name is the Revised Code of Washington, commonly known as “RCWs.”

- Numbered Titles divide state statutes by subject.
 - Example: RCW **29A**
- Titles are divided into chapters and the chapter numbers appear after the title number, separated by a period.
 - Example: RCW 29A.**24**
- Chapters are divided by sections and the section number is listed after the chapter number, separated by a period.
 - Example: RCW Title 29A, Chapter 24, Section 031 would read as RCW **29A.24.031**.

You will find most election laws in [Title 29A](#), however many other chapters associated with specific offices and issues outside of Title 29A also contain election-related laws. For a list of these chapters and sections see the chart found on page # of this manual.

State Rules

The official name is Washington Admistrative Code, commonly known as “WACs.” WACs are organized in a manner similar to RCWs.

- Numbered titles divide state rules by subject.
 - Example: WAC **434**
- Titles are divided by chapters and the chapter numbers appear after the title number, separated by a dash.
 - Example: WAC 434-**250**
- Chapters are divided by sections and the section number is listed after the chapter number, separated by a dash.
 - Example: Washington Administrative Code Title 434, Chapter 250, Section 030 would read as WAC **434-250-030**.

Rules for the Secretary of State are located in Title [434](#). Election rules are found in WAC chapters 434-208 through 434-381.

Federal Election Laws

Federal election laws affect the administration of elections, including:

- MOVE Act—Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act of 2009
- HAVA – Help America Vote Act of 2002
- NVRA – National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (Motor Voter)
- UOCAVA – Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986
- Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984
- Voting Rights Act of 1965

Litigation and Attorney General’s Opinions

- An opinion is requested when the interpretation of an existing law is in question. While not as binding as law, Attorney General Opinions affect election administration.
- Supreme Court and Court of Appeals decisions override current law.
- State and federal court cases affect the administration of election law for the jurisdiction in question. Such decisions, while may or may not be binding for the entire state, influence interpretation of state law.

Search Tools

- The RCWs and WACs may be found on the Secretary of State’s website at https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/election_laws.aspx.
- The state also provides a search option for RCWs, WACs, and the State Constitution at search.leg.wa.gov/search.aspx#document.
- A list of election related RCWs outside of Title 29A at <https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/administrators/2022-december-rcw-chapters-elections-outside-29a.pdf>. (See also the following table)

Election-Related RCW Chapters

Election-Related Topics	
Vacancies in Office	42.12
Eligibility to Hold Office	42.04
Motor Voter	46.20
Mental Competency	11.130
Public Disclosure Commission	42.17A
Redistricting	44.05
Legislative Districts	44.07F
General Government	
Public Records	42.56
Records Retention	40.14 & 36.22

Open Public Meetings Act	42.30
Legal Notices & Publications	65.16
Debt Limits for Taxing Districts	39.36
General Obligation Bonds	39.40 & 39.46
Excess Property Tax Levies	84.52
Property Tax Limitations	84.55
Property Tax Exemptions	84.36
Taxing District Boundaries	84.09
Judicial Offices	
Supreme Court	2.04
Court of Appeals	2.06
Superior Court	2.08
District Court	3.34 & 3.38
Municipal Court	3.46 & 3.50
Municipal Court > 400,000	35.20
State Offices	
Governor	43.06
Lieutenant Governor	43.15
Secretary of State	43.07
State Treasurer	43.08
State Auditor	43.09
Attorney General	43.10
Commissioner of Public Lands	43.12
Superintendent of Public Instruction	28A.300
Local Government	
Counties	36.16, 36.22, 36.32 & 36.89
Cities and Towns	35.02, 35.17, 35.18, 35.22, 35.23, & 35.27
Code Cities: Charter and Noncharter	35A.01-35A.13 & 35A.29
Incorporations	35.02
Disincorporations	35.07
Annexations and Reductions	35.10, 35.13, 35.16, & 35A.14-35A.16
Special Purpose/Junior Taxing Districts	
Dissolution of Special Purpose Districts	36.96
School Districts	28A.315, 28A.320, 28A.323, & 28A.343
Fire Districts	52.02-52.10, 52.14, 52.16, & 52.26
Port Districts	53.04, 53.12, 53.16, 53.36, 53.46, 53.47, & 53.48

Hospital Districts	70.44
Library Districts	27.12
Regional Transit Authorities	81.112
Transportation Benefit Districts	36.73
Regional Transportation Benefit Districts	36.120 & 82.80
Roads and Bridges	36.76, 36.83, & 36.88
Park and Recreation Districts	35.61
Public Utility Districts	54.04-54.12, 54.32, & 54.40
Water and Sewer Districts	35.13A, 57.02, 57.04, 57.12, 57.20, & 57.24-57.36
Diking & Drainage Districts	85.05-85.38
Flood Control Districts	86.09 & 86.15
Irrigation Districts	87.03, 87.28, 87.52-87.56, & 87.84
Conservation Districts	89.08
Mosquito Control Districts	17.28
Weed Districts	17.04 & 17.06
Public Facilities Districts	36.100
Major Public Energy Projects	80.52
Cemetery Districts	68.52 & 68.54

Chapter 1, Section 3

Accessibility Awareness

RCW 29A.12, RCW 29A.40, WAC 434-250

HAVA (Help America Vote Act)

HAVA, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and state law require election officials provide voters with disabilities the same access to voting as other citizens. These laws give voters an equal opportunity to vote privately and independently.

How do you make voting by mail accessible?

Every county must provide:

- An Accessible Voting Unit (AVU) in at least one voting center. The unit must be wheelchair-accessible.
- Election materials in alternate format, e.g. audio, larger fonts, etc.
- Voting centers that meet all requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The AVU must be positioned in a way to protect voter privacy. The voting screen of the AVU should not be viewable by staff or voters in the center.

The “ADA Checklist for Event Accessibility” provided at the end of this section will assist you in determining the accessibility of any voting location.

Disability Advisory Committee

RCW 29A.04

All counties are required to establish and maintain a Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) or a County Accessible Community Advisory Committee (ACAC). The committee must include persons of ‘diverse’ disabilities and persons with expertise in providing accommodations for persons with disabilities. Counties may also choose to partner with each other and share a committee, known as a Joint Disability Advisory Committee, as long as no more than one of the participating counties has a population greater than seventy thousand.

What does the committee do?

The Committee must work with the County Auditor to create a plan and implement changes to improve the accessibility of elections for voters with disabilities with regard to:

The number and location of voting centers and ballot deposit sites and/or ballot drop boxes. (Example: locate drive-up ballot deposit boxes on the driver’s side of a car and pedestrian boxes at wheelchair height.)

- Outreach to voters regarding the availability of accessible voting accommodations.
- Transportation of AVUs to locations convenient to voters with disabilities.

- Implementation of the Help America Vote Act.
- Reviewing and updating the plan on a yearly basis.

Accessibility Awareness

The YouTube video, “Disability Sensitivity Training” produced by the District of Columbia (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gv1aDEFIXq8>) addresses communication with members of the disabled community.

The “Voting with a Disability in Oregon” video produced by Disability Rights Oregon (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOuGDrlcdos>) illustrates ways to help people vote privately and independently at home.

Disability Rights Washington’s YouTube voting series (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SHvXahfDnM&list=PLLSb3deWSkYyHjsWFdeMYGmJTHf-tou-z&index=1>) explains to viewers that voters in various communities retain voting rights and how to exercise those rights.

Voter Assistance

A voter has the right to request assistance from whomever the voter chooses. Staff members may assist voters upon request or offer assistance when it appears that a voter is having difficulty casting a vote.

 *Maintain voter privacy - always ask the voter if assistance is needed prior to approaching.*

Interacting with People with Disabilities

Be Respectful - A person with a disability is a person like anyone else. Treat people with the same respect and consideration.

Meeting Someone - Try to avoid actions and words that suggest the person should be treated differently. People who use wheelchairs may have a variety of different disabilities. When you meet someone, extend your hand to shake if that is what you normally do. A person who cannot shake hands will let you know. If you are meeting a blind person, identify yourself. Use a normal tone of voice. Do not raise your voice unless requested.

Helping - Do not automatically give assistance. Ask first if the person wants help. Offer assistance, quietly and tactfully, but do not overdo it or insist on helping. Respect the person's right to reject help or to indicate the kind of help needed.

- If the offer is accepted, listen to instructions. The person may refuse your offer of assistance or may not wish to discuss their disability.
- If you cannot assist in the way that is requested, discuss it with the person. You have a right to set limits on what you can and cannot do. Your relationship with a person with a disability should be, like any other relationship, a reciprocal one.

- Appreciate what the person can do. Remember that difficulties the person may be facing may stem more from society's attitudes and barriers than from the disability itself.

Communicating - Talk directly to the person, not to an aide, friend, or interpreter. When talking with a person in a wheelchair for more than a few minutes sit down and converse at the same level. Offer to make basic information available in large print, Braille, electronic or audio formats.

- Relax. If you do not know what to do or say, allow the person who has a disability to help put you at ease.
- Do not assume anything. If you have a question about what to do, how to do it, what language or terminology to use, what assistance to offer, ask the person with the disability. That person should be your first and best resource.
- Talk about the disability if it comes up naturally, without prying. Let the person guide you. Be considerate of the extra time a person with a disability may need to say or do things. Let the person set the pace in walking or talking.
- Give whole, unhurried attention to the person who has difficulty speaking. Don't talk for the person, but give help when needed. Keep your manner encouraging rather than correcting. When necessary, ask questions that require short answers or a nod or shake of the head.
- Don't pretend to understand a person with a speech difference when you do not. Don't be afraid to let the person know that you do not understand. Be patient, not only with the person with the disability but also with yourself.
- Speak calmly, slowly, and distinctly to a person with a hearing problem or other difficulty understanding.
- Stand in front of the person, speak directly to the person, and use natural gestures to aid communication.
- When full understanding is doubtful, try writing notes.

Touching - Do not pat or touch a person with a disability unless there is a good reason (such as shaking hands in greeting or if the person has requested assistance).

- Gently touching a deaf person to get their attention is permissible.
- Do not touch someone's cane, wheelchair or other device.

Environments - Provide wide & clear paths of travel for people who use wheelchairs or are blind.

- Be alert to architectural barriers. Inadequate lighting is difficult for those with hearing and sight problems.
- Be aware that some people may be sensitive to smoke, perfumes, or any other irritants that may be in the air.

Wheelchairs or mobility aides - Never push a wheelchair without first asking the occupant if you may do so. Do not move wheelchairs, crutches, or other mobility aids out of the reach of the owners.

Do not invade personal space by leaning on a wheelchair. Do not patronize a person in a wheelchair by patting them on the head.

Service Animals - A service animal is NOT required to have any special certification. Federal law protects the civil rights of persons with disabilities who are accompanied by their service animals in all public places.

- Do not make noises at the service animal; it may distract the animal from doing its job.
- Never touch a service animal, or the person it assists, without permission.
- Do not pet or otherwise distract dog guides - they are working.

ADA Checklist for Event Accessibility

Is this location/event accessible?

Answer the following questions. If any answer is negative, or needs qualification, select a new location or make accommodations.

A detailed checklist for polling places, voting centers and public access is available from the U.S. Department of Justice website at <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/votingck.htm>

PARKING

- The required number of parking spaces are designated as accessible with signs using the access logo. (See the checklist referenced above to determine requirements.)
- One out of every six accessible parking spaces is designed with an access aisle for van parking.
- The accessible parking is located as close as possible to the entrance.
- If accessible parking is not visible from the street, directional signs with the access logo are pointing the way.
- Voters can be dropped off at a curb cut providing adequate and direct access to the building.

PATHWAYS

- Paths are no less than 48 inches wide.
- The slope of the path is no more than one inch of rise for every 20 inches of run.
- There is at least 80 inches of clearance over the pathway at all points.
- All thresholds are no more than one-half inch for interior or three-quarters of an inch for exterior doors.

- Carpets are no thicker than one-half inch.
- If there are gratings in the walking surface, the grating is no more than one-half inch in width.
- Directional signs are visible along the accessible route and at the entrance.
- All doorways are at least 32 inches wide.
- If the location requires movement between floors, an elevator access is in close proximity to the entrance and the training room.
- All stairs are supplemented with ramps of no more than a 1-foot rise for every 20 feet of run.

BUILDING/TRAINING ROOM

- Doors to building and rooms are designed with lever handles, automatic openers and room to move to the side.
- Drinking fountains, telephones and other convenience facilities are designed for wheelchair users or those with mobility issues.
- The restrooms include wide stalls and grab bars, and are in close proximity to the meeting room.
- The room arrangement is such that all persons will be able to participate visually and physically.
- The room can accommodate additional space requirements by those with mobility issues.
- If computers are to be used, computer stations are designed to accommodate wheelchairs.

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Accommodations such as interpreters, handouts, and presentation copies are available in alternate formats.
- There is a statement regarding availability of accommodations in all publicity for the meeting.
- There is a statement that alternate formats are available upon request.
- Videos/films have closed captions.
- A contact person has been identified for accommodation issues.

Chapter 1, Section 4

Election Administration Toolkit

Tools

Every election administrator should assemble a 'toolkit' consisting of items to keep the office running smoothly. Take time to assemble your 'toolkit' to include:

- County Office Procedures (written)
- Contact Information
- Policy & Training Resources
- Election Tools & Resources
 - Elections Forms & templates
 - Helpful online resources
 - Accessibility Guidelines & Resources (section 2 of this chapter)
 - "ADA Checklist for Polling Places [Vote Centers]"
 - Your county Disability Advisory Committee Plan

Office Procedures

Written procedures ensure consistency in completing a task, provide a timeline for processes, and give direction to new employees or for infrequent activities. Procedures also document compliance with state laws and office policy. Written procedures may include:

- Title with initials of author and date of last review.
- Brief statement of the purpose for the procedure.
- List of controlling statutes, rules, or policies.
- List of forms used in the procedure.
- List of records created during the process.
- Step by step instructions necessary to complete the procedure.
- Times and deadlines (including retention schedules)
- Actions to take in special circumstances, e.g. lack of compliance or an emergency.
- Position responsible for the completion of each task or procedure.

Example of Written Procedure Form

Title Ballot Packing for Storage	Document No. and Revision TB – 002
Written and Last Updated by and Date: D.F. 4/21/2008	Effective Date: 6/30/2008
Approved by and Date: WM 6/30/2008	

Purpose

To maintain and track how and where tabulated ballots are packed for storage after tabulation.

References

RCW 29A.60.110	Ballot containers, sealing, opening
WAC 434-261-045	Secure Storage

Forms

	Batch slips
	Storage box table

Records

Ballot storage location.xls	Batch locations are recorded in each election's ballot location spreadsheet
Batch Accountability Sheet	Tabulation accountability paperwork completed by machine operator for each batch of ballots

Procedure

1.0 Pre-Election storage inventory

<u>Action By</u>	<u>Action</u>
Election Technician	1) Review supply check sheet and order any needed supplies at least 4 weeks before election

2.0 Pre-tabulation packing preparation (prior to Election Day tabulation)

- Test procedures with inexperienced staff.
- Adopt procedures only after testing.
- Review and update office procedures annually.

Contact Information

Gather your own quick reference guide or an updated set of Outlook contacts with the following:

County-Specific contacts:

- Equipment Vendors, ex: voting system/tabulation equipment, office printers
- Service Vendors, ex: ballot & ballot packet materials printer, Local Voters' Pamphlet print vendor
- County political parties

Statewide contacts:

- VoteWA Support, C&T Support, and all OSOS Staff (see the VoteWA 'Help' tab)
- US Post Office representatives (participate in daily election calls)

Your Elections Community & Government Entities

One of our best tools and resource for elections is usually a phone call or email away. Do not be shy to contact your government partners to ensure elections are conducted well:

- Any County Auditor's Office or Sec. of State official
- Local government sites, e.g. cities, ports, schools

Policy and Training Resources

Law, policy, and advisories are your **first** and ultimate authority and responsibility:

- RCWs & WACs
 - <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?Cite=29A>
 - <https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=434>
- OSOS Webpages / Clearinghouse & Advisories
 - <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/administrators/>
 - Elections Resources (You must first sign into VoteWA): <https://osos.service-now.com/county>
- Department of Justice: <http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/>
- NVRA and UOCAVA: <http://www.fvap.gov/info/laws>
- **Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP):** www.fvap.gov
- **Public Disclosure Commission:** www.pdc.wa.gov
- **US Postal Service:** www.usps.com. For election mail specifically: <https://www.usps.com/gov-services/election-mail.htm>
- **Budgeting, Accounting and Reporting System (BARS) for (GAAP)> manual search "elections"**
 - https://www.sao.wa.gov/bars_cash/accounting/expenditures/voter-registration-and-election-cost-allocation

Election Tools & Resources

Election tools are driven by policy, not the other way around. They help you execute the law.

VoteWA

VoteWA is our statewide voter registration and election management system.

- Live Production Link: <https://admin.votewa.gov/>
- QA or Practice Link: <https://qa-admin.votewa.gov/>
- VoteWA Manual and Videos: <https://osos.service-now.com/county>

VoteWA includes:

- Increased access to election results
- Online voter registration
- Individual voter information
- Online ballot access
- Standardized voter education notices
- Online voter guides
- Archived election information
- Candidate Filing Management

Voting Systems

Your county voting (tabulation) systems is the tool that allows you to build and count ballots and produce election results. You will need to ensure compliance with state law. Be sure to identify your:

- Voting System equipment manual
- Software, security “keys”, and/or programming files saved to external discs, drives, or other hardware
- Contact information for your vendor
 - Include name and information for the specific contact person for your county if applicable
 - Contact for maintenance requests

Forms and Templates

Voter Registration Challenges: www.sos.wa.gov/elections/voterregistrationchallenges.aspx

- Agency Based Registration Forms: <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/abvr/forms.aspx>
- Online Voter Registration: <https://olvr.votewa.gov/>
- Voter Registration Form: <http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/Print-Voter-Registration-Forms.aspx>

Helpful Online Resources:

Research tools:

- LexisNexis: www.lexis.com (Requires licensed login)
- WA Department of Licensing query (Secure Access Washington): <https://secureaccess.wa.gov/> (Requires licensed login)
- Obituary Search: <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/local>
- Free people search: www.zabasearch.com
- ZIP code locator: <https://tools.usps.com/go/zip-code-lookup.htm>

Chapter 1, Section 5

Election and Voter Registration Costs

Costs & Expenditures

Elections cost money. Participating minor taxing jurisdictions and the state pay their share of election costs. Some examples of recoverable expenditures are:

- Printing costs for ballots and envelopes.
- Postage for mailing outbound ballots and charges for undeliverable ballots.
- Staff time dedicated to the election.
- Annual maintenance for the tabulation system software and hardware.
- A portion of annual maintenance for VoteWA software and hardware.
- Examples of voter registration costs:
 - The voter registration system (VoteWA) maintenance.
 - Printing or postage for required NVRA notices.
 - Staff time dedicated to voter registration.
 - A portion of annual maintenance for election management hardware.
 - Cost of producing a local voters' pamphlet.

Do not include expenses covered by federal and state grants.

Bill voter registration expenses to the county and cities/towns based on voter registration totals. The county is responsible for its share based on the number of voters in unincorporated areas.

Tracking Expenses

There are several methods for tracking expenditures:

- Using budget line items attached to warrants.
- Retaining copies of all invoices.
- Maintaining an itemized spreadsheet during the election.

You may use any combination of these methods to document your expenses that is approved by the State Auditor. Track registration expenses separately from election costs.

Resources

Billing information and rules for cost recovery are available in the BARS Manual (*Budgeting, Accounting and Reporting System*) available on the [Washington State Auditor's Office website](https://www.sao.wa.gov/bars_cash/accounting/expenditures/voter-registration-and-election-cost-allocation/) at https://www.sao.wa.gov/bars_cash/accounting/expenditures/voter-registration-and-election-cost-allocation/

Chapter 1, Section 6

Public Information and Record Requests

RCW 42.56

Public Information

The Public Records Act (RCW 42.56) in conjunction with WAC 434-12A Public records and rules of procedure, helps to define and determine if a document is a public record. Most of the records created and maintained by election administrators are considered public records and are subject to the laws of this this section.

Public records may consist of a number of formats including, but not limited to: letters, memos, emails, chat/instant messages, text messages, voicemails, meeting transcripts, films, videos, photographs, audio recordings, symbols, discs, etc.

State and local retention schedules determine how long documents and records must be retained. Retention schedules are found on the Secretary of State's website under Archives.

Counties use two schedules:

- Common Records Retention Schedule (CORE) and Local Government General Records Retention Schedule (LGRRS) at <https://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/recordsretentionschedules.aspx>.
- Records management assistance, current schedules, and information may be found at http://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/RecordsManagement/records_local.aspx.

Keep documents without a prescribed retention period indefinitely.

Except when specific exemptions apply, if a record is considered public it must be made available for public inspection and copying upon request.

Requests for Public Information

There are many things to consider when receiving and processing a request for public records. It is best practice to have an assigned person in each office who is trained to respond to public records requests, but all staff members should know the general guidance:

- Any member of the public may request a document and the request can be made verbally or in writing.
- An agency must provide the fullest assistance to the requestor.
- Respond to records requests within five business days and during normal business hours.
- Fulfill the request in as short a period of time as possible.
- Do not require a reason for a public records request.
- The law restricts the use of public lists for commercial purposes, but not the release of information.

- Unless exempted, agencies must provide a record if it exists. This includes records held beyond the retention period.

Do not charge a fee for viewing or searching for documents. You can charge the actual cost for copying documents up to 15 cents per page or for scanning paper documents into electronic format provided you meet all conditions of [WAC 44-14-070](#).

What should you do when you receive a public information or record request?

Respond no later than five business days after the request by:

- Providing the record, or
- Notifying the requester with an estimate of when the document(s) will be provided, or
- Seeking clarification of the request, or
- Denying the request with an explanation why you cannot or will not comply.

Are there any exempt records?

The Public Records Act exempts records disclosure, such as:

- Personnel files that are closed.
- Ongoing investigations by law enforcement agencies.
- Preliminary drafts or notes expressing opinions or formulating policies.
- Create an exemption log that identifies denied records by date, author, title, and exemption statute and reason.
- Cybersecurity and physical security plans to prevent or mitigate threats to the office.
- Voter signatures, phone numbers, and email addresses on ballot return envelopes, declarations, and signature correction forms.
 - The requestor may inspect these records in person but may not take photographs or recordings.

A denial may lead to a lawsuit, so keep good records.

Retention of records is separate from records exemptions. An exempt record must still be kept for the required timeframe as directed by the retention schedules.

Resources

- RCW chapter 42.56 Public Records Act: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=42.56>
- RCW chapter 29A sections 08.710 – 775 Public Access to Registration Records: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=29A.08>
- WAC Chapter 434-12A Public Records and Rules of Procedure: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=434-12A>
- Washington State Archives: <https://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/>
 - Basics of Records Management - Advice and Resources: <https://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/RecordsManagement/BasicsofRecordsManagementAdviceandResources.aspx>

- Managing Public Records Requests:
<https://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/recordsmanagement/managing-public-records-requests.aspx>

Chapter 2, Section 1

Elections Security

Election security comprises both physical and cybersecurity components, with physical security serving as the base for robust cybersecurity measures. These combined efforts are aimed at safeguarding against unauthorized access to election sites and computerized systems.

Unfortunately, simply the appearance that system access was gained will cast doubt on an election's integrity. Keep this in mind when making decisions about security.

Physical Security

RCW 29A.40, 29A.60

While tempting, complex security methods, such as security cameras and electronic badge access, alone do not meet the requirements of Secure Storage.

Secure Storage employs physical security and the use of numbered seals and logs or other security measures, that:

Documents appropriate access and detects inappropriate access. -WAC 434-256-045

Physical Security refers to policies, procedures, and actions taken to protect voting systems, equipment, required documentation, ballots, and related facilities from natural hazards, tampering, vandalism, and theft from both internal and external sources.

To ensure the most effective security measures, it's essential to have multiple layers of safeguards in place. Evaluate the security of your office and storage areas by considering the following six questions:

- How does the elections department restrict public access to sensitive areas?
- Are digital data, tabulation systems, storage areas, processing areas, and ballots in custody adequately secured?
- Do you utilize tamper-evident seals and maintain detailed logs to document access?
- Who is responsible and how frequently are logs/documentation reviewed?
- Are staff members trained to identify signs of tampering with seals?
- Have trainings been conducted on your security policies and procedures?

By addressing these questions, you can better assess and enhance the security measures in your office and storage areas.

Layers of Security

Maintaining Secure Storage is the core requirement of your physical security, still other layers will often include:

- Access Control: Implementing access control measures such as gates, locks, and security personnel to restrict entry to authorized personnel only.
- Surveillance Systems: Installing security cameras, motion sensors, or other monitoring devices to detect and deter suspicious activity.
- Security Guards: Employing trained security personnel to patrol election sites and respond to security threats.
- Alarms and Alerts: Installing alarm systems or panic buttons to alert authorities in case of emergencies or security breaches.
- Visitor Management: Implementing procedures for easy identification of visitors, issuing visitor badges, and monitoring their activities while on site.
- Emergency Preparedness: Developing and implementing protocols for responding to emergencies such as natural disasters, protests, or security incidents.
- Training and Awareness: Providing training to election staff and volunteers on security procedures, emergency response protocols, and recognizing and reporting suspicious behavior.
- Collaboration with Law Enforcement: Establishing partnerships with local law enforcement agencies to coordinate security efforts, share intelligence, and respond to security threats effectively.

i *When implementing a new security measure, ask yourself: What happens when the battery dies, or the power goes out? Can your system maintain secure storage when the unexpected happens?*

Secure Storage Requirement

WAC 434-256-045

While greater physical security can be implemented in varying degrees based on available resources, Seals and logs are the simplest and most cost-effective way to assure proper storage of ballots and voting systems. There are three required elements for effective use.

1. Seals:
 - Must be uniquely numbered
 - Tamper evident
 - retained and logged when broken
2. Logs
 - Chronological dates of application and removal
 - Seal number
 - Identifying information of persons attaching or removing seal
 - Documentation as to why a seal was removed after tabulation
3. Policy and Procedures
 - Written procedures should stipulate how seals are to be installed, tested upon installation, and how to identify tampering before removal. Training should include identifying tampering on each type of seal that's used



November 5, 2019 General Election				
Seal Accountability Log				
Time	Date	Seal # Off	Seal # On	Signature

What materials must be secured?

Ballots

The term "ballots" is not restricted to printed ballots. Ballots may mean:

- Any voted ballot.
- Scanned ballot images.
- Emails, including deleted emails, containing voted ballots.
- Tally documents.
- Data, such as mobile ballot boxes (MBBs, Zip Drives, USB drives, V-drives).
- Programmed tabulators.

Voted ballots and ballot images must be in secure storage except during:

- Initial and final processing.
- Duplication.
- Inspection by the Canvassing Board.

Following tabulation, seal ballots in containers that identify the primary or election. Only open containers sealed after tabulation for the following reasons:

- Canvass of ballots prior to certification.
- Recounts conducted per Canvassing Board directive.
- Manual audit per RCW 29A.60.170 (3).
- Order of the superior court.
- Consolidation into one container for storage purposes.

Be sure to document access. This can be included on the seal log. When the Canvassing Board opens a ballot container, include a full record of the additional tabulation or examination of ballots in the Canvassing Board documents.

ⓘ Unsealing ballots during an election must open to public observation.

Voting Devices

Preparation of a voting device for a primary or election should include:

- Complete test logs which indicate precincts tested.
- Sealing the device with a uniquely numbered seal to verify the programming has not been altered.

Ballot Deposit Sites

During an election, keep ballot deposit boxes locked and sealed at all times. Document each time a box is sealed and/or a seal is broken. Two people, either employees or appointees of the County Auditor, must empty ballot deposit boxes together.

At exactly 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, all ballot boxes must either be:

- Emptied, or
- Secured with a numbered seal to prevent deposit of ballots after 8:00 p.m.

Transport ballots to the counting/processing center by either:

- At least two authorized people together, or
- One person with the ballots in containers secured by two authorized people with seals and logs.

Ballot Tabulation Programming

Secure storage is required of all tabulation equipment including:

- Scanners
- Printers
- AVUs
- Data and Databases

Your practices should include:

- Never allowing a vendor or employee uncontrolled access to equipment.
- Limiting access to authorized personnel only and documenting all access.
- Showcasing your procedures when the public observes logic and accuracy tests, ballot processing, recounts, and other election activities.
- Including these in your procedures: use of seals/logs, employee monitored entrances/exits, a sign-in/sign-out log, and visitor name tags, badges, colored lanyards, etc.

Physical Security Best Practices

Preparation of a voting device for any election should include:

- Complete test logs which indicate precincts tested.
- Sealing the device with a uniquely numbered seal, properly.

Physical Security Best Practices

Seals

Seals are only as good as their use protocol.

- Use written procedures that stipulate how seals are to be installed, tested upon installation, and how to identify tampering before removal.
- Training should include identifying tampering on each type of seal that's used.

Seal types

Select a type of seal that is compatible with the application.

- Sticker seals should generally be sold as no residue or low residue stickers. Left over residue can impede tamper evidence if not cleaned before the new seal is applied.
- A low strength plastic pull tight seal should be reserved for indoor controlled environments. Plastic seals are susceptible to heat, cold and prolonged outdoor exposure.
- Seals utilizing aluminum and steel construction is best when applied to outdoor ballot drop boxes. These seals are designed to resist exposure to the elements and add an increased barrier to entry. Tampering with these seals requires a much higher threshold of effort.
- It's preferable, but not necessary, that the vendor for seals will sell only to governmental agencies and not the public.

Locks

When possible, locks should:

- Meet or exceed current ISO (the International Organization for Standardization)
- When purchasing padlocks, CEN (Central European Norm) 4 rating or higher
- Employ proper key control. All keys should be tracked and kept to a minimum.

ⓘ Remember that, by design, locks do not detect or document access and do not alone meet the requirements of secure storage.

Chapter 2, Section 2

Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity is the practice of reducing the risk of cyber-attacks. Computers, mobile phones, servers, electronic systems, and networks are at risk for attack. Systems critical for election security include:

- IT infrastructure and systems used to manage elections.
- Voter registration databases (VoteWA) and associated IT systems.
- Voting systems (tabulation equipment).
- Storage facilities for election and voting systems.
- Vendor Security.

Cybersecurity is important for everyone because digital products play a central role in our daily lives.

Core Security Principles

One of the basic principles of providing a secure system is to manage risk and protect sensitive information. The goal is to keep data private, unchanged, and available. This concept is known as the Confidentiality, Integrity, and Availability (C.I.A.) Triad. Each attempted cyber-attack seeks to violate one or more of the triangle's attributes.



Confidentiality – Private information is kept private by preventing unauthorized access.

- Make sure that everyone and everything that accesses data verifies identity in some way. Methods include a password or PIN, smart card, or fingerprint.
- Permissions allow access to data only to authorized users and no one else.
- Encryption scrambles and conceals the data in a format where the only way you can see the data is if you have a key.

Integrity – Protecting data from unauthorized changes.

- Use specialized software that monitors for suspicious activity and notifies someone if there are unauthorized changes to data.
- Keep systems current and upgrade when necessary.

Availability – Ensuring data and services are available only to authorized users when needed.

- Tune network devices to monitor for Distributed Denial of Service attack.
- Keep systems current.
- Back up and store data in an offsite location.

Social Engineering

Social engineering is when cybercriminals trick individuals into breaking normal security procedures and best practices to gain access into systems, networks, or physical locations.

Social engineering is accomplished in many ways (online, telephone, shoulder surfing, simple persuasion) and is one of the hardest attacks to protect against and is the most prevalent.

Phishing

Phishing is a social engineering tactic used to persuade individuals to provide sensitive information and/or take action through seemingly trustworthy communications. Phishing emails may attempt to appeal to a recipient's fear, duty, obligation, or curiosity.

How to Identify a Potential Phishing Attack

Ways to recognize phishing emails include:

- Be aware of someone that wants too much information.
- Urgent action warning of major consequences.
- Spelling and grammar errors.
- Link to a website.
- Request for personal information.
- Pop-up ads.

Signs an attack could be in progress include:

- Computer is unresponsive.
- Drives or files are unavailable.
- Data files are transferring at a higher-than-normal rate.

How to Avoid a Phishing Attack and How to Respond

There may not be any indication of an attack at all. You can reduce the likelihood of an attack by:

- Not opening any attachments or following links included in emails unless you are sure it is safe. Consider contacting the sender via an out-of-band communication. For example, consider contacting the sender of a suspicious email by calling a known phone number.

If you think you are the victim of a phishing attack, take action immediately:

- Follow county procedures for reporting a potential phishing attack.
- Unplug the network cable or disable the wifi.
- DO NOT turn off the computer.

Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS)

Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) uses multiple compromised computers to overwhelm a network causing network traffic to stop, much like a traffic jam causing a gridlock on a highway. Computers are often infected through phishing attacks that trick the user into downloading malicious files.

Ransomware

Ransomware is an advanced form of malware that can encrypt all data saved on a computer. To unlock the data, a payment is demanded. In elections, cybercriminals seek not only monetary gain but to cast doubt on the democratic process and integrity of elections.

Ransomware uses social engineering tricks to exploit potential victims. Spam emails are a typical method to send out attacks to potential victims. They are designed to look like they are from a legitimate source. Once a user clicks a malicious link or attachment it is downloaded and installed on the computer. It then begins to encrypt data so only the hacker can read it.

Chapter 2, Section 3

Vendor Security

Attackers may attempt to bypass security in a state or county government facility by targeting a vendor first. For this reason, there is a need to address cyber threats associated with vendors and other third-parties that have trusted permissions.

Conduct thorough assessments and use due diligence before engaging with vendors to ensure they have appropriate security measures in place. This includes reviewing their security policies, procedures, certifications, and past security incidents.

- **Contractual Obligations:** Include specific security requirements and clauses in contracts with vendors, such as data protection requirements, confidentiality agreements, and obligations to comply with relevant security standards and regulations.
- **Regular Audits and Monitoring:** Perform regular audits of vendor security practices and conduct ongoing monitoring to ensure compliance with contractual obligations and industry best practices. This may involve site visits, security assessments, and reviewing audit reports and security documentation provided by the vendor.
- **Security Standards and Certifications:** Require vendors to adhere to recognized security standards and certifications, such as ISO 27001 for information security management or SOC 2 for service organization control, to demonstrate their commitment to security best practices.
- **Incident Response and Notification:** Establish clear procedures for reporting security incidents and breaches to the auditor's office promptly, allowing for timely response and remediation measures.
- **Data Protection and Privacy:** Ensure that vendors handle sensitive data in accordance with applicable data protection and privacy regulations, such as General Data Protection Regulations and implementing measures to safeguard data confidentiality, integrity, and availability.
- **Vendor Training and Awareness:** Provide vendors with training and resources to raise awareness of security risks and best practices, empowering them to take proactive measures to enhance security.
- **Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery:** Verify that vendors have robust business continuity and disaster recovery plans in place to ensure the continuity of services and data protection in the event of disruptions or emergencies.

By implementing these measures, an auditor's office can effectively mitigate security risks associated with their vendors and ensure the protection of sensitive information and assets.

For assistance or questions regarding vendor security please contact Cybersecurity@sos.wa.gov and for policy questions ctsupport@sos.wa.gov.

External Storage Devices

Whether you are building your ballot, uploading election results, or importing information from your sorter which isn't connected to a network, you will eventually need to securely transfer data with an external memory device. Whenever you are connecting a device to any computer, there is the risk of compromising that computer. It is, therefore, critically important that only secure devices are connected to your systems.

A new, securely wiped and tamper evident sealed USB should be used to import or export data to or from the air-gapped tabulation system networks.

Programmable USBs

A further addition to security is the use of password protected programmable USB drives. These drives allow elections administrators to transfer data from a secured air-gapped device to a non-air gapped unsecured device without compromising security (such as taking results from your tabulation equipment and upload the results into a computer with internet access.) The drive is programmable to be in a read/write mode or a read only mode. When in read-only mode, the device can be read on an unsecured computer, but no data can be written to the device, which maintains the integrity of the air-gapped computer. This allows for a USB drive that can be used multiple times to move data.

These devices add a further layer of security because you must know the password to either put any information on or to take any information off. The device automatically encrypts the data which is loaded onto the drive and the drive is unreadable by any system unless it has been unlocked.

① The Office of the Secretary of State of Washington has a program to supply each elections office with a supply of suitable drives for every election.

Mobile Devices

Have you addressed your mobile device security? What people are targeting on a desktop can now be accessed on mobile devices. “Mobile Device Security” refers to the measures taken to protect sensitive data stored on portable devices, such as smart phones and laptops. It prevents unauthorized users from using mobile devices to access your network.

Smartphone Best Practices

Best practices include:

- **Device Security Features:** Most smartphones offer built-in security features such as screen locks (PINs, passwords, patterns, biometric authentication like fingerprint or facial recognition), encryption of data stored on the device, and remote tracking and wiping capabilities in case of loss or theft. Take advantage of as many of these as possible.
- **Operating System Updates:** Both iOS and Android platforms release security updates periodically to address vulnerabilities and enhance device security. Be sure to keep your devices up-to-date.
- **Application Permissions:** Reviewing and managing app permissions is essential to control what data and functions apps can access on your device. Granting unnecessary permissions could expose sensitive information and compromise security.
- **App Security:** Downloading apps only from official app stores like the Apple App Store or Google Play Store reduces the risk of downloading malicious software. Additionally, being cautious of suspicious links or attachments in messages and emails can help prevent the installation of malware.
- **Secure Wi-Fi and Networks:** Avoid connecting to unsecured Wi-Fi networks, especially public ones, as they may be vulnerable to eavesdropping and man-in-the-middle attacks. Utilizing Virtual Private Network (VPN) services when accessing public Wi-Fi adds an extra layer of encryption and security.
- **Data Encryption:** Encrypting sensitive data stored on the device ensures that even if the device falls into the wrong hands, the data remains unreadable.
- **Remote Wiping and Tracking:** Enabling remote tracking and wiping features allows users to locate their device if lost or stolen and remotely erase data to prevent access.
- **Biometric Authentication:** Utilizing biometric authentication methods such as fingerprint or facial recognition adds an extra layer of security beyond traditional passwords or PINs.
- **Two-Factor Authentication (2FA):** Enabling 2FA for online accounts adds an extra layer of security by requiring a second form of verification, typically a code sent to a trusted device or generated by an authenticator app, in addition to a password.

Mobile Device Best Practices

Best practices for mobile devices include:

- Avoid public Wi-Fi. Often when connecting to Wi-Fi networks, the assumption is they are safe for use. However, hackers can easily access the network and steal data.
- Use strong passwords. Just as within the network, mobile devices should also require strong passwords.
- Use different passwords for all accounts, including email and social media.
- Do not download any unauthorized applications. Often the user believes the site is reputable, but instead it is a bogus app designed to look like it is genuine.
- Include mobile device security in training programs.

For support and questions regarding security please contact Cybersecurity@sos.wa.gov

Chapter 3, Section 1

Voter Registration Services

RCW 29A.04.205

State policy. It is the policy of the state of Washington to encourage every eligible person to register to vote and participate fully in all elections, and to protect the integrity of the electoral process by providing equal access while guarding against discrimination and fraud. The election registration laws and voting laws of the state of Washington must be administered without discrimination based upon race, creed, color, national origin, sex, or political affiliation. No voter may be required to disclose political faith or adherence in order to vote.

Voters' Rights

The rights of Washington voters are protected by its constitution and laws.

- The right of qualified voters to vote in all eligible elections.
- The right of absolute secrecy of the vote.
- The right to cast a vote in eligible races without limitation based on party preference or affiliation.

What constitutes discrimination or fraud?

RCW 29.84

- Knowingly altering, destroying, defacing, concealing, or discarding a completed registration form, signed ballot declaration, or voted ballot, except for the voter who completed the form, declaration, or ballot, or the county auditor acting as authorized by law.
- Refusing or neglecting to perform any duty required by law.
- Destroying, mutilating, concealing, changing, or altering any voter registration record except as authorized by voter registration law.
- Registering or allowing someone to register a person who is not entitled to be registered to vote.
- Intentionally denying any person eligible to vote the right to register.
- Cancelling a voter registration except as authorized by voter registration law.
- Knowingly using or altering the statewide voter registration database inconsistent with the performance of job duties.
- Examining or assisting another person examining any voter record, ballot, or election material for the purpose of unlawfully identifying the name of the voter and how they voted, or revealing such information.
- Removing a ballot from a voting center or drop box except as authorized by law.
- Providing unauthorized access to the statewide voter registration database.

- Deliberately failing to return a registration form in a timely manner.
- Knowingly providing false information on a voter registration application.
- Offering to pay another person a fee per registration.
- Accepting payment based on a fixed amount per registration.

Penalty: “A person who willfully violates any provision of this title regarding the conduct of mail ballot primaries or elections is guilty of a class C felony punishable under RCW 9A.20.021.”

Who is eligible to vote?

Washington State Constitution, Article VI, Sections 1 & 3

An “elector” is any person qualified to vote. To register to vote, the person must meet these requirements:

- United States citizen.
- Legal resident of Washington State.
- 18 years old at time of voting. Voters who pre-register to vote starting at age 16 are Future Voters. Voter pre-registrations are pending until they become eligible to vote.
 - If a Future Voter is pre-registered to vote and will be 18 by the November General Election, they may vote in state, local, and presidential primaries.
- Not currently serving a sentence of total confinement in prison under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections (DOC) for a Washington felony conviction.
- Not currently incarcerated for a federal or out-of-state felony conviction.

Is a voter’s registration information public?

RCW 29A.08.710

Following items are public information and available upon request:

- Name
- Address
- Political jurisdiction (precinct/district)
- Gender
- Year of birth
- Voting record
- Date of registration
- Registration number

Following items are **not** available to the public:

- Source of registration (Dept. of Licensing, state agency, etc.)
- Declination of registration
- Date of birth
- Phone number, email address

- Service or Overseas Status
- Anything else on the registration form that isn't specified as public information
- All 16- and 17-year-old Future Voter registrants - once a 17-year-old is eligible to vote, their voter registration information becomes public information and available upon request.

Voter Registration Deadlines

Voters must register in order to participate in an election.

The date of receipt by an election official, including the Office of the Secretary of State, is the date of registration for mail-in applications.

Eight-Day Deadline

New applications, address changes, name changes, and voluntary cancellations that are submitted by mail, online, email, or fax must be received by an election official by the eighth day before an election.

Same-Day Voter Registration

After the 8-day deadline, new applications, address changes, name changes, and voluntary cancellations may be submitted **in person** at any County Auditor-designated location until 8:00 p.m. on Election Day to update the registration record and receive a current ballot.

Exception – Service and Overseas Voters

If members of the Armed Forces (as defined by RCW 29A.04.163 and WAC 434-235-010 as a service voter) and overseas electors (defined in RCW 29A.04.109 and WAC 434-235-010 as an overseas voter) consider Washington State their residence, new applicants are exempt from the in-person requirement and may submit their application remotely (online, email, fax) until 8:00 p.m. Election Day.

If they are already registered in Washington State, current same day registration and 8-day deadlines apply.

This exception does not automatically apply to dependents and spouses of military and overseas voters. If a spouse or dependent is away from their place of residence because of the service or overseas status of the voter, they may also register to vote as a service or overseas voter.

See the *Service and Overseas Voters* clearinghouse notice for more information.

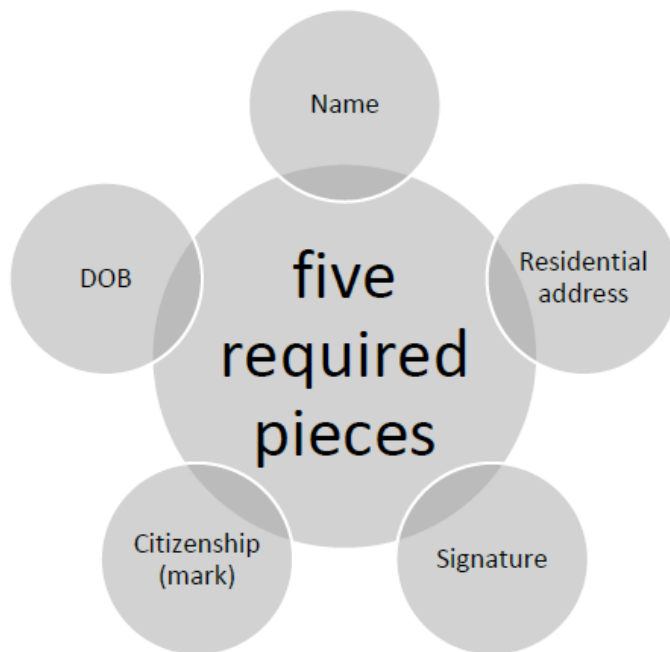
Voter Applications

Acceptable Applications and Methods of Registration

- Washington State mail-in/paper form
- Online voter registration (OLVR)
- Department of Licensing
- Agency-based form
- Health Benefit Exchange
- In-person (registration drives, over the counter)
- Federal applications

Required Information for New Applicants

- Name
- Residential address within the state of Washington (may be a non-traditional address)
- Date of birth
- Affirmation of US citizenship or presentation of documents as part of another government transaction confirming citizenship
- Signature attesting to truth of information provided on the form



NOTE:

- ***ID IS NOT required information to register an applicant.***
- ***BUT it IS required before accepting a ballot.***

Processing a Completed Voter Registration Application

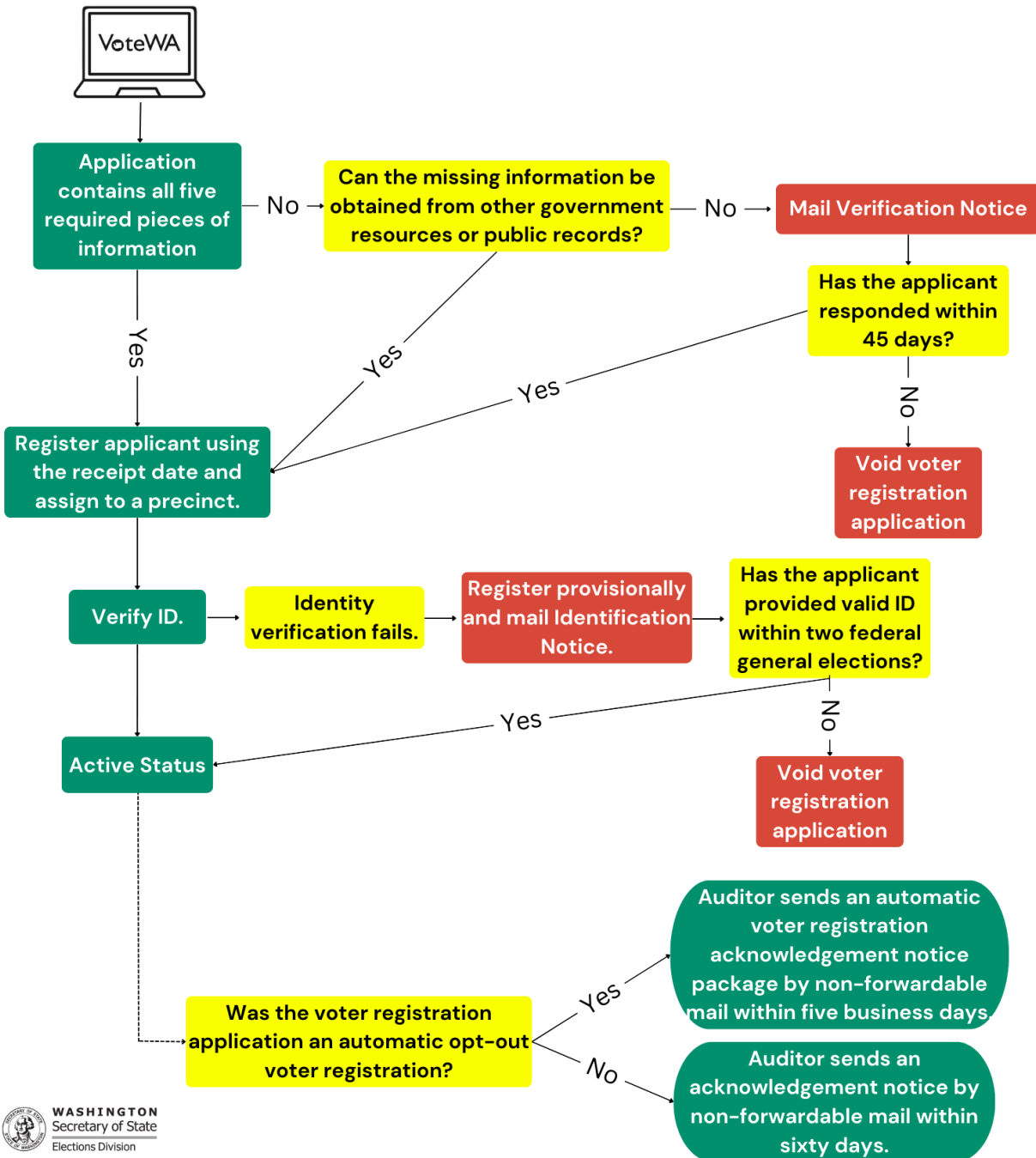
RCW 29.08, WAC 434-324

After confirming an application contains all five pieces of **required** information, register the voter:

- Enter the applicant's information into VoteWA.
- If it is a paper form, scan it and save an image of the signature.
- Verify the state driver's license, learner's permit, state ID, tribal ID, or Social Security Number. (When the ID is not confirmed or provided, register the voter provisionally.)
- Send an **Acknowledgment Notice** (voter ID) to the voter within 60 days of receiving the application.
- If the voter was registered to vote automatically upon completing a transaction for an enhanced card from the Department of Licensing, send an automatic voter registration acknowledgment notice package within five business days See "Notices to Voters" section for more detailed information on acknowledgment notices.
- Automatic voter registrants who decline registration within 15 days from the acknowledgement notice package's date of mailing shall be removed from the voter registration database and deemed never to have been registered. If a declined registration is received after this deadline, the registration shall be cancelled.

Processing Voter Registration Applications

RCW 29A.08; WAC 434-324



Processing a Voter Registration Application that is Missing Information

RCW 29.08.110

When the application is missing one of 5 required pieces of information:

- Do not register the applicant.
- Send a Verification Notice to the applicant requesting only the missing information.
- Hold the application until the missing required information is received or the deadline of 45 days has passed.

ⓘ ***Never send a Verification Notice to a voter who is already registered!***

If the applicant responds within 45 days:

- Finish processing the voter registration application, change the voter's status to Active, and send an Acknowledgment Notice.
- The date of registration for the voter is the date the **original** application was received.

When an applicant fails to respond within 45 days, the applicant cannot be registered, and the registration application is not valid.

The Verification Notice must **not** be used for requesting identification.

Is ID required to register a new voter?

WAC 434-324-045

No, ID is not a required piece of voter registration information.

When an application is missing ID, or the ID cannot be verified, the voter must be registered **provisionally** and issued a ballot.

- A provisional registration (temporary) is dependent on receiving ID eventually.
- All provisionally registered voters must receive ballots; however, the ballots cannot be counted until the voter provides identification.

ⓘ ***Exception: Overseas and service voters are not required to provide ID when registering to vote, meaning they are never registered provisionally.***

Identity Verification

The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) requires ID verification. The ID numbers requested on the form are from the Department of Licensing (DOL) or Social Security (SSN).

If the voter does not provide a DOL or SSN number, or the County Auditor is unable to verify the ID number(s) provided, follow these steps:

1. Provisionally register the applicant and flag the registration as needing ID.
2. Use other government resources and public records to confirm the voter's ID. If confirmed, remove the provisional status from the registration.
3. If unable to verify using other sources, you may contact the voter by phone, email, text, or other means. If the voter provides valid ID, remove the provisional status from the registration.
4. If, after these attempts, you are unable to verify the voter's identity, send an **Identification Notice**.
5. When the voter provides ID, remove the provisional registration status and change to Active.
6. The county elections department shall cancel any provisional voter registration that has been flagged as provisional through two federal elections.

Alternative Forms of ID are Acceptable!

- Valid photo ID.
- Valid tribal enrollment card of a federally-recognized tribe in Washington.
- Current utility bill.
- Current bank statement.
- Current paycheck.
- Current government check.
- Any government document, except for a voter registration card, that shows the registrant's name and current address.

When a voter provides an alternate form of ID, save a notation or scan of the document source in the voter's registration record.

Registering Service and Overseas Voters (UOCAVA)

Citizens overseas or on active duty service are protected by the **Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)**.

To qualify as a UOCAVA voter in our state, the voter must use their most recent residential address in Washington, or the most recent residential address in Washington of a family member.

An overseas voter, as defined in RCW 29A.04.109, is any elector of the state of Washington outside the territorial limits of the United States on Election Day.

Deadlines for **new** voter registrations do not apply to citizens overseas; active-duty service electors; dependents and spouses of service members that are away from their residence due to the member's active-duty assignment.

A service or overseas voter may register to vote by providing one of the following items:

- A voter registration application issued by Washington State.
- A federal post card application (FPCA) issued by the Federal Voting Assistance Program ([FVAP](#)).
- A federal write-in absentee ballot (FWAB) issued by FVAP.
- A national mail voter registration form issued by the Election Assistance Commission ([EAC](#)).
- A ballot (envelope), the ballot declaration signed by a service or overseas voter.

Deadlines for voter registration updates apply to currently registered UOCAVA voters.

Processing Applications for Service and Overseas Voters

If an application from a service or overseas elector lacks a Washington State address, contact the applicant to request the address of the applicant's last known residence in Washington State. An address of a relative may be used if the applicant has never lived in the United States.

If there is insufficient time to obtain the missing registration information prior to an election, or the voter does not respond to your attempt to make contact, precinct the registration using the County Auditor's Office address. Only offices that are countywide or in the courthouse Congressional District can be counted for the voter.

After the election or primary, if the voter does not provide a Washington address, the County Auditor must place the voter on inactive status and send a confirmation notice to obtain the voter's correct residential address.

A service or overseas voter is not required to provide ID when registering. Service and overseas voters' dependents who do not qualify as a UOCAVA voter are not included in the exemption and must provide valid identification.

Service and overseas voters must be offered the option of receiving ballots electronically or by postal mail. If the registration application does not indicate a choice, you must try to contact the voter. Send the ballot by mail if the voter has not responded by the UOCAVA ballot mail date.

Rules for processing service and overseas (UOCAVA) voter registrations and issuing ballots are located in the *Service and Overseas Voters* clearinghouse notice.

Registering an ACP Voter

RCW 40.24, WAC 434-840

Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) voters must **not** be entered into VoteWA.

The Address Confidentiality Program protects victims of domestic violence, participants in the legal system, and election officials facing cyber harassment or stalking. Participants of the program may register to vote, but their registration and balloting information is strictly confidential. Their information is exempt from public disclosure and must never be entered into VoteWA.

A special voter registration form is used for ACP participants. ACP participants applying to register to vote must provide documentation they are in the program.

The County Auditor sends a ballot to the registered program participant at the substitute mailing address provided by the ACP.

Your office should have staff designated to accept and process these registrations as well as send and process the ballots.

16- & 17-year-olds may pre-register to vote as an ACP voter.

Registering a Future Voter

An applicant can pre-register to vote as long as they are at least 16 years of age, a US citizen, and a Washington State resident. Pre-registrations can be submitted by mail, online, or through the Department of Licensing. These registrations are pended as Future Voters until they are eligible to vote.

Information on pre-registered individuals are exempt from public disclosure and cannot be released or included on any official list of registered voters, until

- the person reaches 18 years of age, or
- until the person is eligible to participate in the next presidential primary, primary, or election.

This information is exempt from public inspection and copying under chapter 42.56 RCW. Information may be disclosed for the purpose of processing and delivering ballots.

Notices to Voters

NVRA, HAVA, RCW 29A.08.030

Whenever a voter's registration is accepted or updated in any way, the voter receives a notice.

Applicants must be notified when an application is incomplete, a residence address appears to be incorrect, or an ID check fails. For these purposes, we use:

- Acknowledgment Notices
- Automatic Voter Registration Acknowledgment Notice Packages
- Verification Notices
- Confirmation Notices
- Identification Notices

Which notice should I use?

Each type of notice serves a distinct purpose. To understand which notice to send, start with the application.

- Is required information missing?
- Did the ID check fail?
- Did you receive undeliverable mail or an undeliverable ballot from a registered voter?
- Did the voter update a name?

Each answer requires a different notice.

Acknowledgment Notice

When a voter registers, transfers (address change), changes their name, or reactivates an inactive registration, the County Auditor must mail a notice to the voter.

The County Auditor sends an **Acknowledgment Notice** whenever a voter is assigned to "active" status. It must be:

- Sent by first-class, non-forwardable mail.
- Mailed to the voter within 60 days of receipt of the application.

A voter registration card may serve as the Acknowledgment Notice. It must list:

- Voter's full name.
- Mailing address.
- County name.
- Precinct name and/or number.
- Registration date.

The County Auditor may include additional information.

Automatic Voter Registration Acknowledgment Notice Package

An Automatic Voter Registration Acknowledgment Notice Package as a type of acknowledgement notice sent to voters who are registered automatically registered to vote when obtaining an Enhanced Driver License or ID. Acknowledgment Notice Packages include all of the elements of an Acknowledgment Notice as well as information about how to opt out.

Verification Notice

A registration is not valid until it contains all five of the required pieces of information, (see Chapter 3.)

Before contacting the voter with an official notice, try to locate the missing information through the following methods first:

- A government resource such as LexisNexis, DOL, etc.
- A public resource.
- Phone or email the applicant.

ⓘ *Exceptions: if a voter is missing a signature or a mark confirming citizenship, the voter must provide this.*

A **Verification Notice** must be sent when the form is missing a signature, a citizenship affirmation, or when you're unable to obtain missing information any other way. The purpose of the notice is to obtain the missing piece of information and to notify the applicant that a **45-day deadline** exists in which the application is viable. The notice must:

- Be sent by forwardable mail.
- Include a postage paid, preaddressed return form/envelope.
- Notify the applicant that they must respond within 45 days or the application is void.

Request missing information only. Applicants are not obliged to provide required information more than once. The Verification Notice must only ask for the information missing from the original registration application.

Confirmation Notice

The County Auditor inactivates a voter and sends a **Confirmation Notice** whenever a piece of official election mail from the County Auditor is returned by the U.S. Postal Service as undeliverable or with an address outside of the county. For addresses inside the county, transfer the voter's registration to the new address.

The Confirmation Notice provides the voter an opportunity to update their address.

Required elements:

- Request voter to verify their current residential address.
- Request voter to sign the oath in RCW 29A.08.230 (subject to the March 15, 2024 Consent Decree entered in *Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans v. Hobbs, et al.*, W.D.WA. Case No. 3-23-CV-06014-TMC).
- Include either the voter's state voter ID number or the date of birth*
- Inform voter that if they fail to confirm or update the address with the County Auditor or do not vote (remaining on inactive status) within two federal general elections, the registration will be cancelled.
- Mailed as first class, forwardable mail.
- A postage paid, preaddressed return form/envelope.
- Mailed to the address of registration and each address where the voter could reasonably expect to receive mail.

When the voter responds, a Confirmation Notice may update a voter's address within the county or transfer the voter's registration to another county in Washington State.

Identification Notice

The County Auditor sends an **Identification Notice** when a voter is registered provisionally. This occurs when ID is not provided with the application, or the ID provided could not be verified.

Before sending an official Identification Notice, the County Auditor may attempt to obtain ID information by contacting the voter or utilizing other government sources (i.e. DOL records, LexisNexis, etc.).

If after these attempts, you are still unable to verify the provisionally registered voter's ID, send the Identification Notice prescribed in WAC 434-250-045.

Voter Registration Status

A voter's registration status falls into one of the following categories:

- **Active** – Voter is fully qualified to vote.
- **Inactive** – When notification is received from the USPS, Dept. of Licensing, or other designated agency that a voter has moved out of county or out of state, or when election mail sent to the voter is returned undeliverable.
- **Pending** – The record is processing or an issue must be resolved (this includes Future Voters)
- **Provisionally Registered** – The voter is registered and issued a ballot but must provide ID prior to the ballot being counted.
- **Cancelled** – The voter is no longer registered.

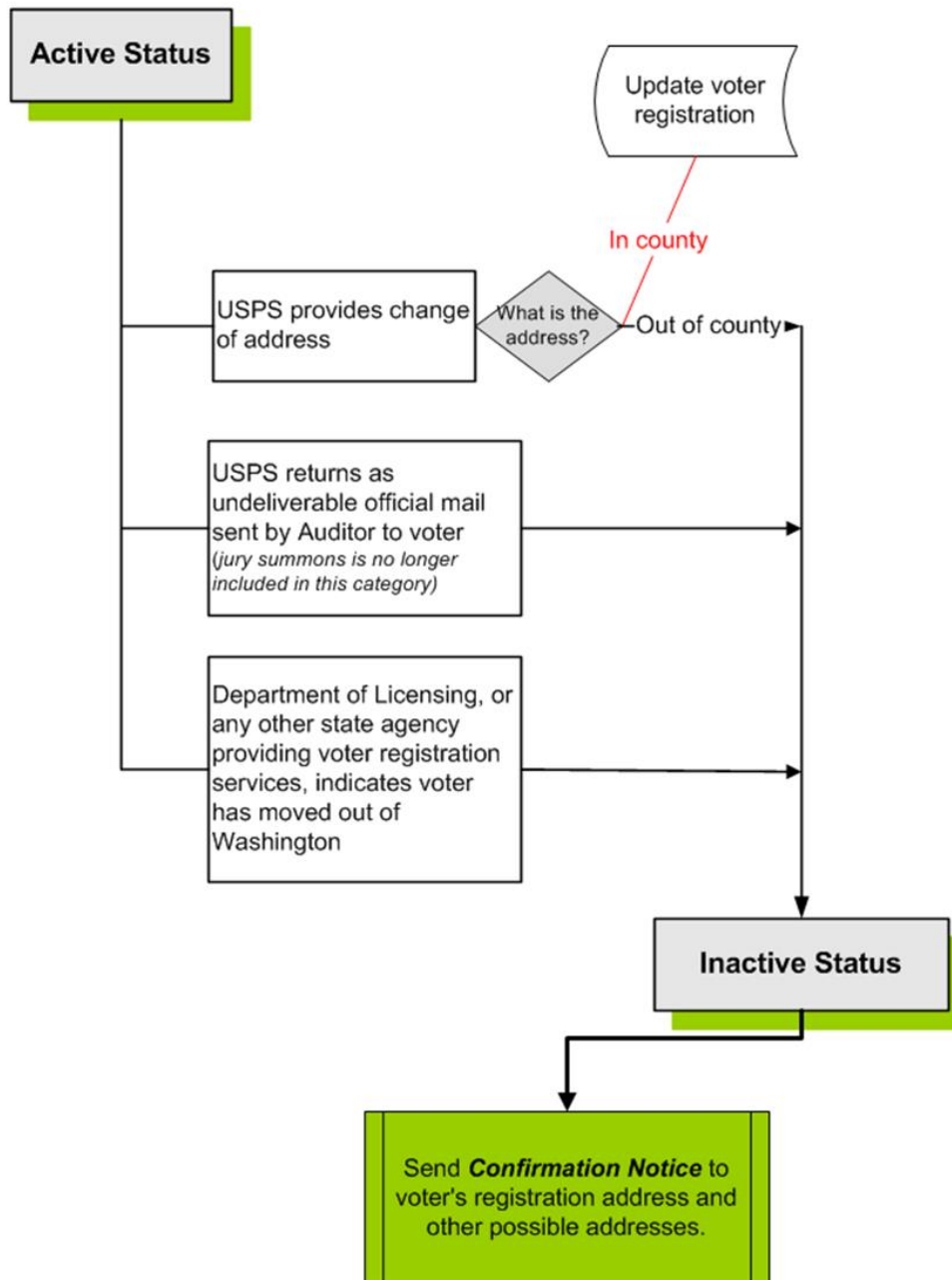
Active and Inactive Status

The default status for voters is **active** – meaning, they are eligible to vote.

A voter's status changes from active to inactive when:

- USPS provides an out-of-county change of address.
- Any undeliverable document mailed by the County Auditor is returned by the U.S. Postal Service without address correction information.
- Any official state agency that registers voters reports an out-of-state address for an active voter. This includes information from the USPS, Department of Licensing and Department of Human Services.

In these cases, send a Confirmation Notice.



Reactivate a voter by changing the status from inactive to active when the voter:

- Attempts to vote.
- Requests a ballot.
- Updates registration information.
- Responds to a Confirmation Notice by providing a residence address located within the same county.

Unless specified by law, only the number of active registered voters determine qualifying numbers such as voter turnout or the number of votes needed to validate (see Chapter 6 section 2).

When the Inactive Voter Responds to a Confirmation Notice

When an inactive voter responds to the notice by providing a residential address within the county or confirms the current address is correct, update the voter's address and status to active.

When an inactive voter responds to the notice by providing a residential address outside of the county, but within Washington, the voter's status remains inactive:

- The former county of residence does not cancel the registration; and
- Should immediately forward the notice to the new county.

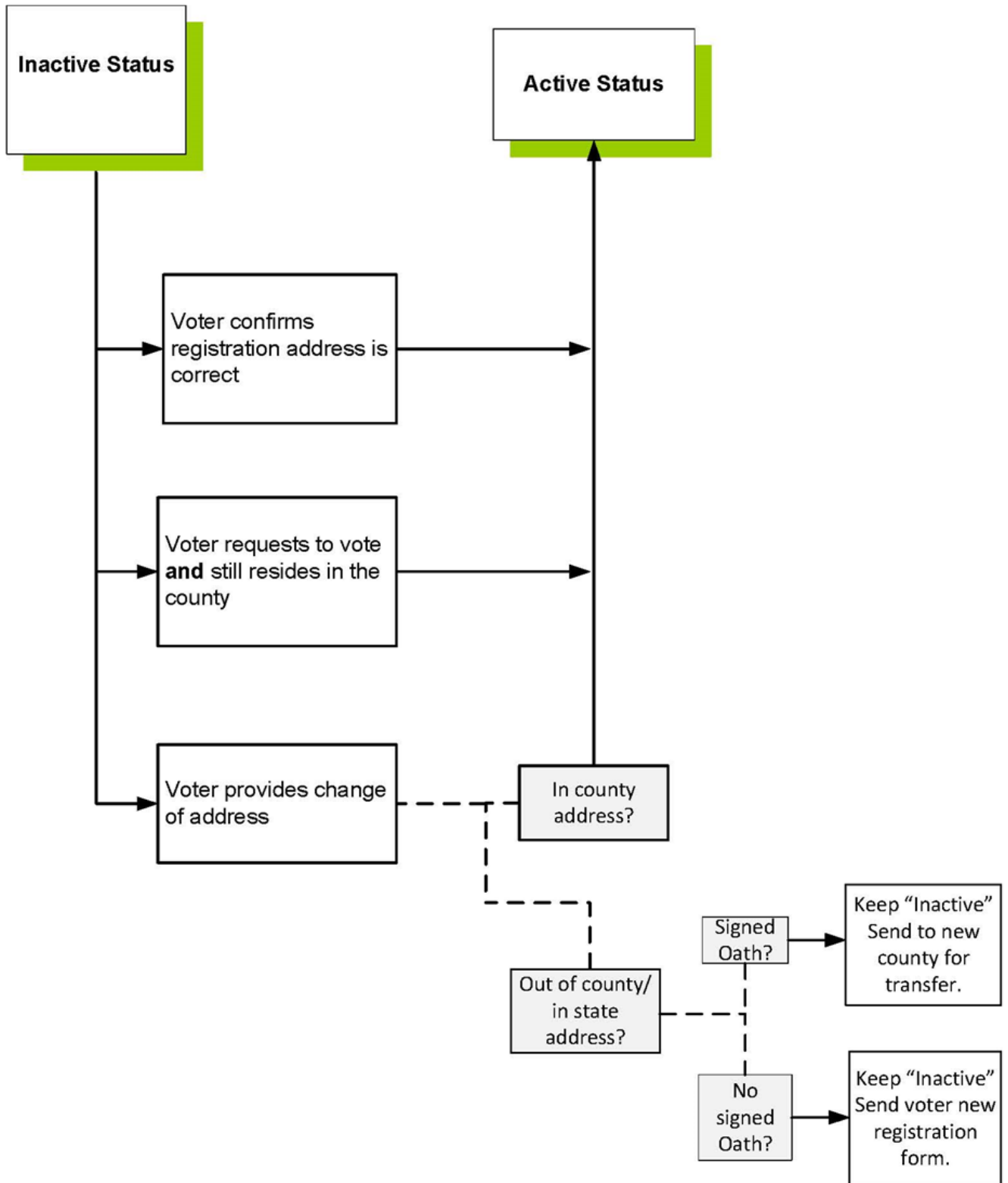
The new county confirms the transfer and activates the voter.

For detailed requirements and procedures, see the [Voter Registration Transfers](#) clearinghouse notice.

When the Inactive Voter *Doesn't* Respond to the Confirmation Notice

The County Auditor must wait for the inactive voter to take any of the following actions:

- Voter attempts to vote - change status to active.
- Voter confirms the address or provides a new residential address within the state - follow procedures for transfers.
- Voter makes no contact through two federal elections - cancel registration.



VoteWA Statewide Voter Registration System

The official record of each voter resides in the VoteWA statewide voter registration and election management system. Each county is connected to VoteWA.

Voters move, change their name, register, pass away, or become ineligible to vote daily. Voter registration data is fluid, not static. For this reason, VoteWA is a dynamic system and requires daily review by counties.

Voter Registration Data Entry

Voter registration data entered into VoteWA:

- New voter registrations
- Updates to existing voter registration information
- Cancellations

Online Voter Registration and Address Corrections

Online voter registration and motor voter registrations depend on the Department of Licensing (DOL) for all required voter information, including the signature of the voter.

Process online registrations the same as other types of voter registration.

Data Integrity Processes & Daily Data Maintenance

WAC 434-324-040 ; WAC 434-324-045

Integrity checks, and duplicate checks identify potential issues. The county must research and resolves each of the flagged records.

- **Validate Voter ID:** If the ID verification fails, the voter record must be assigned a status of provisionally registered, pending verifiable ID. County Auditors may verify voter ID using other governmental information or the acceptable documents listed in WAC 434-250-045.
- **Duplicate Voter Search:** Review and resolve duplicate and transfer reports daily and whenever new registrant information is added.
- **Cancellations:** The voter registration database allows a comparison lists of deceased voters with the Department of Health, and Social Security Death Index. The county **must** research those matches for potential cancellations.
- **Felony Screening and VoteWA:** The Secretary of State handles the cancellation of all felons through our voter registration database and the Washington State Department of Corrections. For more information, see the "[Restoration of Voting Rights After Felony Conviction](#)" clearinghouse. If you receive notification of a felony conviction, contact the Secretary of State's Office (OSOS). Voters with felony convictions should **not** be cancelled at the county level.

VoteWA Assistance

Contact VoteWA Support at (360) 902-4194 or VoteWASupport@sos.wa.gov.

Access the VoteWA Manual within VoteWA → Help → VoteWA Manual (PDF)

Maintenance of Voter Records

How does a voter transfer within the same county?

To transfer (change residential address) **within the county**, the voter may:

- Update their address by contacting the County Auditor in writing, in person, by phone, or by email.
- Submit an update through the VoteWA online portal, DOL, Health Benefit Exchange, or other designated agencies.
- Submit a voter registration application.
- Respond to a Confirmation Notice with a new address within the county.
- The US Postal Service provides a new address within the county.

How does a voter transfer to another county?

To transfer into a **new county**, the voter may:

- Submit a new paper registration application.
- Submit an update through VoteWA online portal, DOL, Health Benefit Exchange, or designated agencies.
- Respond to a signed Confirmation Notice that will be forwarded by the former county to the new county of registration.

The County Auditor of the new county will use VoteWA to verify whether the registration is a transfer.

For **county-to-county transfers**, a voter is only required to provide the minimum information necessary to complete the transfer:

- Name.
- Residential address.
- Signature to the oath in RCW 29A.08.230.
- Either the voter's DOB or voter ID number.

Affirmation of citizenship is not required because the voter is already registered to vote in our state.

The County Auditor must not transfer a voter out of another county without first obtaining the minimum information listed above. If the minimum information is not supplied, correspondence may be sent to the voter to obtain it, but the voter's registration record in the current county shall not be flagged or pended in such a way that will trigger a void/cancellation after 45 days.

For detailed procedures regarding Confirmation Notices and transfers, refer to the [Voter Registration Transfers](#) clearinghouse notice.

What if a voter requests a name change?

Voters must provide the following information to the County Auditor in writing (written note, voter registration application, etc.):

- Name on current registration
- New name
- Residence
- New signature

A signed ballot envelope or Confirmation Notice containing all the required elements is acceptable for updating a voter's name. Retain a copy of the envelope or notice for updating the record.

Cancelling Voters

What cancels a voter's registration record?

Active and inactive voter registrations:

- A signed request for cancellation from the voter
- A completed transfer out of your county
- Duplicate records in VoteWA
- Successful challenge to a voter's registration
- Notification of death from the registrar of vital statistics, Social Security Administration, or published obituary information
- Notification of death with signature from another registered voter
- OSOS receives information from the Department of Corrections (DOC)
- Incapacitation or Guardianship

Inactive voter registrations only:

- Failure to vote or confirm registration address for a period of two federal general elections
- Official information from another state shows that the voter has registered to vote in their state
- Notification from the Office of the Secretary of State that the voter has registered to vote in another state through a dual registration program, such as ERIC
- A signed confirmation notice from the voter confirming the out-of-state address change
- An email from the email address on file with the voter's registration record, if any, that they have moved out-of-state. If the voter does not have an email address on file, or the email is sent from a different email address than the one on file, the emailed request to cancel their voter registration record cannot be accepted.
- An electronic image of a hand-signed cancellation request, such as a .PDF or .JPG

Cancellation Due to Felony Conviction

RCW 29A.08.520

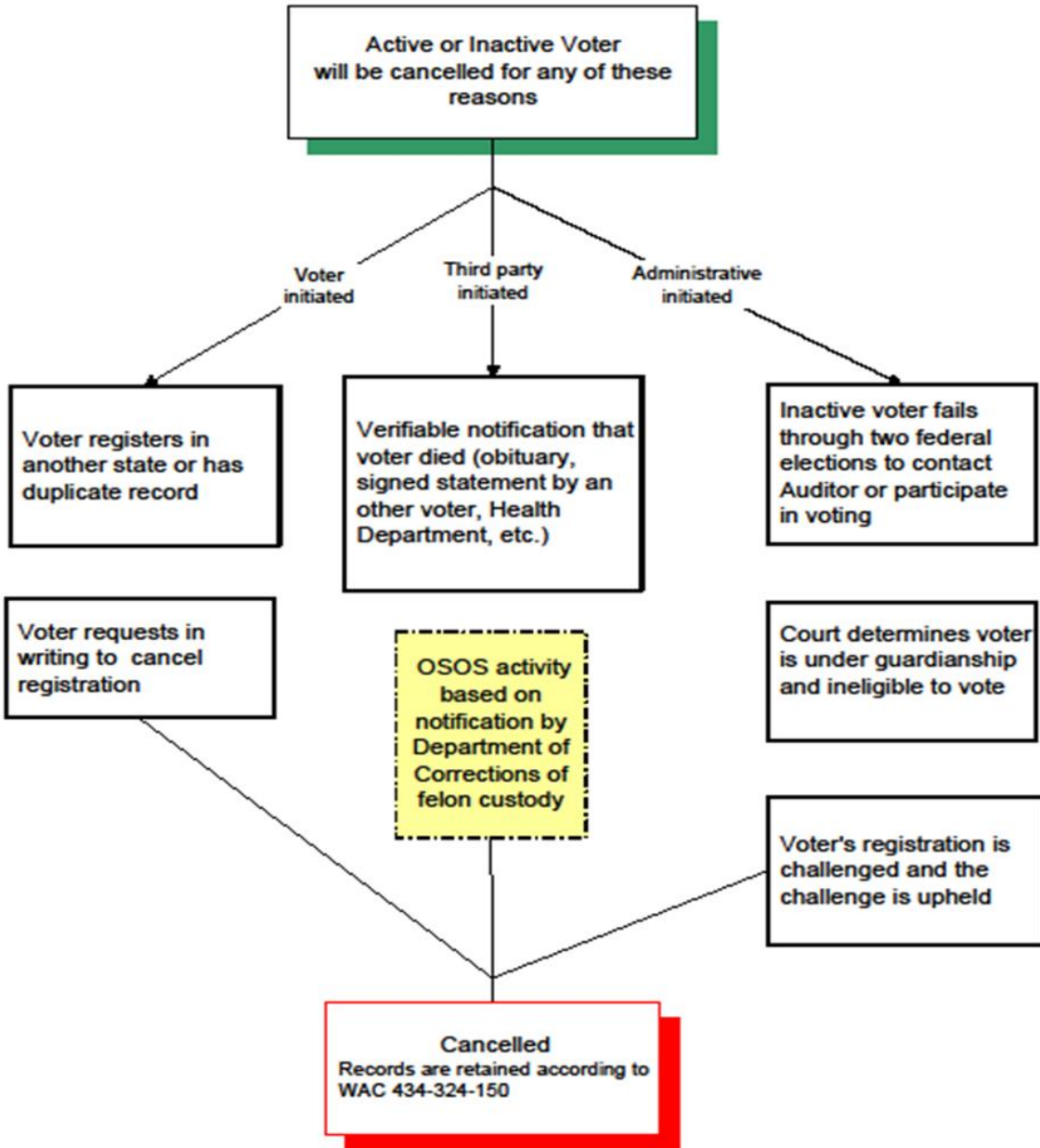
OSOS compares records in VoteWA with records from the Department of Corrections (DOC). The OSOS places the voter on a “Pending – Potential Felon” status and sends a letter to the voter. The voter has 30 days from the date of the letter to respond before the registration is cancelled by the OSOS.

How are voting rights restored?

RCW 29A.08.520

For the purposes of this section, a person is under the authority of the DOC if the person is serving a sentence of total confinement in the custody of the DOC.

Voting rights are automatically restored whenever that person is no longer in total confinement under the custody of the DOC. The person with a felony conviction must register to vote after leaving total confinement to receive ballots again.



Chapter 3, Section 2

Precincts and District Boundaries

RCW 29A.16

Precinct Boundary Rules

Each precinct must be entirely within a single:

- Congressional district
- State legislative district
- County legislative district
- City

Physically, a precinct must (as nearly as practicable) be:

- Contiguous or “touching” -- A single precinct may not be made up of separate parts.
- Compact -- For instance, precincts should not be long, narrow, or have parts that significantly extend beyond the main precinct body.

Visible physical features are used to describe precinct boundaries, such as:

- Streets
- Power lines
- Bodies of water
- Ridges

Exceptions:

- o City/town boundary lines
- o Use of physical features would substantially impair election administration in the involved area.

Precincts cannot exceed 1,500 active registered voters.

The county legislative authority may establish a different limitation, but it must be less than the maximum established by state law.

Making Changes to Precinct Boundaries

The county legislative authority adopts precinct lines (unless otherwise stated in a county charter).

Precinct line changes must follow certain rules:

- Changes cannot be made starting seven days before candidate filing through the General Election.
- Permanent changes may be adopted as long as sufficient time exists to make the changes.
- Temporary precinct changes may accommodate a city or town annexation of unincorporated territory. The changes must be limited to the minimum changes necessary to accommodate the annexation and remains in effect only until the precinct modifications are adopted by the county legislative authority.
- Cities and towns may annex at any time. If the annexation affects an election, the voters are eligible to vote in the city or town election even if the annexation is just a few days before Election Day.

Redistricting

RCW 29A.76

Redistricting apportions congressional, legislative, and internal director/commissioner districts' *population* based on the US Census. This happens at least every 10 years to guarantee equal representation and starts the year after the US Census is taken. The county legislative authority must adopt new precinct lines to comply with the State Redistricting plan and the county commissioner or council internal district boundaries.

The changing of internal district lines is not limited to this ten-year event; for example, county commissioner districts may be changed as often as every four years. (RCW 36.32.020)

The County Auditor has the responsibility to maintain voter registration records, which includes adjusting precinct lines, creating new maps, updating voter registration records, and notifying voters of their new districts and precincts. These procedures take place every year in some form.

Chapter 4, Section 1

When are elections held?

RCW 29A.04, 29A.52

Types of Elections

State Primary

Held the first Tuesday in August.

A Primary reduces the number of candidates in a race to two for the General Election ballot. Voters may vote for any candidate in a race.

Nonpartisan races **skip** the Primary to appear only on the General Election ballot:

- When it is a cemetery district or park and recreation district;
- When it is an unexpired county partisan race with one candidate;
- When it is a PCO race with one candidate; and
- When fewer than three candidates file for office. This applies to all nonpartisan positions, including Superintendent of Public Instruction and judicial offices.

Partisan races have a primary regardless of the number of candidates filed unless the office is an unexpired county race and only one candidate filed for the position.

General Election

Held the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

A General Election is scheduled at regular intervals for a specific purpose, such as electing the officers for any of these jurisdiction types. General Elections include:

- Federal offices
- State offices
- County offices
- Municipalities
- Special purpose districts (School, Fire, Water, etc.)

If a voter must own land to participate in a district election, there may be a different election date. Refer to the RCW title specific to the jurisdiction.

Special Election

Issues or races not regularly scheduled may appear on a special election ballot. There are four dates available for special elections.

- February - 2nd Tuesday
- April - 4th Tuesday
- August (Primary) - 1st Tuesday
- November (General) - 1st Tuesday after 1st Monday

Issues concerning levies, bonds, levy lid lifts, annexations, changes in government structure, and even local advisory issues may appear on the ballot on any of these dates.

What triggers a special election?

A county or district submits a resolution or measure to the County Auditor by the deadline specific to the election. District law may have different deadlines. Refer to the specific district RCW title.

- Spring special elections - 60 days prior to the election date.
- August Primary - Friday before regular candidate filing.
- November General Election - the day of the preceding Primary.

Special Circumstance Elections

RCW 29A.56

Presidential Primary - The Presidential Primary is held on the 2nd Tuesday of March. RCW 29A.56.020 permits selection of an alternate date.

Recall Election - Respond to all requests for information on recalling elected officials by providing copies of RCW 29A.56.110 through RCW 29A.56.270. Notify the Secretary of State whenever your office files a recall charge.

Chapter 4, Section 2

What is on the ballot?

The races and measures that appear on the ballot are determined by:

- The type of election
- The year of the election
- The type of office
- The term of office
- The number of candidates in a race
- Jurisdiction resolutions requesting measures (issues) appear on a ballot

Election Races and Issues

RCW 29A.36, 29A.52; WAC 434-230

Each election type serves a different purpose. The races & issues on the ballot will vary.

Election Type	Appearing on the Ballot
Primary *	Scheduled nonpartisan races with 3 or more candidates Partisan races Local district measures Some charter county offices PCO (precinct committee officer) races with 2 or more candidates
General Elections	Top two Primary vote-getters (partisan and nonpartisan) Nonpartisan races that skipped the Primary State initiatives and referenda Local district measures President & Vice President
Special Elections	Local district measures - Advisory votes - District formations - Changes in government structure - Levies and Bonds

*The following races skip the Primary: park & recreational, cemetery, some judicial districts, any unexpired county partisan race with one candidate and PCO with fewer than two candidates.

Internal districts representing a geographical sub-district (often defined as "District No.") may require different Primary ballots within that jurisdiction. Refer to a jurisdiction's statutes to learn more.

- ⓘ ***Judicial offices may have different rules. Always refer to the clearinghouse notice Judicial Offices located on the Office of the Secretary of State’s Clearinghouse Notices webpage.***

Presidential Primary Ballots

RCW 29A.56

The Presidential Primary does not determine the actual Presidential candidates appearing on the General Election ballot. It operates under different rules than the state Top Two Primary.

- A political party may choose to use, or not use, the results of the Presidential Primary to determine the delegates sent to the national conventions.
- Only major political parties may participate.
- The voter is required to declare a major political party by signing an oath written by the political party.

Elections Requiring Property Ownership

Some special purpose district elections require voters to own property in the district. Diking, drainage, and flood control districts are such district types. When conducting a General Election for these districts, always refer to that jurisdiction’s statutes.

Election Year

RCW 29A.04, 29A.52, 29A.80

The year of an election determines the jurisdictions participating. For example, U.S. President and Vice President appear only on the General Election ballot every four years. Charter counties may adopt different schedules for county or special purpose elections.

Year of Election Scheduled jurisdictions	Primary	General Election
<p>Odd Year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City, town and special purpose districts • Vacant partisan offices • Vacant judicial offices (other than district court) • Regularly scheduled charter county and judicial offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonpartisan offices (except cemetery & park) w/ 3 or more candidates • Partisan offices except unexpired term county offices with a single candidate • Judges — use the jurisdiction’s statutes as necessary and the Judicial Offices clearinghouse notice as a reference • Local measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The top two vote-getters from the Primary • Any races skipping the Primary • State initiatives and referenda (provided by the Office of the Secretary of State) • Judges — use the jurisdiction’s statutes as necessary and the Judicial Offices clearinghouse notice as a reference • Local measures
<p>Even Year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal & state offices • Judicial offices • Partisan county offices • Public Utility Districts (PUD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partisan offices — all races • Nonpartisan offices w/ 3 or more candidates • Judges — use the jurisdiction’s statutes as necessary and the Judicial Offices clearinghouse notice as a reference • Local measures • PCO w/ 2 or more candidates in major party race 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The top two vote-getters from the Primary • Any races skipping the Primary (except PCO) • State initiatives and referenda (provided by the Office of the Secretary of State) • Judges — use the jurisdiction’s statutes as necessary and the Judicial Offices clearinghouse notice as a reference • Local measures • Presidential nominees

Office Types

RCW 29A.04

Classifications of Elective Service

Two classifications apply to elective offices.

Partisan – Any public office where a candidate may indicate political party preference on the ballot. State executive officials, federal senators and representatives, state senators and representatives, and most county officials hold partisan offices.

Candidates may indicate a party preference when filing, but this declaration is not a political party affiliation. Candidates are not nominees of that party.

President/Vice President and Precinct Committee Officers affiliate with political parties. These candidates have the party affiliation printed on the ballot; the presidential and vice-presidential candidates are nominees of their party.

Nonpartisan – Any public office where a candidate does not indicate political party preference on the ballot. **Includes the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, justices and judges,** cities, towns, special purpose districts (school, fire, water, etc.) and some charter county officials.

Designation of an office as partisan or nonpartisan will determine when, or if, an office appears on the ballot. Remember, whenever considering judicial offices for the ballot; refer to the relevant statutes and you can use the [Judicial Elections](#) clearinghouse notice available on the Office of the Secretary of State's clearinghouse notices webpage.

Office Terms

RCW 29A.24

The term of office describes the length of time an elected official will serve.

Regular Term – Also described as full term.

- For most offices, the regular term is two, four or six years.
- The length of regular terms does not need to be printed on the ballot.
- Winners assume the office at the official beginning of the new term which is usually:
 - Second Monday in January for state offices.
 - January 1 for other elected officials unless determined by statute or charter.

Unexpired Term – A vacancy occurring more than one year before candidate filing for the regularly scheduled election.

- An appointee may temporarily fill the vacancy.

- Unexpired terms are at least one year in length. If the unexpired term is less than one year, the unexpired term is considered a short term.
- It is required to list the length of the unexpired term on the ballot.
- Winners assume office immediately following certification of the General Election.

① ***PCOs do not have elections for unexpired or short terms. All vacancies are filled by party appointment, not by election.***

Short Term – The brief period starting upon certification of the General Election and ending with the start of the next full term. (Short terms last about one month.) By definition, an appointee should be filling the office or the office is vacant at the time of candidate filing.

- A short term appears on the ballot in conjunction with a full term and is printed on the ballot as a single phrase (short and full term).
- The winning candidate fills both the short and regular term. The same candidate swears to an oath and takes office immediately after certification of the General Election and again when the regular term begins.

① ***School directors never have a short-term position. All school director regular terms begin as soon as the election is certified.***

Candidates

RCW 29A.04, 29A.24

The number of candidates filing for an office may determine if a race appears on the Primary ballot, the General Election ballot, or skips to the next scheduled election (see “Election Year” in this section).

Office type	Skips the Primary	Skips the General
Partisan office - Unexpired term	County office with only one candidate. No candidates filed in a regular filing period.	No candidates filed in a special filing period.
Partisan office – Regular term	No candidates filed in a regular filing period. Less than two PCO candidates file for a party position.	No candidates filed in a special filing period.
Nonpartisan offices (other than judicial)	Fewer than 3 candidates file. Parks and Recreation district. Cemetery district. No candidates filed in a regular filing period.	No candidates filed in a special filing period.

Judicial	Use the jurisdiction's statutes as necessary and the Judicial Offices clearinghouse notice as a reference.	Use the jurisdiction's statutes as necessary and the Judicial Offices clearinghouse notice as a reference.
Charter county offices	Refer to county charter.	Refer to county charter.

You must notify any candidate when their race skips the Primary ballot and moves directly to the General Election.

Judicial Elections in Washington State

The chart below explains the framework for judicial elections.

Candidates	Municipal Court; District Court; Court of Appeals; Supreme Court		Superior Court	
	Primary	General	Primary	General
1	No ¹	Yes ²	County population less than 100,000: No ¹ County population 100,000 or more: No; certificate of election is issued after candidate filing. ³	County population less than 100,000: Yes ² County population 100,000 or more: No; certificate of election is issued after candidate filing. ³
2	No ¹	Yes ²	No ¹	Yes ²
3 or more	Yes	Yes ²	Yes	Yes ²

1 [RCW 29A.52.220\(1\)](#)

2 [RCW 29A.36.170\(1-2\)](#)

3 [WA Const. Art. IV § 29](#) (**Note:** When applied to multi-county jurisdictions, all counties in the jurisdiction must meet the population threshold.)

Review the [Judicial Elections clearinghouse notice](#) for complete chart details.

Measures

RCW 29A.24, 29A.36

A measure on the ballot requires a **ballot title**. Ballot titles include the name of the jurisdiction asking the question, a concise description of the measure, and a question. Upon accepting a resolution, request a ballot title from one of the following:

- The city attorney, if a city or town passed the resolution.
- The county Prosecuting Attorney for all other local jurisdictions.

① ***When sending the resolution to your Prosecuting Attorney, set a deadline for receiving a ballot title.***

After receiving the ballot title, you must send a copy to the jurisdiction for review even if there were no changes to the title submitted with the resolution. The jurisdiction has 10 working days to appeal to the Superior Court.

Chapter 4, Section 3

Candidate Filing

RCW 29A.24, WAC 434-215

In order to appear on a ballot, candidates must file an official declaration of candidacy with the designated filing officer. Filing officers may only accept declarations of candidacy during specific periods.

Pre-filing Considerations

Public Disclosure Commission

RCW 42.17A

The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) monitors state and local candidate campaign financing, financial compliance with state law, and political advertising. Candidates running for US Congress or President/Vice President report directly to the Federal Election Commission (FEC).

County election administrators must notify the PDC of the following information:

- The names of incumbents and the number of registered voters in each jurisdiction based on the last General Election. The PDC requests counties provide this information each January.
 - Names of all candidates filing for, or withdrawing from, the ballot/election. (Filings for cemetery districts and districts where voters must meet special qualifications such as ownership of land are exempt.)
- ① ***The Secretary of State's Office will use information in the VoteWA system to notify the PDC of candidate filings and withdrawals. Ensure complete and timely data entry into VoteWA.***

PDC Reports

The County Auditor must retain any copies of PDC reports provided by candidates according to the County Auditor Retention Schedule.

PDC contact information:

www.pdc.wa.gov or (360) 753-1111.

Candidate Packets

The [PDC](#) provides candidate packets electronically and online. Printed forms are available if requested by the County Auditor around January 1 of each year.

Lists of Offices Open for Election

Information from Jurisdictions

Prior to **February 1**, the County Auditor sends a questionnaire to each local jurisdiction scheduled to elect officers in the next General Election. The questionnaire confirms information regarding open offices. At a minimum, jurisdictions need to confirm:

- The offices open for the General Election of that year, including vacancies.
- The names of incumbents currently in those offices, including appointees.
- The annual salary for each office at the time of candidate filing.

Additional information may be included.

The questionnaire should request response from jurisdictions prior to **March 1**.

i *Political parties are not considered jurisdictions.*

Offices Open for Filing

Prepare a list of offices sorted by jurisdiction. This list must include office positions or district designations and filing fees. Post the list online or distribute to the public at least two weeks before candidate filing.

Offices open for filing during the regular filing period:

- An office regularly scheduled for the ballot that year.
- A vacancy open prior to the first day of candidate filing *and* the jurisdiction notifies the County Auditor of the vacancy prior to the last three days of candidate filing.

i *Refer to Special Three-day Filing Period in this section (pg. 15) to learn about voids and vacancies.*

Filing Fees and Filing Fee Petitions

Some offices require a filing fee. The salary **at the time** of filing determines the filing fee for an office. Salary does not include compensation based on meetings attended or expenditures covered as per diem.

A candidate lacking sufficient funds to pay a fee at the time of filing may submit a filing fee petition **with** the declaration of candidacy.

A sufficient filing fee petition must have one valid signature of a registered voter in the jurisdiction for each dollar of the filing fee. The filing officer is responsible for checking each petition signature against the voter registration signature. A signature is not required for portions less than one dollar. Do not round the amount up or down.

Amount of Annual Salary	Filing Fee	Filing Fee Sufficiency Requirement	Petition
No salary	No filing fee	No petition signatures required	
Less than \$1,000	\$10.00	Ten signatures	
\$1,000 or greater	1% of the annual salary	Signatures equal to whole dollar amount of the filing fee	

Example: The filing fee is \$406.98, so the petition must have 406 valid signatures of voters registered within the jurisdiction of the office.

May I accept a combination of money and signatures?

No. The candidate either pays the full filing fee **or** submits a petition with the required signatures. Candidates filing with a filing fee petition may not file online.

May I accept a copy of petition signatures?

Petitioners must submit the original signatures.

May a candidate bring in more signatures after submitting a declaration?

The candidate must submit all signatures at the time of filing the declaration of candidacy. Do not accept signatures later.

Who may sign the filing fee petition for candidates of an internal nominating district?

If voters of the entire jurisdiction are allowed to vote on the position in the General Election, any voter in the jurisdiction may sign the filing fee petition. For example, port commissioner races are restricted in the Primary to voters of the internal district, but all voters of the port district may sign the petition because they will all vote on the position in the general election.

No voter may sign two petitions for the same office.

Where to File

Office of the Secretary of State (OSOS)

Candidates file with the Office of the Secretary of State for:

- Federal offices
- Statewide offices
- State Legislature
- Supreme Court Justices
- State Senators
- State Representatives
- Court of Appeals Judges
- Superior Court Judges

County Auditor

All other offices not filing with the Secretary of State file with the appropriate County Auditor. These offices include but are not limited to:

- City and town elected offices.
- Minor taxing district offices.

In multi-county districts (joint districts) other than school districts, the county with the most registered voters for that district is the filing officer. The Superintendent of Public Instruction designates the county filing officer for all shared school districts.

VoteWA may be used to notify the Secretary of State and joint jurisdictions upon approval of a candidate's filing.

When to File

Regular Filing Week

The filing office must be open all five days of candidate filing week, even if Friday is not a normal business day. Candidate filing:

- Begins at 8am the first Monday in May.
- Ends at the 5pm the following Friday.
- Filing offices maintain regular business hours (8am-5pm)

Special Three-Day Filing Periods

What happens if no one files for an office during the regular filing period?

Provide a second opportunity for that office by opening a three-day special filing period if:

- A void in candidacy occurs. A void happens if no one has filed for an office after the end of the official filing period.
- A vacancy occurs prior to the first day of regular filing week but was not open for filing during regular candidate filing.

The County Auditor determines when to open a special three-day filing.

ⓘ PCO vacancies do not trigger a special three-day filing period. The parties are responsible for filling any PCO vacancies.

What happens if an office has no candidates after the regular and special filing periods?

The office **lapses** and skips the current year's ballot. These vacancies appear in the next election scheduled for that type of office as an "unexpired" or "short term." The incumbent stays in office until then.

ⓘ For detailed information on managing voids and vacancies, refer to the clearinghouse notice [Filing for Office](#).

How to File

Candidates may file a Declaration of Candidacy in person, by mail, electronically, or online.

Deadlines and rules apply to regular filing and special filing periods. A declaration received after the filing period has closed must be denied.

In Person

A candidate may submit an official [Declaration of Candidacy form](#) in person or by messenger. Candidates should fill out their own declaration forms; refrain from doing it for them.

By Mail

By mail means delivery through the US Postal Service or other commercial mailing service.

- Declarations submitted electronically (fax, email) are not considered by mail.
- Do not accept declaration forms that are received earlier than 10 business days before the first day of filing week. Return these to the candidate with a notice that it was received too early to be processed.
- Wait until the first day of the filing period to process and publicize mailed declarations.

The Elections Division must receive declaration forms no later than 5:00 p.m. the last day of candidate filing. Delivery to another department in the county or state does not qualify as valid delivery.

Electronic (Fax, Email)

RCW 29A.24.255

With the exception of filing fee petitioners, candidates may submit declarations of candidacy electronically. The filing officer should accept faxed or emailed declaration forms during the filing period.

- The same deadlines apply.
- If payment of a fee is required, electronic filing is not complete until receipt of the fee.

Online Filing

The VoteWA online candidate filing function is available to all counties for all races. Post a link on your county website for candidate access.

All online filing systems must be available 24 hours a day.

- Online filing begins exactly at 8:00 AM on the first day of filing and ends precisely at 5:00 p.m. on the day filing closes.

- Online candidate filings must be reviewed and approved prior to publication on your website.
- Candidates filing online must pay any applicable filing fee before the filing is complete.

Special Three-Day Filings

Apply the regular filing period rules and methods when conducting special three-day filing periods.

Special Considerations

Special Purpose Districts

Districts requiring land ownership may conduct candidate filing according to that jurisdiction's laws, and it may occur at a different time of the year. The district may also require use of a different candidate declaration form and have different qualifications. Always refer to the specific RCW Titles and Sections for that jurisdiction first before following Title 29A RCW.

Precinct Committee Officers (PCOs)

RCW 29A.80, WAC 434-230

Precinct Committee Officers (PCOs) are political party positions voted upon and elected in the Primary of every even-numbered year. Candidates compete against other candidates of the same political party within a single precinct.

- Each **major** political party has an elected position in every precinct. Minor political parties do not have elected precinct committee officers.
- If a single candidate files for a PCO position in a precinct, the candidate is considered elected. The position does not appear on the ballot.
- If no candidates file for a PCO position in a precinct, the party fills the position by appointment.
- PCOs may not submit a Voters' Pamphlet profile and do not appear in pamphlets.
- Write-in candidates are not permitted for PCO races.

Do not open a special filing period for voided or vacated PCO positions.

Filing Procedures

WAC 434-208, 434-230

At the time of filing, a candidate must be:

- Registered to vote in the district of the office and any applicable internal district. You must confirm the candidate's voting residence lies within the jurisdiction and internal district, if applicable, of the office prior to approving the declaration.
- Qualified to serve if elected. It is the responsibility of the candidate to know if they have all the qualifications required for the office (e.g., residency). The County Auditor does not determine if the candidate is qualified.

Prospective candidates may register to vote or update their voter registration at any time **prior** to filing.

- ① ***Remember to confirm internal taxing district boundary lines with the taxing districts prior to filing week.***
- ① ***Voters who are 17 years old at the time of candidate filing and who will be 18 years old at the time of the primary are eligible to be PCO candidates. They are not eligible to run as candidates for other offices.***

Processing a Declaration

For each declaration, you need to:

- Verify the receipt of the filing is within the filing period, particularly if the candidate files online, electronically or by mail.
- Confirm the applicant is currently a registered voter within the jurisdiction of the office. The information on the declaration must match the information on the voter registration. If the candidate has moved, process any applicable voter registration update for the candidate before accepting the declaration.
- If the office requires a candidate registration in an internal sub-district (e.g., county commissioner district or school director district) you must verify this also. Possible resources: maps, assessor's lookup system or other county geographic information system.
- If necessary, accept and receipt the filing fee.
- Make any notations on the declaration required by your office procedures.
- Notify the candidate of the deadline for withdrawing from the ballot and that filing fees are not refundable.

Party Preference

Candidates for partisan office, other than US President/Vice President and PCO, may indicate a party preference. This is the candidate's preference and does not indicate if the candidate is endorsed by or affiliated with that political party.

- If no choice is indicated, apply the default phrase “States No Party Preference” to the candidate’s ballot information.
- Except as described in WAC 434-215-120, there are no restrictions to the name of a political party.
- If a candidate indicates both a party preference and “States No Party Preference,” use the party preference written in.

President/Vice President and PCOs must declare a party affiliation.

- Political supporters nominate candidates for US President/Vice President using a convention process. These candidates affiliate with a political party or convention. In this case, party preference language is not used.
- PCO, a political party office, requires candidates indicate political party affiliation when filing. Party preference language is not used.
- Exception: While nominated by convention, independent Presidential candidates do not affiliate with a political party.

Write-in Candidates

Declared Write-in Candidates

Any qualified person may become a declared write-in candidate by filing a Declaration of Write-in Candidacy with the appropriate filing officer.

Write-in candidates must file a declaration to have votes tallied for a race. They may file a declaration of candidacy form up until 8:00 p.m. on Election Day.

Write-in candidates that file more than 18 days before an election do not pay a filing fee. Those that file 18 days or less before an election must pay a filing fee. For offices with a fixed annual salary of more than \$1,000, the filing fee is 1% of the annual salary. For offices with a fixed annual salary of \$1,000 or less, the filing fee is \$25. Candidates for offices without a fixed annual salary must also pay the \$25 filing fee, including those paid on per diem or per meeting basis.

Declared write-in candidates may submit a filing fee petition in lieu of the filing fee.

Who may not file as a write-in candidate?

RCW 29A.24.311

Do not accept a write-in declaration when:

- The candidate filed as a regular candidate or a declared write-in candidate for the same office in the Primary. This candidate may file a write-in declaration for a different office in the General.
- The candidate has already filed for another position on the ballot.

ⓘ Exception: office of precinct committee officer, charter review board member, or freeholder.

Undeclared Write-in Candidates

Voters may cast votes for a person simply by writing in the name on the ballot; however, votes for these names will not be tallied without a timely declaration of write-in candidacy filed by the candidate.

① ***State law prohibits write-in candidates for PCO elections.***

Processing Filing Fee Petitions

RCW 29A.24.101 and WAC 434-215-025 prescribe filing fee petition formats. Process filing fee petitions in four steps.

1. Verify each voter signing the petition is a valid voter in the district (not the sub-district if all voters in the district vote on the General Election ballot).
 - Count the first valid signature — Reject any subsequent signatures of a voter on the same petition.
 - No voter may sign two different petitions for the same office. Reject all signatures from a person if they sign more than one petition.
 - You may stop checking signatures when the number of valid signatures equals the number required.
2. Certify the petition as:
 - Sufficient — If the number of valid signatures equals or exceeds the number of filing fee dollars required.
 - Insufficient — Reject the petition because there are not enough valid signatures. Once submitted, do not accept additional signatures.
3. Notify the candidate of the sufficiency or insufficiency of the petition.
4. Sufficient and insufficient filing fee petitions have different retention schedules. (<http://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/RecordsManagement/RecordsRetentionSchedulesforCountyAuditors.aspx>.)

What happens when a petition is missing essential information?

Filing fee petitions may be rejected if:

- The petition is not in the proper form;
- The petition clearly bears insufficient signatures;
- The petition did not accompany a declaration of candidacy;
- The petition did not meet the filing deadline.

May I reject a candidate's declaration?

Yes, but only if the declaration is 'defective as to face.'

- Example 1: A candidate lists an address outside the district on the declaration form.
- Example 2: The candidate is not a registered voter.
- Example 3: A candidate has already filed for another office on the ballot (with the exception of PCO or temporary position).

May a candidate submit two declarations?

A candidate's name may not appear more than once on a ballot unless one of the positions is for the following:

- Charter review board.
- Freeholder.
- Precinct committee officer.

Additionally, a filed candidate cannot also be a declared write-in candidate for another office appearing on the same ballot.

A candidate must withdraw the initial candidate filing before filing for another position. This rule applies to all instances including candidates filing for the wrong office, or candidates submitting more than one filing electronically. **Filing fees are not refundable.**

A candidate may not reactivate or resubmit any declaration of candidacy that the candidate has withdrawn. In this instance, the candidate must file a new declaration and pay the filing fee (if any) again before candidate filing ends.

May an individual hold more than one office?

A person may serve in more than one office during the same time as long as there is no conflict of interest as determined by the courts.

Withdrawals

WAC 434-215

Candidates wishing to withdraw from the ballot may do so no later than close of business the **Monday** following the regular candidate filing period. Special three-day filing periods do not have withdrawal periods.

At the time of filing, candidates must be informed that:

- The last day to withdraw is the Monday following regular candidate filing.
- The filing officer must receive a signed request for withdrawal.
- A candidate may not revoke a withdrawal.
- Filing fees are not refundable.

When a candidate withdraws, unless using the VoteWA candidate filing module, you must notify the Public Disclosure Commission.

If a race has no candidates after the last day for withdrawals, a void in candidacy exists and you must conduct a special three-day filing period.

Can I accept a withdrawal after the deadline?

No candidate may withdraw from the ballot after the close of business on the Monday following the last day of filing week.

If a candidate wishes to withdraw after the deadline:

- A court must remove the name from the ballot.
- The candidate may contact the PDC to declare that, if elected, they will not serve.

Ballot Order

RCW 29A.36

Primary Election Ballot

Determine the order of candidate names on the Primary ballot by lot draw. Order of the lot draw also applies to the ballot order for Primary sample and provisional ballots.

Conduct the lot draw immediately following the close of Candidate Filing Week.

Who conducts the lot drawing?

Secretary of State determines the order of names:

- Federal offices.
- Statewide offices.
- State Legislative and Judicial offices.

County Auditor determines the order of names:

- Cities, towns, and minor taxing districts. The lead county (county with the majority of voters) determines ballot order for shared jurisdictions. Notify joint counties of the ballot order.
- School districts' lead county is determined by State Superintendent for Public Instruction

General Election Ballot

The top vote-getter of a Primary race appears first, followed by the second-place vote-getter.

Exceptions are:

- If an office did not appear in the Primary, the names appear in lot draw order.
- Presidential/Vice Presidential nominees' order is determined by political party. The candidates from the major party which received the most votes in the last Presidential election are listed first, then the candidates from the major political party with the second most votes are listed second. Minor party and independent candidates are listed in the order that the nominations were received by the Secretary of State.
- If the top two vote-getters have the same number of votes in a Primary, determine the order of names for the General Election ballot by lot.

Appearing on the Ballot – Special Cases

Judicial Offices

With the exception of Superior Court, you should manage judicial offices as you would any nonpartisan office. Judicial offices may appear on the ballot in any year.

- ① ***For more information, refer to the jurisdiction's statutes as necessary and the Judicial Offices clearinghouse notice as a reference.***

Precinct Committee Officer (PCO)

- Only PCO races with two or more candidates for the same party office appear on the ballot.
- The order of the PCO races depends on the number of votes cast statewide in the last Presidential election for each major political party. PCO offices are listed in the same order as Presidential candidates.

The Office of President and Vice-President

RCW 29A.04, 29A.56

Declarations of candidacy and filing fees are not required.

Major Political Party – A major political party is one whose nominees for President and Vice President received at least five percent (5%) of the total votes cast at the last preceding Presidential election. For major political parties:

- National conventions nominate candidates and submit official nominations to the Secretary of State.
- Nomination certificates must include names of official electors to serve at the Electoral College.

Minor Political Party – A political organization other than a major political party; and

- State conventions with at least 100 attendees nominate candidates and submit official nominations to the Secretary of State.
- Petitions signed by at least 1,000 valid Washington registered voters must be signed at the conventions.
- Candidates may hold multiple conventions to collect signatures.
- Nomination certificates must include names of official electors to serve at the Electoral College.

Independent Candidate— A candidate nominated by convention without a party affiliation. Independent candidates must submit the same paperwork as minor political parties.

Lapsed Election

If a nonpartisan race is without a candidate after both the regular filing period and special filing period, the scheduled election for that office lapses.

- The office is not printed the ballot.
- No write-in votes will be counted.
- The incumbent remains in office until the election of a successor in the next regularly scheduled election for such offices.

- At the next regularly scheduled election, the office will appear on the ballot for the remainder of the term.

If the incumbent resigns after the special filing period, an appointee fills the position until the next election for that position.

Chapter 4, Section 4

Election Preparation

Publish in a Newspaper of General Circulation

Notice of Election

RCW 29A.52.355

Deadline: 15 to 5 days before the deadline for voter registration applications by mail.

Required content:

- Voter registration information:
 - Last day to register online/mail.
 - Last day to transfer or update an existing registration.
 - Last day to register in person.
 - Registration locations.
- Election information:
 - Type of election.
 - Date of election.
 - How to obtain a ballot.
 - List of jurisdictions participating in the election.
 - Positions appearing on the ballot (Candidate names and addresses are not required).
 - Short titles of ballot measures (see WAC 434-208-140).
 - Where to find additional information about the election.
- Public meetings:
 - Canvassing Board Meeting Notice.
 - Dates, times and locations of public meetings associated with the election.

If a local voters' pamphlet is mailed to all residences in the jurisdiction, only the items listed under *Voter Registration Information* and *Public Meetings* must be in the notice. If the local voter's pamphlet is not mailed to all residences (e.g., is included in the ballot packet that is mailed to each voter), the notice must include the items listed under *Election Information*.

Notice of Availability of Services

RCW 29A.04.220

Deadline: Publish no later than 13 days before Primary or election. (Linked to the deadline to publish the Notice of Election)

Required content:

- Assistance information to elderly and persons with disabilities.

- Availability of voter registration aids.
- Availability of voting aids.
- Procedures for voting calculated to reach elderly and persons with disabilities.

Notification:

- **Either publish separately or incorporate into the Notice of Election.**

Publish Elsewhere

You must notify the listed persons in some fashion. You may use a combination of press releases, announcements on your web pages, letters, or email to get the word out.

Notice of Logic and Accuracy Test

WAC 434-335-320

Deadline: 24 hours before testing.

Must Include:

- Date and time of test

Best Practice:

- Include location and purpose of test

Notify:

- Press
- Political parties
- Public
- Candidates

Targeted Notices

Notice of Special Filing Period

RCW 29A.24.171, 24.181

Deadline: No later than 24 hours prior to conducting special filing period.

Must Include:

- List of offices open for filing.
- Dates, times, and location for beginning and ending of filing period.

Notify:

- Newspapers.
- Radio.
- Television in the county.
- Post online (optional).

Notice of Recount

RCW 29A.64.030

Deadline: At least one day before recount.

Must Include:

- Dates, times, and location of the recount. Recounts begin when you begin sorting ballots by precinct (WAC 434-264-090).
- Each person entitled to receive notice may attend accompanied by counsel.
- Any observer rules you have adopted or addressed in WAC 434-264.

Notify:

- Applicant or affected parties.
- Candidates for that office.
- Media.

Less Frequently Used Notices

Not all required notices are found in RCW 29A. The following are some of the notices required for special purpose elections:

- Notice of election for organization/reorganization of school districts (RCW 28A.315.275).
- Election on question of incorporation (RCW 35.02.100).
- Notice of election to disincorporation (RCW 35.07.050).
- Election of charter adoption for first class cities (RCW 35.22.070).
- Notice of election for annexation by code city (RCW 35A.14.070).
- Petition and notice of election for transfer of city harbor (RCW 36.08.010).
- Notice of election for removal of county seat (RCW 36.12.030).
- Notice of election for bonds to fund roads and bridges (RCW 36.76.100).
- Notice of special Primary and special election to fill congressional vacancy (RCW 29A.28.050).

Ballot Design

RCW 29A.36, WAC 434-230

An election needs the following types of ballots:

- Official ballots.
- Accessible ballots (Accessible voting units (AVUs) must be programmed and available for voters).
- Provisional ballots.
- Sample ballots.

- Special absentee ballots.

All ballot types and styles must use the same format and must include:

- Title – Name of election, date of election, county name.
- Ballot instructions - including specific instructions for:
 - Partisan Primary
 - Partisan General Election
 - General Election for office of U.S. President and Vice President
 - PCO races
 - Casting a write-in vote
- Races and candidates
- Ballot style or precinct identifier
- Clear delineation between instructions and the first measure or office

ⓘ For more information about ballot formatting and design requirements, refer to the “Election Preparation” clearinghouse notices and the OSOS Ballot Format & Ballot Packet Materials Checklist on the OSOS website.

Order of Offices/Measures/Candidates

RCW and WAC specify the order for countywide and statewide races and measures. Written county procedures determine placement of local jurisdiction measures and offices on the ballot.

Measures for creating a district by resolution of the county legislative authority appear as a county measure. Following creation of a district, measures and offices will appear according to county policy.

Policies and procedures should provide instruction for placement when receiving more than one measure or type of measure from a district.

Order of Candidates Within a Race	
Top 2 Primary	
ORDER OF:	DETERMINED BY:
Partisan candidates	Lot Draw results
Nonpartisan candidates	Lot Draw results
(PCO) Precinct Committee Officer	Lot Draw results
RCW 29A.36.131	
General Election	
ORDER OF:	DETERMINED BY:
Partisan candidates	Highest vote-getter in Primary
Nonpartisan candidates with a Primary	Highest vote-getter in Primary
Nonpartisan and partisan candidates without a Primary	Lot Draw results
President / Vice President (major political parties)	Number of votes for the party candidate cast statewide in the last Presidential Election
RCW 29A.36.131, RCW 29A.36.161, RCW 29A.36.171, WAC 434-230-045	

Creating the Perfect Ballot

WAC 434-230

Refer to WAC 434-230-012 and the Ballot Format & Mail Ballot Packet Materials Checklist at <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/administrators/>

A ballot must meet specific design standards set by the type of voting system and state standards. Comply with WAC 434-230-012 in font size and style, alignment, capitalization, spacing, and use of color and shading.

The perfect ballot relies on functional design and careful proofing.

Try the following proofing techniques:

- Maintain a checklist for every proofing session.
- Proof from the original documents, such as online candidate filings in VoteWA, hardcopies of candidate filings received through the mail, and the certified lists from the Secretary of State for statewide candidates and measures.
- Check the candidates/races on ballot against the VoteWA list/report.
- Isolate proofers from distractions or move to a different room or location.
- Use two or more people and switch roles.
- Read to each other. This makes you concentrate on each word.
- Repeatedly proof using an entirely different set of eyes.

Primary-Only Voter Ballots

WAC 434-232

In Primary Elections, including the Presidential Primary, voters who will be 18 years old in time for the next General Election are eligible to vote in Primary contests.

Primary-only voters must receive a ballot that only includes eligible contests and excludes all ballot measures and any candidate races that are elected during the Primary, such as precinct committee officer, freeholder, charter review, and commissioners elected to a newly formed jurisdiction.

For a Primary that includes contests prohibited to primary-only voters, create primary-only voter ballot styles as needed. Primary-only voter ballots should be issued at the same time as other ballots, 30 or 45 days before Election Day for service and overseas voters, or 18 days before Election Day for other voters.

Sample and Provisional Ballots

RCW 29A.36, WAC 434-230

Use the same design principles and layout for sample and provisional ballots.

Sample Ballots

Sample ballots contain all issues and/or races within the county. If a county's population is one million or more, sample ballots may represent a region.

- A printed copy must be available through the Auditor's Office.
- Same format as official ballot.
- Easily distinguishable from regular ballots (e.g. different color).
- Available 15 days prior to election.
- If the county provides a local voters' pamphlet with a sample ballot, separate sample ballots are not necessary.

ⓘ *Review RCW 29A.36.151 and WAC 434-230-010 for "sample ballot" rules, WAC 434-250-105 for an "example of an actual ballot," and 52 USC 21082 for "a sample version of the ballot."*

Provisional Ballots

Provisional ballots must differ from the official ballot by being:

- Visually distinguishable from the official ballot.
- Incapable of tabulation by a voting system.

You may use sample ballots as provisional ballots, provided the sample ballot complies with both requirements.

Staffing

Base staffing on the anticipated number of returned ballots. Increased staffing for an election requires:

- Training – Signature verification has a mandatory training requirement. Workers need training in public information, office procedures and policy, document management and specific tasks.
- Oaths – Signature checkers and ballot box attendants require oaths.
- Equity – If possible, appointees working at voting centers and staffed deposit sites should represent both major political parties. Obtain a list of potential workers from each party.

ⓘ *Do not forget to allow for unplanned absences.*

Tabulation Equipment

Good maintenance is essential to proper tabulation.

i *Best practice: Have maintenance service on the tabulation equipment every year.*

Pre-Testing

You must pre-test all programming and tabulation equipment before the official tests. Thorough pre-testing of the tabulation system (including AVUs) includes testing:

- Hardware
- Software
- Reporting results (look at all reports)
- Retesting following any changes in programming
- Send results reports to VoteWA Support to verify upload to VoteWA

Test and verify all:

- Ballot styles
- Formats (alternative languages, electronically duplicated, ballot on demand)
- Voting responses
- Printers (from any printing source you will use)
- Special AVU considerations include proofing the text **and** audio

Official Logic and Accuracy Tests

The Logic & Accuracy (L&A) Test is an official test of a tabulation system. The test must verify that the system will correctly count and report the votes as cast.

The event is open for public observation. The County Auditor conducts the test prior to each election. For Primary and General Elections, a representative of the Office of the Secretary of State must attend when state offices and measures are on the ballot. In this instance, the State will schedule the test date and time.

To prepare, the county shall:

- Provide the official test matrix and a sample ballot to the OSOS at least 14 days before the test.
- Mark test ballots in the manner required in WAC.
- Invite political party observers.
- Draft and review all observer conduct rules.
- Notify the press, candidates, and public of the date and time of testing.

Logic and Accuracy Test Requirements:

- Conduct the test exactly as you count ballots during the election.
- Use the same machine operators.
- Issues, offices, and candidates must appear in all appropriate precincts.
- The system must accumulate votes accurately.
- Test the system reporting of votes against the test matrix.
- Verify the upload of test results to the statewide VoteWA system.

AVUs and Electronic Duplication Systems:

Test AVUs prior to the official testing of the tabulation system. You may not use any untested AVU in the election.

Test the programming on one AVU. Test every other AVU once the base programming has been loaded.

- Test functionality of every machine.
- Test reporting and accumulation of votes.

The County Auditor must provide a log of the testing at the official L&A Test.

ALL tabulation equipment used in an election must pass the L&A testing before tabulating ballots for that election.

What if a tabulation system fails the official L&A test?

Take the following steps if the system fails:

1. Identify and correct the issue.
2. Pretest to verify that all issues are corrected.
3. Conduct an emergency Logic and Accuracy test.

Emergency Logic and Accuracy Test

For any failure, the County Auditor must schedule an emergency L&A pursuant to WAC 434-335-310. At least one additional County Canvassing Board member or an OSOS representative must be present.

Official Observers

[RCW 29A.40.100, 12.130, WAC 434-261-020, 250-110](#)

Major political parties may appoint official observers to watch the election process. Prior to every election, the County Auditor must submit to the major political parties in writing:

- A request for observers to observe all mail ballot and counting center activities.
- The request must state the maximum number of observers allowed to observe ballot processing for each processing location.

County Auditors must provide training for official observers. Do you provide written guidelines to your observers? Anticipate their questions and concerns with a set of written instructions to describe:

- Duties and responsibilities of observers.
- The processes they will observe.
- Legal requirements for the various processes.

Be a considerate host:

- Set the boundaries. Clearly define the areas observers may freely access. If you have restrictions on activities (such as potlucks) make it known early on.
- Prepare and share staff schedules. Knowing when staff takes breaks or takes lunch will help observers arrange their day.
- Have sign-in sheets and name badges ready.
- Provide a space for observers to call their own. Designate a table, locker or shelf for purses, coats, and personal items.
- Outline the appropriate ways to ask questions. Providing written **guidelines** allows for effective and accurate information and speeds up communication between observer and the elections department.

Chapter 5, Section 1

Issuing Ballots

RCW 29A.40, WAC 434-250, WAC 434-235

In Washington State, we deliver a ballot packet to every active registered voter.

A voter may request their ballot be delivered to:

- The voter's residence,
- A mailing address, or
- An address specific to the election (may be electronic if the voter will be overseas or on active duty assignment away from their address of registration).

The County Auditor must record the ballot issue date and report the total number of ballots issued and returned by precinct for every election.

Protecting Voter Secrecy

If a voting system prints **sequential** numbers on ballots, the County Auditor must put a procedure in place to prevent ballots from being issued to voters sequentially.

If necessary, change the sequential order of ballots by shuffling prior to inserting them into envelopes. See the [Protecting Secrecy of the Vote](#) clearinghouse notice.

Service and Overseas Voters (UOCAVA)

WAC 434-235

Send overseas and service voters their ballots at least 30 days before a special election and 45 days before a Primary or General Election.

A UOCAVA voter may request the delivery method of their ballot (postal mail or electronic). This preference applies to every election until the voter changes their delivery preference or the ballot is returned undeliverable.

If the voter does not indicate a preference, mail the ballot through the US Postal Service.

If a UOCAVA ballot sent electronically returns as undeliverable with no alternate delivery email address, a ballot must be sent by postal mail.

If a UOCAVA voter submits a registration application that is missing a residential address and there isn't enough time to contact the voter to obtain an address, place the voter in the precinct encompassing the County Auditor's office for the current election.

- If the ballot is returned, count only federal races and countywide offices/issues.
- If the voter's precinct is still undetermined following the primary or election, place the voter on inactive status and send confirmation notices to obtain the voter's correct Washington residential address.

Special Absentee

RCW 29A.40.050

Issue a special absentee ballot for a state Primary or General Election when:

- A voter submits a [Special Absentee Ballot Application](#) (available in the Forms for Voters page on the [OSOS website](#)) or provides information indicating they will be unable to vote and return a regular ballot by normal mail delivery within the period provided for regular ballots, and
- The election is within 90 days.

If a regular ballot is not available, issue a paper ballot with blank lines for each office and provide the voter a list of known candidates and measures. The voter will write their choices on the blank lines.

- Do not wait to issue special absentee ballots; provide the voter with something as soon as you receive a complete request. If the voter did not indicate they are unable to vote and return a ballot by normal mail delivery on a special absentee form, you may contact the voter to verify they qualify for a special absentee ballot.
- Include a list of known candidates and measures for that election at the time of the application.
- Instructions accompanying a special absentee ballot must state the voter may also cast a regular ballot that, if received, will count in lieu of the special absentee ballot.

The voter is entitled to request a regular ballot in addition to the special absentee ballot.

Inactive Voter Requests a Ballot

When an inactive voter requests a ballot, issue an **official** ballot (not a provisional) .

An inactive voter may submit a change of address that is received no later than 8 days prior to the day of the primary or election and receive a current ballot based on that new precinct.

After 8 days prior to and until 8:00 pm Election Day, inactive voters may update their voter registration in person at a county election office, voting center, or auditor-designated location and receive a current ballot based on their new residential address.

A voter who fails to update their residential address by the 8-day registration deadline and does not appear in-person at an auditor-designated location to make the update may still vote according to their previous registration address. Too-late address changes will be effective following the election.

Inactive voters shall be placed on active status when a request for a ballot or registration update is received.

Identification Required

WAC 434-250

When the County Auditor has not yet verified a voter's identification, issue the provisionally-registered voter an **official** ballot.

The voter record shall be flagged in such a way that indicates a ballot shall not be processed until identification is provided. The return ballot envelope may also indicate that the voter is provisionally registered. Send an **Identification Notice** in compliance with WAC 434-250-045 at the time of the election or with the official ballot (this is not the Acknowledgment Notice).

The notice informs the voter:

- How to include a driver license pr permit number, state ID card number, tribal ID of a federally-recognized tribe in Washington state, the last four digits of a Social Security Number , or a photocopy of valid identification (include a list) with the voted ballot.
- How to return the required identification without compromising the security of the ballot.
- Notify voter, "If you fail to provide identification, your ballot will not be counted."
- Be sure to open any ballots received from provisionally registered voters to determine if the voter provided identification in the return or security envelopes or sleeve.

ⓘ *Don't get confused, provisionally registered voters do not receive a provisional ballot. They get an official ballot, but it cannot be counted until they provide identification.*

Replacement Ballot v. Reissued Ballot

When a ballot is requested and a ballot has not yet been accepted for that voter, you will need to determine if a replacement or reissued ballot is required:

- Replacement Ballot means a ballot that is the same type or style and precinct as the most recently issued ballot. The ballot contains the same races and measures.
 - Voters may request replacement ballots by telephone, in writing, electronically, or in person by the voter or a family member.
 - Issue replacement ballots to voters until 8:00 pm on Election Day.
 - Keep a record of each replacement ballot issued, including the date requested.
- Reissued Ballot means a new ballot issued to a voter as a result of a residential address update and the voter's ballot has changed — different precinct, different races, and/or different measures. This update can be a result of in-county address change or a registered voter transferring into a new county.
 - Voters may receive reissued ballots by submitting registration updates by telephone (if an in-county transfer), mail, online, electronic submission, or in-person no later than 8 days prior to Election Day. After the 8-day deadline, voters must appear in person at a county election office, auditor-designated location, or voting center to update their address and receive a reissued ballot.

If you are unable to find a voter's record, or if the voter indicates this is their first registration, register the voter and issue a ballot.

Address Confidentiality Program

Send official ballots to Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) participants as soon as possible but no later than 18 days before the election. It takes longer for ACP ballots to reach the voters as the ballots are mailed to the Secretary of State's ACP program, who then repackages the ballot and mail it to the voter, potentially adding 2-3 days to the mail time. Mailing these ballots first class and putting all ballots for a household in an envelope or box can reduce the mailing time.

Mark the return envelope for delivery to authorized county personnel. Only authorized county personnel may process ACP ballots.

Primary-Only Voters

Voters who are 17 and will reach the age of 18 on or before the November general election are Primary-Only Voters. They are not active registered voters until 90 days prior to an eligible primary.

Balloting:

- Only allowed to vote in winnowing contests for candidates

- Not allowed to vote in deciding contests: initiatives, precinct committee officers, freeholders etc.
- Separate styles of ballots must be made for this voter

Notices & Disclosure:

- All registration data is exempt from disclosure for those under 18
- Ballot issuance data is disclosable once produced
- Do not send any notice to this voter prior they are eligible to vote

Ballot Packets

WAC 434-230, -235

Postal Mail Packets

For All Voters

- Ballot — specific to a voter's precinct
- Security envelope/sleeve
- Pre-addressed, postage-paid return envelope with ballot declaration
- Outer mailing envelope with postal endorsements that forward ballots, send updated address information, and return undeliverable ballots to the County Auditor
- Instructions — specific to the election, how to mark the ballot, and type of ballot

Overseas and Service (UOCAVA) Voters

Packets mailed to overseas and service voters have additional requirements.

Use return envelopes with the ***federal*** prepaid return postage account when mailing through the US mailing services — do not use the business reply account meant for regular ballots.

Two additional items must be included:

1. A ballot privacy (secrecy) sheet; election information printed on this sheet must not verify or identify the voter in any way.
2. A space for the voter to provide a telephone number.

UOCAVA voting instructions must specify:

- How to return the ballot by email, fax, or postal mail.
- How to use the ballot privacy sheet when returning a voted ballot electronically.
- The need to sign the ballot declaration on or before Election Day.
- How to obtain information about the election — e.g., county website and email addresses.
- How the voter confirms their ballot arrived at the elections office.
- County Auditor's complete contact information: website, mailing address, email address, phone number, and fax number.

Ballots – Delivered Electronically

Overseas and Service (UOCAVA) Voters

UOCAVA voters may choose to receive ballots via email or fax. All ballot packets must include:

- Information required for every mail ballot packet.
- A ballot declaration.
- Voting instructions specific to voting an email/fax ballot.
- A privacy sheet to separate the voted ballot from the signed declaration.
- County Auditor website information.
- Instructions for returning the ballot electronically by 8:00 pm PST Election Day, or by mail and postmarked on or before Election Day.

Non-UOCAVA Voters

While any voter may request to have their ballot delivered to them electronically, non-UOCAVA voters must return a paper ballot by mail, ballot drop box, or in person. They may not return their ballots electronically.

Undeliverable Ballots

NVRA

An undeliverable ballot is one that the USPS could not deliver to the voter. The USPS may return mailed ballots to the election office as “undeliverable.”

You must request address change information from the USPS and use that information to update voter registration records. This information qualifies under the Federal National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) for changing the status of a voter.

If a ballot is returned as “undeliverable” or forwarded, the county auditor must process these ballots following certification of the election.

- If the updated address is within the county, update the voter registration and send the voter an acknowledgment notice, or
- If no updated address information was received or the updated address is outside the county, place the voter on inactive status and send the voter a confirmation notice to all known addresses.

Reconciliation Tip: Undeliverable ballots are not reported as “ballots returned” in election reports. They are just blank forms that did not reach voters as intended.

Deadlines for Mailing Ballots

Days prior to an election	Type of ballot mailing	Requirements for requests received after deadline
90 days	Special absentee ballots	<p><i>Requests outside of 90 days</i> — return application or hold until deadline.</p> <p><i>Requests inside 90 days</i> — issue immediately. Provide write-in ballots if official ballots are unavailable.</p>
45 days	Primary and General Election ballots to overseas and military voters	Requests for overseas or military ballots inside 45 days — issue immediately.
30 days	Special election ballots to overseas and military voters	Requests for overseas or military ballots inside 30 days — issue immediately.
18 days	Ballots for all elections are available and mailed to regular voters Ballots mailed to ACP voters AVUs available for use	Ballots requested inside 18 days — issue as soon as possible.
8:00 P.M. Election Day	Ballots issued for requests received prior to 8:00 PM	Requests received after 8:00 PM will not be honored.

Certificate of Mailing

RCW 29A.40, WAC 434-250

Before a primary or election, counties must certify ballot-mailing dates to the Secretary of State. The certification verifies your county mailed ballots no later than:

UOCAVA:

- The 30th day prior to special elections.
- The 45th day prior to Primary and General Elections.

All Other Ballots:

The day all other non-UOCAVA ballots are sent to the Post Office to be delivered, no later than the 18th day prior to all primaries and elections.

Blank [certification forms](#) are available on the OSOS Administrators web page.

Chapter 5, Section 2

Receiving Ballots

RCW 29A.40, WAC 434-250, -235

You may receive voted ballots by mail, electronically (**overseas and service voters only**), or at a ballot drop box. From the time of receipt until opening, place all received return envelopes in secure storage.

- ① ***For ballots deposited by voters at ballot drop boxes or voting centers, see requirements in the “Voting Centers and Ballot Deposit Sites” Clearinghouse Notice.***

Ballot Drop Boxes

Eighteen days before every election, the County Auditor must open a minimum of **two** ballot drop boxes in different geographical locations. However, each county must provide at least one ballot drop box in each city, town, and census-designated place with a post office as well as one ballot drop box for every 15,000 registered voters. These locations may be either a ballot drop box or a voting center.

State law prohibits electioneering, campaigning, or petitioning within 25 feet of any ballot drop box or 100 radial feet from a voting center.

Procedures for managing ballot boxes are the same at drop boxes and voting centers:

- Secure boxes at all times with a lock and uniquely numbered seal. The seal, in conjunction with a seal log, documents access to the ballots. Seal logs must record when the box was opened and by whom.
- Deposited ballots must be accessible only to the County Auditor, assigned staff, or people appointed by the County Auditor.
- Transport ballots to the counting center. Two authorized people can do this together or one person can transport ballots in a container already secured with a seal and log.
- At exactly 8:00 pm, **empty or seal** all ballot drop boxes to prevent late ballot delivery on Election Day.

Allow voters in line at 8:00 pm to vote (or finish voting) and accept their ballots.

- ① ***Review ballot drop box seal logs immediately following Election Day. Are you missing a log or is the log incomplete? It is important to verify that the ballot drop box is empty.***

Unstaffed Ballot Drop Boxes

Availability

Unstaffed ballot drop boxes are available beginning 18 days prior to the election. The County Auditor may set specific hours of availability. Many unstaffed boxes are available 24 hours per day.

Secure an unstaffed ballot drop box located in a building with a lock, seal, and seal log.

Outdoor unstaffed drop boxes must be:

- Tamper-proof.
- Weatherproof.
- Anchored to prevent removal.
- Located in convenient, well-lit areas.
- Accessible.

Operations

Empty the drop boxes:

- Frequently enough to prevent damage to ballots.
- Frequently enough to prevent the box from becoming too full.
- Frequently enough to prevent unauthorized access.
- With no fewer than two staff members or appointees.

Staffed Ballot Drop Boxes

Availability

The County Auditor establishes the dates and times that staffed ballot drop boxes are available to voters. Staffed ballot drop boxes must be open on Election Day and remain open until 8:00 pm.

Operations

At least two people must staff the box and subscribe to an oath regarding the discharge of duties. They must be:

- Employees of the County Auditor's office, or
- Representatives of different major political parties appointed by the County Auditor.

Staff must record the seal number of the box prior to the first deposit. The seal must be intact when returned to the Auditor.

Ballots returned after 8:00 pm Election Day **must** be placed in a separate container and sent to the Canvassing Board for rejection.

Deliver the sealed, unopened ballot box/container to the County Auditor upon closing.

Student Engagement Hubs

RCW 29A.40.180

Each state university, regional university, and The Evergreen State College, as defined in RCW 28B.10.016 must provide both voter registration services and ballots via the Public Voter Portal (VoteWA) to Washington citizens. Higher education campuses as defined in RCW 28B.45.012 (branch campuses) only need to provide ballots via the Public Voter Portal.

Student Hubs may be open during county business hours starting up to eight days before an election through 8:00 pm on Election Day or until all voters in line at 8:00 pm have voted and deposited their ballots. Hubs are only required to be open during November General Elections.

A list of all Student Engagement Hubs must appear in the printed State Voters' Pamphlet and the printed Local Voters' Pamphlet produced by the applicable counties. Institutions must contract with the county for Student Engagement Hub operation.

① For further information, refer to the “ESB 6313 Advisory #2 — Student Engagement Hubs” advisory.

Voting Center Requirements

RCW 29A.40.160, WAC 434-250-105

Availability

At least one voting center, typically the County Auditor’s Office, must be open during regular business hours during the entire voting period, starting 18 days prior to the election and ending at 8:00 pm Election Day. In addition to the location requirements outlined in [RCW 29A.40.160\(2\)](#), the County Auditor may determine the days and hours of any additional voting centers.

Operations

Requirements for staffed ballot drop boxes also apply to voting centers.

Additionally, voting centers must:

- Be in an accessible location (ADA).
- Be located in a public building or building leased by a public entity including, but not limited to, libraries.
- Be marked with signage outside the building indicating it is a place for voting.
- Issue ballots, including all appropriate ballot packet materials (ballot declarations), for all Washington voters both in and out-of-county.
- Offer disability access voting, ensuring voter privacy.
- Provide provisional ballots.
- Provide voters’ pamphlets — state and local when applicable.
- Provide real-time voter registration services via VoteWA for all Washington voters both in and out-of-county (Universal Registration). Offer conditional registration and balloting services if the system is unable to process applications.
- Display voter information required by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), including election-specific information and an example of an actual ballot or a sample ballot in substantially the same format as an actual ballot.
- Display appropriate partisan office notice.
- Provide instructions on how to mark the ballot properly.
- Provide election materials in alternative languages, if required.
- Assist voters.
- Provide a ballot drop box.
- Secure the ballot drop box at exactly 8:00 pm on Election Day, or after all voters in line have cast a ballot.

For more information regarding voter registration and issuing ballots for out-of-county voters, refer to the “ESB 6313 Advisory #1 — Universal Registration” advisory.

How to Vote on an AVU

Accessible voting units (AVU) allow a voter to mark and print a paper ballot. The voter places the ballot into a security envelope and a signed ballot return envelope. Some systems require the voter to bring the ballot they received in the mail while others print the ballot on blank paper.

- Voters do not need to provide identification, nor do they sign a declaration other than the one on the envelope.
- If the system requires the voter to bring their ballot with them, the voter simply uses the device to mark the ballot.
- If the system prints the ballot, election staff must consult VoteWA for the correct ballot style and load the ballot into the system for the voter.
- For either system, marked ballots are placed in a security envelope and a signed ballot return envelope, then deposited in the ballot drop box.
- The ballot is processed the same as ballots returned through the mail or ballot drop box.

Provisional Ballots

When to issue a provisional ballot?

- The voter's record shows an accepted ballot, but the voter asserts they have not yet voted and requests a new ballot.
- A voter is registered in another state.

A provisional ballot packet includes:

- A ballot that cannot be read by the tabulation system
- A secrecy envelope
- A provisional ballot outer envelope
- Written notice about the free access system

The voter must:

- Sign the declaration.
- Provide addresses (registered address, both present and former if applicable).
- Include date of birth.
- Insert the ballot inside the secrecy and outer envelopes and return to the elections staff.

Elections staff will verify that all required information is on the outer envelope.

ⓘ Do not confuse a provisional registration with provisional ballots they are not connected.

Free Access System

Through a free access system or voter notification, every provisional voter must be able to learn if their provisional ballot was counted. **At the time of voting**, provide the provisional ballot voter with written information on how to ascertain the status of their provisional ballot without cost to the voter.

Requirements:

- Instructions on how to determine if their ballot was counted must be given to the voter at time of casting a provisional ballot.
- Information must be available to the voter one week after certification.
- Must be free to voter.
- Must be exclusively available to voter.
- Information on the system or voter notification should show the disposition of the ballot was determined as valid and counted, not counted, or an explanation of why it was rejected, or sent to another county for determination.

See [52 USC 21082](#), [RCW 29A.60.195](#), and [WAC 434-261-125](#).

Chapter 5, Section 3

Initial Processing

RCW 29A.40, .60, WAC 434-250, -261

The three phases of ballot processing: **initial**, **final**, and **tabulation**.

Initial processing refers to all steps taken to prepare ballots for tabulation. When a voter moves from one precinct to another, or if the voter's ballot style changes, the first valid ballot that matches the voter's current ballot is the ballot to count.

Initial processing begins upon receipt of the ballot, including:

- Postmark verification
- Signature verification
- Crediting voters
- Opening and separating envelopes
- Manual inspection of ballots
- Scanning (if applicable)
- Duplication, resolution, or adjudication
- Any additional steps required to prepare the ballots for tabulation

Postmark Verification

A valid mailed ballot requires a postmark date of Election Day or before. Ballots deposited in a ballot drop box do not have postmarks, but ballot drop boxes are closed at 8:00 pm Election Day. The fluorescent barcode printed on the ballot envelope and a date of mailing through a commercial mailing service (i.e. FedEx, UPS) qualifies as a postmark. Refer any ballot envelope postmarked after Election Day or deposited later than 8:00 pm to the County Canvassing Board.

Exceptions to the postmark requirement for mailed ballots:

- Instead of a postmark, UOCAVA ballots require a signature date on or before Election Day.
- When the postmark is illegible or missing on non-UOCAVA ballots, use the date the voter signed the declaration.
- Postage that prints a date (metered or printed stickers) does not qualify as a postmark — use the date the voter signed the declaration.

Signature Verification

Every valid ballot requires a signed declaration. Staff verifies that the signature accompanying the ballot matches the signature on the voter's registration record. Before verifying signatures, staff must:

- Attend signature verification training.
- Sign an oath.

Every county should have written procedures for accepting or challenging ballots based on signature verification.

What if the voter is unable to sign?

If a voter is unable to sign the declaration, they may make a mark witnessed by two people. The return ballot envelope must have spaces for the signatures of the witnesses. Do not verify signatures of witnesses.

What if the voter uses a common nickname?

Accept common nicknames, variations of the voter's name, or initials as long as the handwriting is the same.

What if the voter signs a different name?

If it appears the voter has changed their name, and the information required under RCW 29A.08.440 to complete a name change is not provided or legible, the county auditor shall send the voter a change of name form or voter registration form under RCW 29A.08.440 and direct the voter to complete the form.

What if the voter uses a power of attorney (POA)?

POA does not apply to voting. Do not accept signatures using the voter's POA and treat the ballot envelope as unsigned.

What if the voter returns a ballot that was not issued to the voter who signed?

Count the ballot for the registered voter who actually signed the ballot declaration when:

- The voter who signed the declaration can be identified.
- The signature on the declaration matches the signature on the voter registration record.
- The voter who signed the declaration has not returned another ballot.

ⓘ Check the precinct! You must count only the races and measures for which the voter is eligible to vote.

Cure an Unsigned Declaration (Missing Signature)

When a returned ballot lacks a mark or signature to the declaration, the voter may “cure” the unsigned declaration.

If a signature is missing, immediately, and no later than three business days following receipt of the ballot, notify the voter by first class mail that the signature on the ballot declaration didn't match the signature on the voter registration record and of the steps the voter must take:

- Appear in person and sign the declaration no later than the day before certification; or
- Sign a copy of the declaration or mark in front of two witnesses and return it to the County Auditor no later than the day before certification. (Missing Signature Form)
- The signature must match those already on file.

Five business days prior to certification, all voters who have not responded to cure notice **must** be contacted by:

- Telephone, leaving a voicemail if the voter doesn't answer and voicemail is available;
- Text, if the voter has opted into text messages; and
- Email, attaching a copy of the cure form to the email, if the voter has provided an email address.

See the clearinghouse notice, [Missing and Mismatched Signatures on Ballot Declarations](#). Accept forms returned by email/fax, mail, or in person.

Do not send a copy of the voter's signature with the form. A voter's signature is not public information and cannot be released.

If the voter has not responded by five business days before certification, call, text, and email the voter again. Keep a record of the following items:

- The date of contact attempts to the voter and when the notice was sent.
- The date the voter submitted the cure notice.

ⓘ A current ballot signature issue cannot be “cured” by a signature on a suspended ballot.

CURING UNSIGNED DECLARATIONS:		
Actions available to voter	Deadline	Count the ballot when...
Appear in person to sign declaration	The day before certification	Signature on declaration matches the signature on voter registration record
Sign a copy of the declaration and return it to the County Auditor's Office	The day before certification	Signature on copy of declaration matches signature on voter registration record

Cure a Signature that Does Not Match

Voters must cure questioned or mismatched signatures by the day prior to certification of the election or primary. To cure a mismatched signature, voters can:

Appear In Person:

- Sign a new voter registration form no later than close of business the day before certification of the primary or election. OR

Provide a signature update form:

- Sign a signature update form that includes **both** the ballot declaration required by WAC 434-230-015(3)(c) and the voter registration oath required by RCW 29A.08.230.
- Via email, mail, in person, or electronically one day prior to certification.

Provide valid secondary identity verification:

- Last four digits of the voter's Social Security Number
- Full driver's license, instruction permit, or state identicard card number
- Alternate ID other than a voter registration card that shows the name and address of the voter
 - o Photo ID
 - o Valid enrollment card of a federally recognized Indian tribe in Washington state
 - o Copy of a current utility bill or bank statement
 - o Copy of a current government check
 - o Copy of a current paycheck
 - o Another government document

Multifactor Authentication Code:

- The multifactor authentication code sent from the county auditor to the voter must be from a system approved for use by the Secretary of State.
- A multifactor authentication code the county auditor sent to the voter's phone number or email address on record.

If a voter signs and returns the ballot of another voter, the ballot may be counted for the **signer** if they can be identified.

- The signature on the envelope must match the signer's voter registration record.
- The voter who signed must not have returned another ballot.
- Only issues that the voter is qualified to vote upon will count.

ⓘ A voter may not cure a signature after certification of the election just to qualify for recount.

Special Circumstance Ballots

Replacement Ballots

Any voters may request a replacement ballot. If the voter returns two ballots of the same type/style and precinct, process the first valid ballot received for their current registration.

If the voter returns additional replacement ballots, they shall be assigned suspended/canceled status and considered informational or invalid.

i *Reconciliation Tip: "Informational/invalid ballots" should not be sent to the Canvassing Board for rejection nor be included in your reconciliation report.*

Reissued Ballots

If the voter moved from one precinct to another, or if the voter's ballot style changed to include or exclude contests, this is a reissued ballot. If the voter returns more than one reissued ballot, the current ballot (the ballot that matches the voter's current residential information) should be counted. All other ballots received from that voter are considered informational and are not rejected.

Federal Write-in Absentee Ballots (FWAB)

FWABs are intended for military or overseas voters who did not receive a regular ballot. Any military or overseas elector may use a FWAB for any election.

UOCAVA voters may also be registered from a voted ballot when a signed declaration accompanies the ballot.

Prior to processing a Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB), refer to the clearinghouse notice, [Service and Overseas Voters](#).

The clearinghouse notice answers the following questions:

- **WHO QUALIFIES AS A SERVICE VOTER?**
- **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THE VOTER IS NOT REGISTERED?**
- **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THE VOTER ALSO RETURNS AN OFFICIAL BALLOT?**
- **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF A MILITARY OR OVERSEAS VOTER DOES NOT PROVIDE A WASHINGTON STATE RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS?**

UOCAVA Ballots Submitted Electronically

Accept voted UOCAVA ballots returned by electronic transmission no later than 8:00 pm PST Election Day.

Only UOCAVA voters may return a ballot electronically.

- A copy of the signed declaration must be included.
- The original ballot is not required.
- Process the ballot (duplicate if necessary) if the signature on the declaration matches the voter registration record.

Secrecy of the ballot:

- Print the ballot and attachments.
- Separate the declaration from the voted ballot by a privacy sheet or envelope.
- Apply public disclosure exemptions.

Not an official ballot?

The state of Washington allows voting responses on something other than the official ballot.

- Confirm the voter did not already return a ballot.
- The voter must still sign a ballot declaration and it must accompany the voting responses. If a signed declaration is not included, treat it as an unsigned ballot.
- Count only the votes for offices and measures for which the voter is eligible.

ⓘ *Exception: responses on ballots from prior elections do not count.*

Duplicate the valid votes onto the correct precinct ballot.

Provisional Ballots

When you receive a provisional ballot, first check VoteWA to see if the voter is registered anywhere in the state.

If registered in another county:

- Send the ballot to that county.

If registered in your county and there is not already an accepted ballot for the voter:

- If the correct ballot was voted, — process the provisional ballot.
- If the incorrect ballot was voted — process and duplicate the ballot to the correct ballot style with the offices and issues for which the voter was eligible.

If not registered to vote in Washington:

- If the voter was canceled in error— reinstate registration and process.
- If the voter was canceled correctly or was not registered anywhere in WA before the 8:00 pm election deadline— ballot does not count.
- If the voter is registered in another state— treat the ballot as if the voter is not registered; do not send ballot to the other state.

Crediting Voters

Credit all voters with valid ballots before certifying the election or primary. Crediting voters for voting usually occurs automatically when logging receipt of valid ballots into VoteWA.

Do not credit voters with rejected ballots.

Opening and Separating Envelopes

In order to protect the secrecy of ballots, use a two-step process:

1. Separate the security envelopes/sleeves from the outer declaration envelopes.
2. Isolate the declaration envelopes prior to removing ballots from the security envelopes/sleeves.

Store the declaration envelopes in a logical manner — you may need to find them later.

Confirm ballots are not in the envelopes by doing one of the following:

- Look through the envelope hole, or
- Insert an object through the hole, such as a zip tie.

ⓘ *Be prepared: Envelopes do not always contain the correct ballot or any ballot at all! Anticipate problems when writing office procedures.*

Manual Inspection

Ensure correct tabulation by manually inspecting ballots for voter intent issues. All ballots must be manually inspected prior to scanning or tabulation.

Inspect all ballots manually:

1. Both sides of the ballot.
2. Each response position.

Training for ballot inspectors should include:

- An explanation of what the county tabulation system will and will not read.
- A copy of and thorough explanation of the *Statewide Standards on What is a Vote* ([WAC 434-261-086](#)).
- Any special rules that apply to the specific primary or election (e.g., Presidential Primary).
- Office procedures for write-in votes.

When manually inspecting ballots, look for anything that prevents correct tabulation of the ballot or any reason the ballot may need to be duplicated.

Duplicating and Resolving

Duplication is the process of creating a true, readable (by the tabulation system) copy of valid votes onto an official blank ballot, paper or electronic.

A **readable** ballot is any ballot that the county vote tabulation system can accept and read as the voter intended. When a ballot is unreadable by the tabulation system, you must duplicate the votes to a blank ballot.

Duplication must include:

- A two-person team
- An audit trail and log
- A unique control number on the original ballot
- Initials of the two individuals conducting duplication
- All ballots kept in secure storage

i *Include your ballot duplication situations and procedures in the County Canvassing Board manual.*

Resolving ballots is the process of telling a digital scan voting system how to interpret how a voter marked their ballot, known as “adjudication” in some counties.

Whether a county is duplicating or resolving, there are specific requirements that apply:

- Teams of at least two staff members.
- An audit of all duplicated ballots, both paper and electronic, by another team of two staff members.
- A unique control number must be assigned to the original ballot and corresponding copy.
- For ballot duplication, the duplication log must include the total number of ballots duplicated and the initials of the duplication team members.
- For ballot resolution/adjudication, a log from the system is printed and signed by the two staff members who resolved/adjudicated the ballots.

When using an automated duplication program, you must compare the duplicate ballot to the original eBallot to ensure the votes match the original ballot.

Overseas and Service (UOCAVA) Ballots

Duplication of FWABs and Electronically Received Ballots

These ballots are not typically ready to scan and tabulate. Sometimes the user is unable to print the whole ballot or you'll receive a copy that's difficult to read.

In all cases, do your best to honor the voter's intent.

FWABs (Federal Write-In Absentee Ballots)

Some UOCAVA voters will vote on a generic federal write-in ballot that doesn't provide candidate names or measures. These voters may not know the exact name of a candidate and will simply write in the position and name of a political party. The FWAB allows them to indicate a party preference that applies to all the positions on the ballot. When this happens, count votes according to voter intent Rule R.

If you are unable to determine the voter precinct, duplicate the ballot as if the voter resides at the County Auditor's Office. In this case, only the votes for countywide issues and congressional district in which the County Auditor's Office is located can be counted.

Voter Registration Challenges – Ballots

RCW 29A.08

If a voter challenges another voter's registration record **before** a voted ballot is received by the County Auditor's Office, the ballot must be set aside with a record of pertinent information, and then presented to the Canvassing Board for determination.

Chapter 5, Section 4

Final Processing

RCW 29A.60, WAC 434-250, -261

Final processing begins with scanning ballot images into the tabulation system and ends before votes are tabulated by the tabulation system. Final processing of voted ballots may begin after 7:00 am on the day of the election. Final processing may begin after 7:00 am the day before the election if the county auditor follows a security plan that has been submitted by the county auditor and approved by the secretary of state.

- ① ***At no time should observers handle ballots or photograph/record voted ballots. Only authorized staff may handle ballots.***

Tabulation

Tabulation is the production of election results in a format that can be read by a person, whether precinct totals, partial cumulative totals, or final cumulative totals.

Tabulation, regardless of the type of vote tallying system, may not begin before 8:00 pm on Election Day.

- ① ***Prior to every election, confirm that all computer and support systems accurately display the correct times and dates.***

Duplication and Resolution/Adjudication

During final processing, ballots may need duplicating or resolving/adjudication if:

- The tabulator damages the ballot.
- Manual inspection did not detect final processing issues.

Whether discovering a ballot reading issue during initial or final processing, apply the duplication or resolution/adjudication procedures consistently.

At all times, seal original and duplicate ballots in secure storage, except during duplication, tabulation, or inspection by the County Canvassing Board.

Write-in Votes

To promote consistency statewide, there are rules pertaining to write-in votes. To help you manage the complex aspects of write-in voting, refer to the [clearinghouse notice, *Write-in Voting*](#).

- Election results must include the total number of write-in votes for each office.
- Manage ballots with write-in votes, overvotes, and undervotes during tabulation so you can easily revisit these ballots.
- Write-in votes cast for a candidate whose name does not appear on the ballot are not individually tallied unless the candidate has filed a timely write-in candidate declaration.

Valid Write-in Votes

A write-in candidate must file a declaration of candidacy before Election Day in order to tally votes for that candidate.

In order to advance from the Primary to the General Election ballot, a write-in candidate needs to meet both of these qualifications:

- Receive at least 1% of the total votes cast for that office. Total votes cast includes votes for candidates printed on the ballot plus the total write-in votes. Overvotes and undervotes are not valid votes cast for candidates and are not used in determining whether a candidate meets the 1% requirement.
- Be one of the top two vote-getters.

In a General Election race, a write-in candidate must receive the most votes to be elected.

- Tally votes for declared individual candidates only when it could make a difference in the outcome of the election.
- Do not tally or duplicate individual votes for write-in candidates who did not file a timely declaration of candidacy.

Frequently Asked Questions about Write-in Voting

What are write-in votes?

Each office has a line where the voter may write in any name as their choice for that office.

Who is a declared write-in candidate?

A write-in candidate who submits a declaration of candidacy form and pays the appropriate filing fee (if applicable) no later than 8:00 pm on Election Day.

Can anyone be a declared write-in candidate?

Declared write-in candidates must possess the same qualifications as regular candidates. Candidates who lost the Primary are ineligible as a declared candidate for the same race in the General. Candidates already appearing on the ballot for another office are also ineligible.

Are votes for fictitious characters valid?

The voter cast them as valid write-in votes, so the votes are included in the total number of write-ins. However, since fictitious characters cannot submit a declaration of candidacy, votes cast for them will not be tallied.

Is the vote valid if the voter did not fill in the response position on the ballot?

Yes. If the voter writes a declared write-in candidate on the write-in line, it is a valid vote, even without a marked response position. Consider this when manually inspecting ballots. If tabulated, write-in votes without a marked response area will record as undervoted (Refer to the question, "Should a ballot with a write-in vote be duplicated if the response position is not marked?").

If the voter votes for a candidate printed on the ballot and writes in a vote for the same office, is it an overvote?

Yes, *unless* the voter voted for a printed candidate and wrote the same candidate's name as a write-in. In that case, the vote is valid for that candidate.

When do you tally write-in votes?

Report the total number of write-in votes cast for each office. Then, tally the votes for individual declared write-in candidates only if those votes could make a difference in the outcome of the election.

Check the results of each race with a declared write-in candidate to determine if you must tally for individual write-in candidates.

A declared write-in candidate needs to receive the next highest number of votes in a Primary AND at least 1% of the total votes cast in order to appear on the General Election ballot.

Should I duplicate a ballot with a write-in vote if the response position is not marked?

It is not required to duplicate ballots with write-ins. State law only requires that individual votes be tallied when the sum of write-ins, overvotes, and undervotes are enough to affect the outcome of the election.

Exception: The number of votes cast for Governor, including write-in votes, determines the number of signatures required for state initiatives and referenda. This total refers to all votes cast for Governor, including write-in votes. In this case report all write-in votes, including those not filling in a response position, to the Secretary of State. For Governor, ballots must also be

duplicated when the write-in response position is marked, but no candidate is written in. This is not a valid write-in vote.

[For digital scan tabulation systems, should I enter the write-in vote into my system when resolving ballots?](#)

You are not required to record the candidate's name. If you are required to tally these votes later, however, you will need to pull the ballots to tally the votes. To avoid this situation, some digital scan counties record the individual names of declared write-in candidates during the process of resolving.

[Are write-in vote totals included in the official results of the election?](#)

Yes, usually as a total for the write-in category. A write-in vote is a valid, recordable vote.

[Should declared write-in candidates be included in the voters' pamphlet?](#)

Not for the election or primary for which they have declared. If the candidate declared as a write-in for the Primary and qualified for the General, then the candidate is no longer a write-in and will be printed on the ballot and included in the General Election Voters' Pamphlet.

Post-Election

Ballot counting continues after Election Day through to the final day of canvassing because you may receive valid ballots any time during that period.

Valid ballots are defined as:

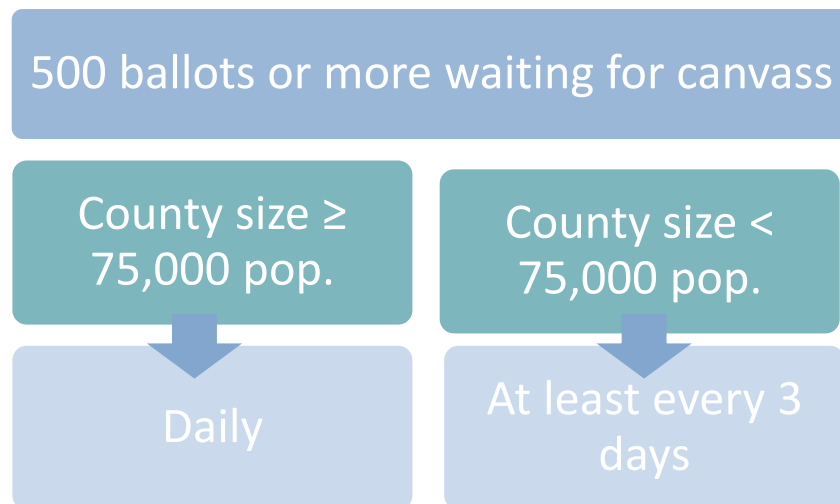
- Ballots with a valid postmark received between Election Day until the end of the day prior to certification.
- Ballots from UOCAVA voters signed no later than the day of the election and received by end of the day prior to certification.
- Valid provisional ballots, including those from other counties.
- Ballots canvassed and determined to be valid by the County Canvassing Board.
- Ballots duplicated after Election Day.

When to Tabulate After Election Day

The number of ballots, the length of time, and the population of the county determines when to tabulate following Election Day.

RCW 29A.60.160 mandates, "...the county auditor, as delegated by the County Canvassing Board, shall process ballots and canvass the votes cast at that primary or election on a daily basis in counties with a population of seventy-five thousand or more, or at least every third day for counties with a population of less than seventy-five thousand, if the county auditor is in possession of more than five hundred ballots that have yet to be canvassed."

i *Important — Update results In VoteWA immediately following every count and send a pdf of the results and your tabulator file to the OSOS.*



Results

Report election and primary results as:

- Cumulative
- By precinct

After every tabulation session is completed, results are:

- Uploaded to the VoteWA system before you leave for the day.
- Showing on your public website.
- A pdf copy of the results file is transmitted to Office of the Secretary of State.
- Printed out for the record.
- Transmitted by email/fax to media and other interested parties.

Review Results

Within two days after Election Day, review results for anomalies by comparing precinct-by-precinct results for each race, measure and jurisdiction. ([WAC 434-261-110](#))

Look for any anomalies such as:

- Abnormal number of overvotes
- Abnormal number of undervotes
- Odd vote distribution (especially within a jurisdiction)
- Unlikely patterns of voter turnout

Investigate and document the cause of any anomaly.
Correct any identified errors.



Post-Election Audits

RCW 29A.60.170, .185

An audit of duplicated ballots and an audit using one of the following methods are required:

- An electronic voting machine audit,
- Random check / random precinct or batch audit, OR
- Risk limiting audit.

Duplicated Ballot Audit

A separate team of two must audit ballots duplicated during final processing. This audit compares the duplicated ballot to the original ballot and maintain an audit trail.

Random Check of Counting Equipment – Random Precinct/Batch Audit

A random check of the ballot tabulation equipment is required and **must be completed no later than 48 hours after Election Day**.

The random check compares the manual count of the ballots to the machine count on the tabulation system. The random check/batch audit must:

- Include three precincts or six batches depending on ballot counting procedures in the county.
- Be limited to one office or issue on the ballots selected for the check.
- Include procedures adopted by the county Canvassing Board prior to processing ballots.
 - Procedures must specify under what circumstances a discrepancy will lead to an audit of additional ballots and the method to determine how many additional ballots will be selected.
 - Procedures must establish how the random precinct/batches to be checked shall be selected.

Risk Limiting Audit

A risk-limiting audit (RLA) uses statistics to sample ballots appropriately for review. In a risk-limiting audit, ballots are randomly selected and hand-tallied one by one until enough have been sampled confidently determine whether the correct winner was found the first time. If the winner won by a lot of votes, the sample needed to confirm the outcome may be quite small; if the race was close, the audit will examine more ballots.

Please refer to the state clearinghouse [Auditing Ballots and Equipment](#) for more detail.

Final Storage

Secure all ballots immediately after tabulation. You may separate ballots according to precinct or batch.

If a single container stores multiple precincts or batches:

- Clearly separate the precincts or batches (e.g., with a piece of colored paper).
- Note which precincts or batches are in the box on the outside label.

Only open the storage containers when directed by the Canvassing Board or court order.

i *In a close race, it may be necessary to re-examine ballots with undervotes, overvotes and write-in votes. Consider this when storing ballots.*

Chapter 6, Section 1

County Canvassing Board and Voter Intent

RCW 29A.60

Canvassing Board members must, by law, canvass ballots and certify the election. The County Canvassing Board is a three-member board that makes final determinations before certifying an election. Two of the three members, otherwise known as a quorum, must agree in order for any decision to be valid. All three members are required to certify an election.

For a handbook with laws, citations, and visuals, see our OSOS [Introduction to County Canvassing Boards](#).

Who serves on the County Canvassing Board?

The three-member Board consists of:

- County Auditor (or Deputy County Auditor). In King County, the Elections Director.
- Prosecuting Attorney (or Deputy PA).
- Chair of the Legislative Authority (or another member of legislative authority). In King County, this can be delegated to an employee of the legislative body who reports directly to the chair.

Members may at least one day prior to their duties, designate in writing an alternate for a specific time or election, or until revoked by the designee. The designee for each position must have a separate designation on file in the County Auditor's Office prior to undertaking Board duties.

What if a canvassing board member is also a candidate?

If possible, candidates appearing on the ballot should not serve on the canvassing board for that election or primary. The candidate may designate an **alternate** to serve in their place.

If no one is available to serve on the canvassing board who is not a candidate at that election or primary, the candidate may serve on the board, but may only make decisions on votes cast for other offices, an entire ballot, or groups of ballots.

Candidates must never make decisions on their own races.

- If a question involves the candidate's race, the two remaining members make the determination.
- If the two disagree, the vote in question is not counted unless the vote could affect the outcome of the race. In that case, a representative of the Secretary of State shall break the tie.

What does a canvassing board meeting look like?

The board is required by law to adopt written procedures.

All county canvassing board meetings fall under the Open Public Meetings Act.

A public notice must be published for every meeting. The meeting agenda must be posted on the County Auditor website.

In the course of a meeting, decisions are made by quorum. Two members of the board must agree.

Records must be kept of all meetings (written minutes, audio recording, and/or video recording). Audio and video recordings have the same retention as written minutes.

See RCW 42.30 for more details.

Which canvassing board duties may be delegated to staff?

County Canvassing Boards may delegate duties in writing to County Auditor staff. Duties that may be delegated:

- Processing incoming ballots (signature verification)
- Emergency Logic and Accuracy tests
- Determining the validity of provisional ballots in certain situations
- Breaking tied races
- Verifying the Auditor's abstract of votes
- Processing special absentee ballots
- Administering recounts
- Voter registration challenges
- Determining voter intent according to rules outlined in "Statewide Standards on What is a Vote"

Which canvassing board duties may not be delegated to staff?

- Determining the validity of challenged ballots
- Determining the validity of provisional ballots presented to the board
- Rejecting ballots
- Certifying the election

When does the board certify the election?

- On the 10th day after a special election held in February or April and Presidential Primaries
- On the 14th day after a primary
- On the 21st day after a general election

What constitutes a vote?

The Help America Vote Act in 2002 (HAVA) mandated that states adopt uniform standards defining what constitutes a vote and what counts as a vote for each voting system in the state.

What is the standard?

["Statewide Standards on What is a Vote"](#)

This guide is published by the Secretary of State's Certification & Training Program in cooperation with the County Auditors and Canvassing Boards. It is adopted into the Washington Administrative Code.

Included in this guide:

- Examples of voted ballots representing all voting systems currently used in Washington State
- Rules for the canvassing boards
- Statewide consistency



Chapter 6, Section 2

Completing the Election

RCW 29A.60, WAC 434-262

Before Certifying a Primary or an Election

You must complete the following before a primary or election may be certified. Be sure to allow time between producing final results and the Canvassing Board certification to finalize all of these tasks:

- A random check of ballot counting equipment using a random batch audit, a risk limiting audit (See chapter 4 section 4, “Final Processing”)
- An audit of all duplicated ballots
- Credit all voters whose ballots were valid and counted
- A complete reconciliation report of ballots

Crediting Voters

Crediting voters’ records for casting a ballot is part of ballot processing. Credit the voter’s registration record in VoteWA only if a ballot was successfully processed and counted for that voter, or in other words, an “accepted” ballot.

When suspending a ballot for Canvassing Board determination, also suspend voting credit for that voter. If the Canvassing Board decides to count all or part of the ballot, give the voter credit for voting.

Complete all crediting before certification of the election or primary.

Ballot Reconciliation

Reconciliation starts when the first ballot is sent and received. Account for all received ballots in the final reconciliation of every election. **Daily reconciliation** is critical to successful final accounting of ballots.

Reconcile the numbers of:

- Ballots received — as documented in initial ballot processing
- Signatures checked — found in VoteWA, and canvassing board documentation/actions
- Challenged ballots (signature issues, returned too late, etc.) — compare to challenged ballot report/list from VoteWA
- Ballots rejected by the Canvassing Board, including unresolved signature challenges, late postmarks, etc. — from the Canvassing Board minutes and daily records
- Ballots counted — from tabulation reports

- Any other categories needed to account for every ballot received in your office
- Ballot reconciliation is not complete until all ballots are processed and reported, including provisional ballots, and ballots sent to the canvassing board for rejection.

We use a simple equation to reconcile ballots:

$$\text{Ballots Received} = \text{Ballots Counted} + \text{Ballots Not Counted}$$

- ⓘ ***If the numbers do not reconcile, document the steps taken to resolve the discrepancy.***
- ⓘ ***VoteWA does NOT contain all reconciliation information.***

Reconciliation Report

When certifying an election or primary, present a complete reconciliation report to the Canvassing Board.

State law requires reconciliation reports to document the number of:

- Active registered voters, inactive voters
- Total ballots issued, received, counted, and rejected
- Total replacement ballots requested, issued, and received
- Total provisional ballots issued, received, counted, rejected, and sent to other counties
- Total Federal write-in ballots received, counted, rejected, and sent to other counties
- Overseas and service (UOCAVA) ballots issued, received, counted, rejected, and sent to other counties. These numbers need to be broken out by mail, email, website link or fax
- Non-Overseas and non-service (non-UOCAVA) ballots sent by email, website link or fax; received by email or fax; rejected for failing to send the original hard copy or any other reason
- The number of voters credited with voting
- Additional information needed to account for all ballots, such as the number of ACP and special absentee ballots
- Ballots returned by email, fax, and deposited in county ballot boxes
- Ballots issued through VoteWA, other online programs, or PDF generated by the county

If you are unable to balance the number of ballots, document the efforts to find the discrepancy on the report. The reconciliation report and discrepancy documentation must be included in the official election certification.

The Reconciliation Report must be sent to the Secretary of State for every election and be publicly available at the County Auditor's Office and/or on the County Auditor's website.

The Secretary of State shall review the reconciliation for each county and work with the county auditor to resolve discrepancies. If a discrepancy is resolved, the county auditor shall submit a correct reconciliation report to the secretary of state within seven days following the certification of the election. The corrected report then becomes the official reconciliation report for that election. The county auditor shall post the corrected report on the county auditor website.

ⓘ Do not wait until the day of certification to complete the report. Complete what you can in advance and make final adjustments just prior to certification.

Certification

County Responsibilities

The Canvassing Board must certify elections:

- 10 days after a special election held in February or April and Presidential Primaries.
- 14 days after a primary.
- 21 days after a general election.

IMPORTANT– Canvassing Board must certify **on** Certification Day.

Certification is an open public meeting and must be posted on your website.

All three Canvassing Board members, or designees, must certify the election.

Certification documents include the Auditor’s Oath and Board Certificate (must include the signatures and original seals of the Auditor), written narrative of errors and discrepancies discovered, if any, and a verified Abstract of Votes. The reconciliation report is submitted to the Secretary of State with the certification documents for state primaries and general elections.

Oath of Authenticity

STATE OF WASHINGTON }
COUNTY OF County Name } ss.

I solemnly swear that the unofficial returns and supporting documentation of the Election Type held on Election Date , in County Name County, State of Washington, are true and correct.

County Auditor

Day of Month , 20 Year

County Legislative Authority (witness)

County Prosecuting Attorney (witness)

Certification of the Canvassing Board

STATE OF WASHINGTON }
COUNTY OF County Name } ss.

The undersigned officers designated by law as constituting the Canvassing Board for the County of County Name, State of Washington, hereby certify that this is a full, true, and correct copy of the Abstract of Votes including the number of registered eligible voters, cumulative results, precinct results, and report of votes cast at the Election Type held on Election Date , in County Name County, State of Washington.

Witness our hands and official seal this Day day of Month , 20 Year

(Both Counts Seal)

County Auditor

County Legislative Authority

County Prosecuting Attorney

(2020) WAC 434-062-010

“Election Certification Oaths” form is available at:
<https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/reconciliationandcertification.aspx>

PLAN AHEAD

- Schedule Canvassing Board members well in advance of the election certification meeting.
- Conduct the final count the day before or very early on the day of certification.
- Finish as early on certification day as possible.
- Prepare all reports and forms, set up, and schedule support staff to cover.

Results

Upload all election results to VoteWA.

Email a scanned copy of results for state offices/measures and the results export file from your tabulator to VoteWA Support.

OSOS Responsibilities

No later than 17 days after a primary, the Secretary of State's office will certify results for:

- All statewide offices
- U.S. Senators
- U.S. Congressional Representatives
- Legislative and judicial offices encompassing more than one county.

No later than 30 days after a general election, the Secretary of State will certify the results of the general election for:

- All statewide offices
- U.S. Senators
- U.S. Congressional Representatives
- Legislative and judicial offices encompassing more than one county
- All state measures

Finishing Up

Following certification:

- Issue ceremonial certificates of election to all winners for offices elected by the voters within a single county.
- Prepare to answer questions about oaths of office and where to file. Refer to the clearinghouse "Oaths of Office" for further information.
- For general elections only - report to each special taxing district the voter turnout for their district in the General Election.
- Wait to change data in VoteWA until after certification and/or determination of the voter turnout in each special taxing district.
- Organize and label records by election type and date.

ⓘ When storing documents, include the "hold until" retention date and the document retention number on the label.

Determine Taxing District Turnout for Validation

Districts use general election turnout to determine the validation requirements for their bond and levy measures. The County Auditor must provide a report that lists the number of voters that participated in the general election for each taxing district in their county.

The County Auditor is not responsible for determining minimum turnout or yes votes required for ballot measures and shall not determine if ballot measures meet requirements for passage. The County Auditor should not provide any other validation numbers to districts.

Best Practices: Provide each taxing district with the deadlines for submitting levy or bond resolutions for each election along with a copy of the voter turnout report.

ⓘ For more information, refer to the “Bonds and Levies” Clearinghouse.

Records Retention

Retain all records, including electronic files, according to the retention schedules found on OSOS — State Archives webpage: <http://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/RecordsRetentionSchedules.aspx>.

Chapter 6, Section 3

Recounts

RCW 29A.64, WAC 434-264

A recount is re-tabulating the votes, including write-ins, for a specific office or issue on all valid ballots cast in a primary or election. If a ballot has been duplicated, the duplicate ballot (not the original) shall be counted.

What initiates a recount?

Recounts can be mandatory or by request. State law requires a recount if the number of votes for each candidate is within a specified range. By law, you cannot recount a race or issue more than twice.

Jurisdiction	Requested Recount	Mandatory Recount	Hand Recount
Statewide Race	Written request within 2 business days after state certification, by candidate or political party	Less than 2000 votes, AND Less than ½ of 1% difference between candidates	Less than 1000 votes, AND Less than ¼ of 1% difference between candidates
State Measure	Written request within 2 business days of state certification by 5 or more registered voters	Less than 2000 votes, AND Less than ½ of 1% difference between candidates	Less than 1000 votes, AND Less than ¼ of 1% difference between candidates
Congressional, Legislative, Judicial or Local Race	Written request by candidate or political party within 2 business days of state or county certification, depending on the office	Less than 2000 votes, AND Less than ½ of 1% difference between candidates	Less than 150 votes, AND Less than ¼ of 1% difference between candidates
Local Measure	Written request within 2 business days of county certification by 5 or more registered voters	No mandatory recount	No mandatory recount

Requested Recounts

State law determines who may request a recount in writing.

- **For an office:** by a candidate of that office or officer of a political party only.
- **For a measure or question:** by any group of five or more registered voters only.

The requester must submit a request for a recount within two business days of certification of the election.

For statewide, US Senate, US Representative, state legislative, Court of Appeals, and Superior Court offices plus state measures : the request is filed with the Secretary of State.

For all other offices and local measures: the request is filed with the County Auditor who serves as the filing officer for those districts.

Included in a recount request:

- The office or issue for which the recount is requested.
- Whether the recount is a machine or manual count.
- If all or only a portion of the precincts are to be recounted.
- A deposit depending upon the way the recount is conducted.
 - Machine recount \$.15 per ballot.
 - Manual recount \$.25 per ballot.

The requester is responsible for the entire cost of the recount and will receive a bill or refund for the difference.

Conduct a requested recount in the same manner as a mandatory recount.

The requester may stop the recount at any time; however, a recount cannot be stopped before completion if the result would reverse the outcome.

If a partial recount reverses the outcome of the election, recount all the ballots for that race or measure.

If a full recount reverses the outcome of the race or question, the deposit is refunded.

Mandatory Recounts

Mandatory recounts occur when the votes for offices or statewide measures fall within the statutory range. State law does not provide for a mandatory recount of a local issue.

Mandatory recounts of any office or state measure, by machine or by hand, occur when the difference between the two candidates or state measure choices is:

- Less than 2000 votes difference, AND

- Less than $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1% of the total votes cast for the office or issue.

For statewide offices or measures, you must recount votes by hand if the difference between the two candidates or choices is:

- Less than 1000 votes, AND
- Less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1% of the total votes cast for the office or issue.

For all other offices, you must recount votes by hand if the difference between the two candidates is:

- Less than 150 votes, AND
- Less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of one percent of the total votes cast for the office or issue.

Alternative method — If an alternative recount method is proposed, all candidates must agree to it.

Which candidates are recounted?

The type of election determines which candidates meet the recount threshold and require a recount.

In a primary, the second and third highest vote getters may require a recount.

- The highest vote getter automatically advances to the general election.
- If the top two are the close candidates, no recount is necessary.

In a general election, the top two vote getters may require a recount.

Who pays for a mandatory recount?

The district that pays for regular election costs is also responsible for mandatory recount costs.

Conducting a Machine Recount

You may choose to recount by hand or machine if the vote difference does not require a hand recount.

The County Canvassing Board sets the date and time of the recount.

The Secretary of State may set the certification date in a multi-county recount.

The applicant and affected people are officially notified one day before the recount.

Observers are allowed. Different types of observers are prioritized in WAC when space will not accommodate all observers.

Assemble the ballots to be recounted in the presence of observers.

Votes previously determined by the County Canvassing Board are counted as directed by the Board.

Ballot issues found during the recount, not previously addressed or included in the original count, are determined by the County Canvassing Board.

Recount results are by precinct and only include the office or issue recounted.

Digital Scan Systems

In a machine recount, program digital tabulation equipment to identify all ballots that include an undervoted office or ballot measure subject to the recount. Inspect for valid votes not correctly counted by the tabulation equipment. Refer votes not correctly counted to the County Canvassing Board.

Optical Scan Systems

In a machine recount, optical scan tabulation equipment must be programmed to out-sort all ballots that include an undervoted and overvoted office or ballot measure subject to the recount. For digital scan systems with adjudication, all overvotes and undervotes that were not previously adjudicated must be reviewed.

Inspect for valid votes not correctly counted by the tabulation equipment. Refer votes not correctly counted to the County Canvassing Board.

May a canvassing board determine is a recount is conducted by machine or by hand?

Yes, as long as a hand recount is not required. Coordination with other counties may be necessary for joint districts.

Conducting a Hand Recount

The original paper ballots are used for hand recounts, except for ballots where votes were duplicated onto another ballot. In that case the duplicate ballot is recounted.

Voter intent previously determined by the County Canvassing Board is counted as directed by the Board.

Ballot issues found during the recount, not previously addressed or included in the original count, are determined by the County Canvassing Board.

Votes are tallied by counting board(s), comprised of at least two members:

- One representative from each of the two major political parties; or
- Two staff members from the County Auditor's Office.

Recount only the votes for the office or issue.

Each board will receive one precinct or batch at a time.

Note: You may use batches only if the County Auditor produces election results by batch for comparison. However, you must produce final recount results by precinct.

Counting boards:

- Sort ballots into separate stacks, one for each candidate or response, undervotes, overvotes, and write-ins.
- Each board member manually counts each stack to confirm the number of votes in each stack.
 - Report results *if* the members' counts match.
 - Count ballot stacks again *if* the counts do not match.
 - Send ballots to another counting board *if* the counts still do not match after a second count.

When conducting a machine recount, counting boards must inspect each undervote and procedures followed that conform to WAC 434-264.

Certifying a Recount

The County Auditor prepares an amended abstract of the recounted ballots for the County Canvassing Board, even if the results did not change. The abstract includes results only for the recounted office or measure:

- A revised cumulative summary.
- The number of votes cast in each precinct.

The County Canvassing Board must review and approve the amended results. If the results do not match the original results, the board will verify that all the ballots have been recounted and all discrepancies are resolved.

Tied Races

If the recount results in a tie, the winner is determined by lot.

Depending upon the office, the County Canvassing Board or the Secretary of State designates the time and place for the lot draw, notifies the affected candidates, and certifies the winner.

Measures are not subject to lot draws — they either have enough votes to pass or they fail.

INDEX & REFERENCE MATERIAL

Principles of Election/Registration Officials

Washington State Election Officials' Pledge

We the Elections Officials of Washington State, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish accurate vote counts, ensure electoral transparency, provide for the common defense of the electoral process, promote voter access, and secure the blessings of democracy. We do commit ourselves to the faithful execution of our duties...

- I* uphold the Constitution of the United States and the laws, policies and court decisions of federal, state and local jurisdictions;
- I* encourage every eligible person to register to vote and to participate fully in all elections;
- I* administer elections without discrimination based upon race, creed, color, national origin, sex, or political affiliation;
- I* protect the integrity of the electoral process by providing equal access to the process while guarding against discrimination and fraud;
- I* commit to excellence and competence by maintaining the highest level of knowledge and expertise in the elections process through continuing education and self evaluation;
- I* am accountable for maintaining public confidence in honest and impartial elections which I conduct in a fair, efficient and accurate manner;
- I* encourage every eligible person to register to vote and to participate fully in all elections
- I* manifest a positive role in community relations by being accessible and receptive to both individuals and groups;
- I* am flexible and innovative within the framework of the law in carrying out my duties on behalf of the public's interest;
- I* conduct all fiscal responsibilities with wisdom and integrity, and I am accountable for all funds and resources committed to my charge;
- I* endeavor to maintain the highest level of integrity in performing all duties of my profession.



Name: _____

Signature: _____

Glossary of Election Terminology

For a complete list of election terms and definitions generally standardized nationwide, see the Election Assistance Commission's glossary at

https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/glossary_files/Glossary_of_Election_Terms_EAC.pdf.

Abstract of Votes	The official statement of votes cast for an election or primary as prepared by the County Auditor. A preliminary abstract must be prepared prior to certification, corrected and presented to the canvassing board at certification of the election.
Address Confidentiality Program (ACP)	A program implemented by the Secretary of State which allows certain voters' registration data to be kept out of public record for their protection. At least two election administrators in each county maintain the county program for these voters.
Adjudication	Electronic determination of voter intent on a digital scan tabulation system, similar to ballot duplication.
Accessible Voting Unit (AVU)	Any voting device that complies with the American Disability Act and Help America Vote Act and is certified at the state and federal level to provide independent voting to persons visually and/or manually challenged. Also see DRE.
Automatic Voter Registration (AVR)	When citizens are automatically registered to vote by government agencies they interact with (Department of Licensing, Health Benefit Exchange, etc.).
Ballot Accountability Sheet	A form completed by election workers at a voting center recording the number of ballots issued (including provisional ballots).
Ballot Deposit Site	A location that only receives ballots. A site may be staffed by two people or unstaffed.
Ballot Box	A box provided by the county for voters to deposit ballots that is secured using seals and seal logs. An unstaffed ballot box is secured so that envelopes, once deposited can only be removed by authorized staff. If located outdoors, it must be constructed of durable material able to withstand inclement weather and be sufficiently secured to prevent removal. Unstaffed boxes are available 18 days prior to Election Day.
Ballot Duplication	Making a true copy of valid votes from ballots that may not be counted by the tabulation system as the voter intends. Ballots may be duplicated on blank ballots or by making changes to an electronic image (resolving/adjudication). The original ballot may not be altered in any manner. A signed duplication log must be retained as part of this record.

Ballot Duplication Log	A numerical record of the relationship between original ballots and duplicate ballots. The log shows the number assigned to a duplicated set and the two people who duplicated the ballot.
Ballot Marking Code	The coded patterns printed on the ballot intended to identify the ballot style to the ballot counting system.
Ballot Path	The process ballots follow from the ballot box until final storage upon certification of the election.
Ballot Tabulator	A system or machine used to tally votes from ballots.
Canvass, Canvassing	The process of examining ballots, subtotals, and cumulative totals in order to determine the official returns of a primary or election. This process includes the tabulation of any votes that were not tabulated at the counting center in the initial results reported on the day of the primary or election.
Canvassing Board	The County Auditor, the County Prosecutor, and the Chair of the County Legislative Authority or their designee. The Board is responsible for canvassing ballots and certifying elections. Some duties may be delegated.
Canvassing Board Designee	A person designated in writing by a member of the Canvassing Board to serve in place of the Canvassing Board member.
Counting Center	The location where ballots are processed and counted.
Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) Accessible Community Advisory Committee (ACAC)	Each county shall establish and maintain an advisory committee that includes persons with diverse disabilities and persons with expertise in providing accommodations for persons with disabilities. The committee shall assist election officials in developing a plan to identify and implement changes to improve the accessibility of elections for voters with disabilities
Direct Recording Electronic voting device (DRE)	DREs are a type of AVU (see AVU). DREs record votes electronically. They do not use a paper ballot. Instead they store votes digitally, while also creating and printing a paper record of the votes cast by a voter, verifiable by the voter.
Digital Scan System	A voting system that creates a scanned image of the voted ballot. Responses are recorded by reviewing the image and voter intent issues are resolved digitally.
Election Assistance Commission (EAC)	The federal commission charged with developing voting system guidelines; providing a national program for testing, certification, and decertification of voting systems; maintaining federal registration information; reporting to Congress the effects of the NVRA; administering HAVA funds at the federal level; and studying best practices and other matters relevant to the effective administration of federal elections.

Elections Official	When pertaining to voter registration includes any staff member of the Office of the Secretary of State, staff of state agencies or offices providing voter registration services, or a staff member of a County Auditor's Office.
Official Election Observer	A person officially designated by a major political party to observe election procedures.
Final Processing	The reading of ballots by an electronic vote tallying system to produce election returns of votes cast, but does not include final tabulation.
Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)	A postage-free postcard distributed by the Federal Voting Assistance Program for use by voters covered by UOCAVA .
Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)	Provides information for US citizens covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). The FVAP website is http://www.fvap.gov .
Future Voter Program Future Voters	The Future Voter Program allows preregistration of applicants at least 16 years old. "Future voter" means a United States citizen and Washington state resident, age sixteen or seventeen, who has provided information related to voter registration to the appropriate state agencies.
Help America Vote Act (HAVA)	Federal legislation enacted in 2002.
Header Card	A card fed into a ballot scanner indicating the beginning of a batch of ballots. It is used to tell the ballot tally system the precinct or batch that is being counted.
Initial Processing	The preparation of ballots for tallying. It includes verification of signatures and postmarks, separation of ballots from envelopes, manual inspection, scanning, and resolution/adjudication or duplication of ballots.
Logic & Accuracy Test (L&A Test, LAT)	An official test to verify the ballot tabulator and programming is correctly counting each style of ballot and accurately producing cumulative vote totals. L&A tests are required prior to every election and may be observed and certified by the Secretary of State's Office for each primary and general election.
Manual Count	A manual tally of an office or issue.
Manual Inspection	The process of inspecting each voter response position on each voted ballot. Inspection is performed as part of the initial processing.
National Voter Registration Act (NVRA)	Federal legislation enacted in 1993. Commonly known as the "Motor Voter" act because it established voter registration through state licensing agencies.

Online Voter Registration (OLVR)	Allows voters to register and update a registration online using the VoteWA Public Portal. The system integrates the DOL driver license record web service for information sources and validation.
Online Candidate Filing	Allows candidates to file online through the VoteWA candidate filing portal.
Optical Scan System	Mechanical tabulation system utilizing optical scan technology to tabulate votes on printed ballots.
Precinct	A geographical subdivision for voting purposes established by a county legislative authority.
Primary-only Voters	A seventeen-year-old Future Voter who will be 18 by the November General Election, eligible to vote for candidates in the primary election.
Provisional Ballots	Ballots issued when there is a question regarding a voter's eligibility to vote. A provisional ballot may be issued by a voting center or by election officials at the Auditor's Office for any reason. Validity of provisional ballots is researched using a voter's registration information and is subject to final decision by the county canvassing board.
Receiving Board	A group of election workers that receive the ballots at the counting center on Election Night.
Recount	The process for retabulating the votes on all valid ballots cast for a specific office or issue.
Resolution	Using a scanned image to resolve questionable votes. After each session, a log of the resolutions must be printed and signed by the team that resolved those ballots.
Risk-limiting Audit (RLA)	A risk-limiting audit (RLA) uses statistics to confirm election outcomes. In a risk-limiting audit, ballots are randomly selected for review. Ballots are hand-tallied one by one until enough have been sampled to confirm that the correct winner was found the first time. If the winner won by a lot of votes, the sample needed to confirm the outcome may be quite small; if the race was close, the audit will examine more ballots.
Same-day Registration (SDR)	Voters may update their voter registration or register to vote until 8:00 PM on Election Day. In the eight days before the election, they must appear in a voting center in person to register and receive a ballot.
Seal	Numbered seal used to secure containers of ballots. The seal, once applied to the container, must be broken to access the contents.
Seal Log	A list recording the seal numbers used, the two people applying or breaking a seal, the date applied and removed, and the reason for removing the seal.

Service Voters	Voters (or electors) who are members of the armed forces, a US Military Academy, a group officially attached to the armed forces or a spouse/dependent absent from their place of residence by reason of the service of the member. Depending on the election type, service voters are issued ballots 45 days or 30 days before each election. Service voters are not held to the postmark requirement; the date of signature is used to validate the ballot.
Student Engagement Hub	Sites located on higher education campuses that provide online access to electronic ballots and, as required by RCW or by contract, voter registration services. Student Engagement Hubs are only required to be open during a General election.
Tabulation	The process of tallying votes into a readable format, whether as precinct totals, partial cumulative totals, or final cumulative totals. Tabulation may not begin until after 8:00 PM on the day of the election.
Tally	The process of producing results for individual candidates by hand,
Test Deck	The group of ballots used in a Logic and Accuracy test to verify the accuracy of the vote tallying system.
Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)	The act specifically defines voting services to U.S. citizens who reside outside the United States, U.S. citizens who are members of the Uniformed Services and their family members. The term UOCAVA is refers to these citizens or any special service provided to these citizens.
Uniformed Services	U.S. Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force and Coast Guard), merchant marine, commissioned corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Also known as service voters.
Universal Registration	A voter may go to any county election office or vote center in WA to register to vote and receive a current ballot for their county of registration at any time.
Valid Signature	1) A signature on a ballot envelope verified against the registered voter's signature on file, or 2) a mark with two witness signatures.
Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)	This is an independent verification system for direct recording electronic voting machines (DREs) designed to allow voters to verify that their vote was cast correctly, to detect possible election fraud or malfunction, and to provide a means to audit the stored electronic results.

VoteWA	<p>VoteWA, the statewide voter registration and election management system, includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased access to election results. • Online voter registration. • Individual voter information. • Online ballot access. • Standardized voter education notices. • Online voter guides. • Archived election information. • Candidate Filing Management.
VoteWA Public Portal	<p>An online voter registration and information tool maintained by the Secretary of State. Allows voters to register, make updates to their registration, check the status of their registration, view a customized voter's guide, find a drop box or voting center, print a replacement ballot, and view their voting history.</p>
Voting Center	<p>A county location that provides voter registration services and materials, ballots, provisional ballots, accessible voting units, sample ballots, instructions on how to properly vote the ballot, a ballot drop box and voters' pamphlets, if available. Each county must have at least one voting center for each primary and election.</p>
Voting Response Area (Target Area)	<p>The area on a ballot where the voter may make a mark to record their vote. The voting response area must be clearly indicated in the instructions.</p>
Voting System	<p>Total combination in a county of all tabulation equipment. This includes all software, firmware and documentation required to program, control, and support the equipment.</p>

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Weed Districts	17.04 & 17.06
Public Facilities Districts	36.100
Major Public Energy Projects	80.52
Cemetery Districts	68.52 & 68.54

Washington State Constitution

The most recent Washington State Constitution can be found at

<https://leg.wa.gov/CodeReviser/Pages/WAConstitution.aspx>.