

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)	Voter registration system 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.

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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). 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 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 by the Canvassing Board to carry out one or more of the statutory responsibilities the Canvassing Board is allowed to delegate.
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)	Also known as an 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 as an AVU by providing independent voting to persons visually and/or manually challenged AND records a vote electronically, does not use a paper ballot, and creates a paper record verifiable by the voter.

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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.
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)	Federal Post Card Application. A postage-free postcard distributed by the FVAP 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. Applicants at least 16 years of age who are signed up for the Future Voter Program and will become registered voters when they turn 18 years of age.
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.

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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 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 on a single precinct's ballots prior to a mechanical tally. The results are then compared to a mechanical tally of the same ballots. This process is jointly requested by observers representing each major political party.
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 of response areas 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.

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Recount	The process for confirming the tabulated votes for a specific office or issue. Only ballots tallied in the certified results for that office/issue will be recounted.
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 new ballot.
Seal	Numbered seal used to secure containers of ballots. The seal, once applied to the container, must be destroyed 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 or a group officially attached to the armed forces. 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	See "tabulation."

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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	VoteWA, the statewide voter registration and election management system, includes: <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	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.

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Voting Center	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.
Voting Response Area (Target Area)	The area on a ballot where the voter may make a mark indicating their choice. The voting response area must be clearly indicated in the instructions.
Voting System	Total combination in a county of all tabulation equipment. This includes all software, firmware and documentation required to program, control, and support the equipment.

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