

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 a park and recreation district.
- 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.

General Election

Held the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

A General Election is an election scheduled on a fixed date 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.

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- 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 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. The law 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.

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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 Types

[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

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*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 chart [Judicial Offices in Washington State](#) located online and within the “Candidates” section below.

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.

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.

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Year of Election	Primary	General Election
Scheduled jurisdictions Odd Year <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 Judicial Offices in Washington State chart • 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 Secretary of State's Office) • Judges — use Judicial Offices in Washington State chart • Local measures
Even Year <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 <i>Judicial Offices in Washington State</i> chart • 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 Secretary of State's Office) • Judges — use Judicial Offices in Washington State chart • Local measures • Presidential nominees

Office Types

RCW 29A.04

Classifications of Elective Service

Two classifications apply to elective offices.

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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.

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 chart [Judicial Offices in Washington State](#), available on the OSOS website and at the end of this section.

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.

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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 term 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 judicial chart.	Use judicial chart.
Charter county offices	Refer to county charter.	Refer to county charter.

NOTES: _____

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

Judicial Elections in Washington State
Judicial Elections in Washington State

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 because certificate of election is issued after candidate filing ³	County population less than 100,000: Yes ² County population 100,000 or more: No because certificate of election was 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](#)

² [RCW 29A.36.170](#)

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

An election to fill a vacancy in District Court may not occur in an odd-numbered year, per [AGLO 1973 No. 76](#) and [RCW 29A.04.321\(1\)](#).

Measures

[RCW 29A.24, 29A.36](#)

NOTES: _____

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.

ⓘ 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.

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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.)

i *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 Local Government 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 first of each year.

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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**.

ⓘ 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.

ⓘ 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.

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Amount of Annual Salary	Filing Fee	Filing Fee Petition Sufficiency Requirement
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 (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
- Supreme Court Justices

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- Multi-county State positions
- 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:

- State offices and districts that are entirely within a single county.
- 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 is the filing officer. The superintendent of public instruction designates the county filing officer for all shared school districts.

Counties accepting filings for single-county Legislative, Court of Appeals and Superior Court positions must notify the Secretary of State's Office the same day the filing is accepted. This can be done via VoteWA.

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 Monday, two weeks before Memorial Day.
- Ends at the close of business the following Friday.
- Filing offices maintain regular business hours.

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:

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- 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, “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 earlier than 10 business days before the first day of filing week.
- 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 the end of the last day of candidate filing. Delivery to another department in the county or state does not qualify as valid delivery.

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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 9:00 AM on the first day of filing and ends precisely at 4:00 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 RCW 29A.

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.

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- 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 transfer at any time **prior** to filing.

- ① *Remember to confirm internal taxing district boundary lines with the taxing districts prior to filing week.*
- ① *17 year-olds (Primary-Only Voters) are eligible to participate solely in races subject to the primary process for winnowing candidates to a final list of two. They cannot vote for PCOs.*

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, transfer 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 graphic information system.
- If necessary, accept and receipt the filing fee.

NOTES:

- 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.

Send candidate declaration information for legislative, court of appeals, and superior court candidates electronically to the Secretary of State and the PDC the same day the declaration is accepted. This is accomplished by entering the information into VoteWA.

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

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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 has already filed for another position on the ballot.
- ① *Exception: office of precinct committee officer, charter review board member, or freeholder.*
- 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.

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 both signatures.
 - 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>.)

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What happens when a petition is missing essential information?

If the petition did not accompany a declaration of candidacy, or the petition did not meet the filing deadline, the petition is invalid.

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 on the **Monday** following the regular candidate filing period. Special three-day filing periods do not have withdrawal periods.

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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.
- The Secretary of State when the office is for state legislature, court of appeals, or superior court.

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.
- Multi-county Legislative and Judicial offices.

County Auditor determines the order of names:

- Single county Legislative and Judicial offices. Immediately notify the OSOS of the ballot order for those offices.

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- 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.

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 processed 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.

i *For more information, refer to the “Judicial Elections” Clearinghouse.*

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:

NOTES: _____

- 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 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.

Independent Candidate— A candidate nominated by convention without a party affiliation.

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 count.
- 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.

NOTES: _____

Chapter 4, Section 4

Election Preparation

Publish in a Newspaper of General Circulation

Notice of Election

RCW 29A.52.355, WAC 434-208-140

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 available, only the items listed under *Voter Registration Information* and *Public Meetings* must be in the notice. As of July 2021, all County Auditors must publish a local voter pamphlet.

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.

NOTES: _____

- 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.

NOTES:

- 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

Depending on the county tabulation system, an election may need the following types of ballots:

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

NOTES: _____

- 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.
- Races and candidates
- Ballot style or precinct identifier
- Clear delineation between instructions and the first measure or office.

i *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 state 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

NOTES: _____

(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

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.

NOTES: _____

- 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.

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

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).

NOTES: _____

- 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.

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)

NOTES: _____

- 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 complete ballot packet sample 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.

NOTES: _____

- 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.

NOTES: _____

- 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.

NOTES: _____

