

2024 Presidential Primary Ballot Format & Packet Materials Checklist

Overview

The Presidential Primary Ballot Checklist is a resource for the election officials who serve voters in Washington State. It was developed for training purposes through the cooperative efforts of state and county election administrators.

This reference tool, in conjunction with the [Presidential Primary Advisory Program](#), provides guidance for formatting ballots and ballot packet materials. It contains citations for the Revised Code of Washington (RCWs) and Washington Administrative Code (WACs).

While the checklist does not contain every ballot requirement or design principle, it does cover specific requirements for Washington's Presidential Primary. Refer to the citations to format envelopes, overall ballot layout, political party ballots, candidate information, the required insert, alternate ballot types, and additional required instructions, and the [Ballot Format and Ballot Materials Checklist](#) for evergreen ballot and ballot packet creation rules.

This informational publication is intended to provide Washington State election administrators a guide to ballot design and layout rules and best practices.

It is the responsibility of the County Auditor to ensure ballots are compliant with all current laws and requirements.

Contents

Overview	2
Overall Ballot Layout	4
Alternate Types of Ballots	6
Overseas and Service Mail Ballot Packet Requirements	7
Partisan Office Ballot Packet Inserts and Instructions	8
Candidate Format on Ballot	9
Envelope Requirements	10
Insert Requirements	12
Mail Ballot Packet Requirements	13

This informational publication is intended to provide Washington State election administrators a guide to ballot design and layout rules and best practices.

It is the responsibility of the County Auditor to ensure ballots are compliant with all current laws and requirements.

Overall Ballot Layout

Overall Design | WAC 434-219-155(2), 434-230-012; Presidential Primary 2024 Advisory “Ballot Requirements”

- 1. Allow instructions to occupy their own column, if space allows.
- 2. Include the following informational statement: “For a list of the people and organizations that donated to Presidential candidates’ campaigns, visit www.fec.gov.”
- 3. Avoid use of ALL CAPITAL letters, centered type, and using more than one font.
- 4. If space allows, use a 12-point type. Avoid any type size lower than 8-point.
- 5. Consistent use of shading and/or color.
- 6. Consistent font and type size for all races.
- 7. Consolidated ballot layout consisting of main heading, instructions and both party ballots on the same side of paper.
- 8. Consolidated ballot order – Instructions, Democratic Party, and Republican Party.
- 9. No political party checkbox printed on the ballot.

Main Heading | WAC 434-219-155, 434-230-015(1)

- 1. County.
- 2. Date.
- 3. Presidential Primary.

Overall Instructions; printed on consolidated ballot itself | RCW 29A.36.161, 29A.56.040; WAC 434-219-155, 434-230-015(1)

- 1. How to mark a vote on the ballot.
- 2. How to mark a write-in vote.
- 3. Refer to insert for detailed instructions on how to vote.

Overall Ballot Layout (cont.)

- 4. Notice in clear, simple language, and printed in large type stating that a ballot with votes for more than one candidate is void. The notice **must** appear on the face of each presidential primary ballot.
- 5. Clear delineation between the instructions and the party ballots listing candidates through the use of white space, illustration, shading, color, symbol, font size, or bold type.
- 6. Federal Election Commission (FEC) statement printed on consolidated ballot with instructions: “For a list of the people and organizations that donated to Presidential candidates’ campaigns, visit www.fec.gov.” This statement substitutes the requirement for the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) statement.

Optional:

- 1. Print FEC statement on the ballot envelope **and** in accompanying materials instead of printing on the consolidated ballot with the instructions.
- 2. Explanation to voter why the ballot voted must be of the same party marked on the envelope.

Instructions; printed on ballot in either overall instructions or in heading of each race | WAC 434-230-015

- 1. Number of party ballots/candidates the voter may vote (e.g., “vote for only one candidate within the party you marked on your envelope”).

Optional:

- 1. Colors may be used to differentiate between official ballots and provisional or sample ballots.
- 2. May use instructional graphics provided by OSOS.

Alternate Types of Ballots

Provisional, electronically delivered, on demand, and special absentee ballots | RCW 29A.36.115; WAC 434-230-010

- 1. Political party declarations must be included on either:
 - a. the return ballot envelope, **or**
 - b. a separate sheet of paper with instructions for the voter to place the signed declaration in the ballot return envelope, but outside of the security envelope.
- 2. Service and overseas ballots must contain a privacy sheet and instructions for returning the ballot and signed declaration electronically.
- 3. Provisional and sample ballots must be visually distinguishable from the official ballot.
- 4. Provisional ballots must be accompanied with information for the voter to access the free access information to discover whether their vote was counted, and if not, the reason why.
- 5. Ballots printed on demand by the county or voter are **not** required to use color for party designation and ballot identification if such a printer is not available.

Overseas and Service Mail Ballot Packet Requirements

- 1. Include all checklist items from “Mail Ballot Packet Requirements”.
- 2. Include all checklist items from “Partisan Office Ballot Packet Inserts and Instructions” if applicable.
- 3. Include all checklist items from “President & Vice President Ballot Packet Instructions.”

In addition to the above listed items, overseas and service voter mail ballot packets must also include the following:

Return Envelope | RCW 29A.40.091; WAC 434-235-030

- 1. For return UOCAVA ballot postage, use the federal postage-paid indicia as authorized by 39 USC 3406 using the DMM 703.8.0 permit.

Separate Insert Required – Privacy/Secrecy Sheet | RCW 29A.40.091; WAC 434-235-030

- 1. A ballot privacy sheet that can be placed between the declaration page and the ballot for electronic return. Information printed on this sheet must **not** include the declaration or information that could be used to identify the voter.

Additional Instructions Required – On the Ballot, Insert, or the Security or Return Envelopes | WAC 434-235-030

These required instructions may be located on the ballot, on a separate insert, on the return envelope, or on the security envelope/sleeve.

- 1. The mailing address, phone number, fax number, email address, and website of the County Auditor’s Office to enable a voter to contact the elections office for additional information about the election.
- 2. How to return the ballot and signed declaration by fax, email, or postal mail.
- 3. How to insert the privacy sheet between the declaration and the voted ballot for electronic return.
- 4. How to confirm the voted ballot arrived in the elections office. Provide this information in a format the voter can keep after the voted ballot has been returned.

Partisan Office Ballot Packet Inserts and Instructions

Party Ballot, Office Name | WAC 434-219-155 (2)

- 1. Candidates of each party must appear in a single column. The list may not wrap to a second column or the next page.
- 2. “Democratic Party” or “Republican Party” must be printed immediately above the associated list of candidates.

Optional:

- 1. Number of party ballots/candidates to be voted (e.g., “vote for one,” “vote for one candidate and only within the party you marked,” or “vote for only one candidate if declaring with the ____ Party”). This information may also be in the instructions.

Color | WAC 434-219-155 (2)(d)

- 1. A “Democratic Party” heading within or under a blue shaded bar and a “Republican Party” heading within or under a red shaded bar printed immediately above the associated lists of candidates.

Note: See section “Alternate Types of Ballots” for exceptions to this requirement.

Candidate Format on Ballot

List of Candidate Names | RCW 29A.56.040; WAC 434-219-155(2)

- 1. For each political party ballot, list candidates together in alphabetical order as certified by the Secretary of State. The Democratic Party's candidates will be listed first; the Republican Party's candidates will be listed second.
- 2. Print candidates' names in a type style and point size that can be easily read. If necessary, type point size may be adjusted to fit an overly long candidate name.
- 3. *If an uncommitted delegate response is requested by a political party:* Include an uncommitted delegate response position (target area) after the list of candidates and above the write-in line.

Write-in Area; following each list of candidates | WAC 434-219-155(2)(h)

- 1. Response position (target area) and space to write in a candidate name.

Envelope Requirements

Outer Mailing Envelope | RCW 29A.40.091; WAC 434-230-015, 434-250-070

- 1. The calendar date of the election **must** be prominently displayed on the outer mailing envelope in bold, 20-point font or larger.
- 2. Display the elections logo according to [“Official Elections Mail – Graphic Guidelines and Logos” USPS Publication 631 Jan. 2022](#).
- 3. Utilize postal service endorsements that allow ballots to be forwarded, allow the county auditor to receive the updated address information for forwarded ballots, and allow the return of ballots not capable of being forwarded.
- 4. Conform to postal regulations.
- 5. County elections office address.

Optional:

- 1. Additional instructions and/or county branding provided it does not interfere with the voter declaration format.
- 2. County branding or logo may be used, provided it does not interfere with the Office of the Secretary of State or USPS requirements.

Return Envelope – Postal Address Side | RCW 29A.40.091; WAC 434-230-130, 434-230-135

- 1. Addressed to the County Auditor’s address.
- 2. A hole punched in a manner that will reveal whether the security envelope/sleeve is inside.
- 3. Display the elections logo according to [“Official Elections Mail – Graphic Guidelines and Logos” USPS Publication 631 Jan. 2022](#).
- 4. Conform to postal regulations.
- 5. Pre-paid return postage. For return UOCAVA ballot postage, use the federal postage-paid indicia as authorized by 39 USC 3406 using the DMM 703.8.0 permit.
- 6. Must **not** include information that could be used to identify the voter.

Envelope Requirements (cont.)

Optional:

- 1. County branding provided it does not interfere with the voter declaration format.
- 2. Label/identify return envelope and/or security envelope or sleeve.

Return Envelope – Voter Declarations, Template | WAC 434-230-015, 434-230-130

- 1. Required format designated by the Office of the Secretary of State's template (*Return Envelope Declaration Template Advisory* issued with the official certified party declarations).
Resize format only to accommodate county mailing needs. Contact the Office of the Secretary of State to approve changes to the template.

- 2. Official designated colors for party check boxes.

Exception: On-demand printing and web-delivered envelopes are not required to use color on party declaration checkboxes.

- 3. Conform to postal regulations.

Optional:

- 1. County branding or logo may be used, provided it does not interfere with the Office of the Secretary of State or USPS requirements.
- 2. Label return envelope.

Security Envelope or Sleeve | RCW 29A.40.091; WAC 434-230-130

- 1. A hole punched in a manner that will reveal whether a ballot is inside.
- 2. Must **not** include information that could be used to identify the voter.

Optional:

- 1. Additional instruction and/or county branding provided it does not interfere with the voter declaration format.
- 2. Label security envelope or sleeve.

Insert Requirements

Required Insert | WAC 434-219-155(3)

- 1. Instructional insert provided by OSOS (*Ballot Insert Advisory*) explains how to sign and mark the ballot in accordance with the political party declaration.

Optional:

- 1. Additional information may be printed on the opposite side of the required insert.

Mail Ballot Packet Requirements

Additional Instructions | RCW 29A.36.161, 29A.40.091; WAC 434-219-155, 434-230-015, 434-235-030

Include for voter use:

- 1. Print complete ballot declaration as cited in WAC 434-230-015.*
- 2. Space for the voter to sign and date the declaration, write their phone number, and for two witnesses to sign.*

These instructions may be located on the ballot, on the back of the separate insert, or on the security or return envelopes:

- 1. How to complete and sign the declaration on the return envelope.
- 2. Explanation on how the voter may make a mark, witnessed by two other people, if the voter is unable to write their signature.*
- 3. Explanation that power of attorney cannot be used to sign a ballot for someone else.*
- 4. Notice that in order to be counted, the ballot must be either postmarked no later than Election Day and arrive the day before Certification Day or deposited at a designated deposit site no later than 8:00 PM on Election Day.*
- 5. How to cancel/correct/change a vote by drawing a line through the text of the candidate's name or ballot response. Graphic is optional. Wording should not require the voter to mark another choice.
- 6. Notice about overvoting.
- 7. How to place the ballot in the security envelope/sleeve, and the security envelope/sleeve into the return envelope.
- 8. How and where to obtain a replacement ballot if the original ballot is destroyed, spoiled, or lost.
- 9. Explain how the voter may update their address.
- 10. How a voter can learn about the locations, hours, and services of voting centers and ballot deposit sites, including availability of accessible voting units (AVUs).
- 11. If FEC statement is not printed on the ballot, it must be printed on the ballot envelope **and** accompanying ballot materials.

* Commonly located on the Return Envelope

Mail Ballot Packet Requirements (cont.)

Additional

- 12. For reissued ballots, explain that the reissued ballot is the current ballot.

Optional:

- 1. Any additional information the County Auditor deems necessary.

When the County Auditor is a Candidate on the Ballot That Year | RCW 29A.40.091(5)

- 1. The **County Auditor's** name may not appear on the security envelope, return envelope, or any voting instructions or materials included with the ballot when the Auditor is a candidate during the same year.

This informational publication is intended to provide Washington State election administrators a guide to ballot design and layout rules and best practices.

It is the responsibility of the County Auditor to ensure ballots are compliant with all current laws and requirements.

An informational publication of the Certification and Training Program, Elections Division, Office of the Secretary of State