

October 13, 2008

Cowlitz County Canvassing Board
c/o The Honorable Kris Swanson, Auditor
207 N. 4th Avenue
Kelso, WA 98626

Dear Canvassing Board Members:

In accordance with RCW 29A.04.570, the State Election Certification and Training Program conducted a comprehensive review of election procedures in Cowlitz County during the 2007 Primary Election.

The RCW also requires a follow-up visit prior to the next Primary or General Election to verify the County has taken the steps necessary to correct the changes recommended in the review report.

The following recommendations were discussed during my follow-up visit:

1. **Notice of Closing Voter Registration Files** - *The elections department must revise its notice to inform voters that registration closes only in the precincts that are participating in the election.*

Follow Up: After receiving advice from the Cowlitz County Prosecuting Attorney, the County Auditor has not changed the department's Notice of Closing Registration and will not change it for future primary elections.

2. **Precinct Boundaries** - *The elections department should redraw the precinct boundaries to make the McGowan precinct contiguous.*

Follow Up: The Cowlitz County Elections Department has decided not to redraw the precinct boundaries for the McGowan precinct. They believe the change could result in jeopardizing voter secrecy.

3. **Questionnaire to Cities, Towns, and Districts** - *The department must send the questionnaire to all of the jurisdictions in the county for which the County Auditor is the filing officer.*

Follow Up: The elections staff now sends the questionnaire to all jurisdictions for which the County Auditor is the filing officer.

4. **Notification to Nonpartisan Candidates** - *The elections staff sent notices to candidates who would not appear on the primary election ballot in August. The issue of whether or not a candidate would appear on the primary election ballot was evident at the end of candidate filing week or after a special filing period in June.*

Follow Up: The elections staff will notify candidates when they will not appear on the primary election ballot as soon as they are aware of the situation.

5. **Ballot Applications** - *The Cowlitz County Elections Department must change both the Special Ballot Application and the Hospital Ballot Application to comply with elections laws.*

Follow Up: Both applications have been changed.

6. **Auditor's Office as a Polling Place** - *The County Auditor's Office must post instructions for voting where people are likely to vote in large type for the visually impaired.*

Follow Up: The elections staff posted the instructions in the lobby by the accessibility voting unit.

7. **Political Party Observers** - *The elections department staff must request political party observers for all stages of ballot processing. They should make the request in writing and can include it with their request for election workers.*

Follow Up: The elections department requested political party observers for the General Election and will continue to request them in the future.

8. **Ballot Security** - *The elections department must use numbered seals and logs to secure its unstaffed deposit boxes. When the reviewer mentioned this, the elections department staff purchased numbered seals and adopted procedures for sealing the drop-off boxes and recording the seal number. They must also adopt procedures for placing ballots in secure storage while the workers are not processing the ballots.*

Follow Up: As mentioned above, the ballot deposit boxes were secured with numbered seals and logs before Election Day. After the election, they also secured the room where the ballots are processed by putting a new lock on the door and the keys to the door are then secured.

9. **Provisional Ballot Envelopes** - *The department must design and acquire provisional ballot envelopes and adopt procedures for correctly recording all of the information and verifying the voter's signature.*

Follow Up: The department now has the required envelopes and procedures.

- 10. Tabulation** - *The Cowlitz County Elections Department staff must be very conscientious of the statutory requirement that no tabulation commences until after 8:00 p.m. Under no circumstances should results be available in readable format until after that time.*

Follow Up: The election department staff will adopt different procedures for checking anomalies in the cumulative results so that the results will not be tabulated until after 8:00 p.m. They will follow those procedures for the 2008 General Election.

- 11. Canvassing Meeting** - *The Cowlitz County Canvassing Board should not certify the election without the final results of the election and the reconciliation report.*

Follow Up: The Canvassing Board has changed its procedures.

The County Auditor, Kris Swanson, and her staff should be commended for their obvious dedication to the election process and their desire to improve a very good operation.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 360.902.4159 or tbuckles@secstate.wa.gov.

Sincerely,



Tracy Buckles
Elections Specialist