Washington Secretary of State
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Advisory Issue 09: County Questions
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Three questions have been recently asked by counties:

1. If no oath is marked and there are no special district elections, should the ballot be rejected or should a blank ballot be tabulated?

2. How should political party oath corrections be handled?

3. How should DREs be handled in this Primary?

Question #1. Both methods will work and both require accounting for the ballots. In either case, the voter's signature must be checked against their voter registration. If any signature problems are found, the procedures for curing a signature, including allowing the voter to mark a party oath, must be followed.

Once a signature has been accepted and an oath is not marked, the ballot does not need to be opened if there are no other issues on the ballot. The County Canvassing Board would reject them and the ballots are accounted for as "rejected ballots" on the ballot accountability form.

Tabulating a blank ballot is also an option. Once the signature has been verified and an oath is not marked, the ballot is opened to see if the voter marked votes on the ballot. If the ballot is blank, it may be run through the tabulator as is. If the ballot contains votes, it will have to be duplicated as a blank ballot.

Question #2. Political party oath corrections were not addressed in RCW or WAC. The Secretary of State's Office suggests applying the principles outlined in the "Statewide Standards on What is a Vote." As always, send any questionable ballots to your County Canvassing Board.

Question #3. The newly adopted WACs regarding voting centers are in effect for this election, so please review them ahead of time. Your office is considered a voting center.

For the Presidential Primary, the person assisting the voter will need to enter the voter's political party choice into the DRE before the voter begins voting. Please instruct the voter to only vote for the party they have selected. It will be necessary to reconcile the total number of DRE ballots cast with the number of "poll book" entries. However, the number of party oaths signed will not be reconciled to the number of ballots counted for each party.

If you have any questions about the above information, please contact the Certification and Training Program at (360) 902-4180.

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