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2.1 VOTER REGISTRATION SERVICES

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLE

RCW 29A.04.205

“State policy. It is the policy of the state of Washington to encourage every eligible person to register to vote and to participate fully in all elections and to protect the integrity of the electoral process by providing equal access to the process while guarding against discrimination and fraud.”

WHAT CONSTITUTES DISCRIMINATION OR FRAUD?

RCW 29A.84

- Refuse or neglect to perform any duty required by law.
- Intentionally deny any person eligible to vote the right to register.
- Knowingly alter, destroy, or discard a completed registration form.
- Knowingly destroy, mutilate, conceal, change, or alter any voter registration record except as authorized by voter registration law.
- Deliberately fail to return a registration form in a timely manner.
- Knowingly provide false information on a voter registration application.
- Offer to pay another person a fee per registration.
- Accept payment based on a fixed amount per registration.

“Penalty. A person who willfully violates any provision of this title regarding the conduct of all ballot primaries or elections is guilty of a class C felony punishable under RCW 9A.20.021.”

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO VOTE?

WA CON ART. VI, SEC 1 & 3

An “elector” is any person qualified to vote.

- 18 years old at time of voting.
- United States Citizen.
- Legal resident of Washington State.
- Not subject to guardianship covering voting rights.

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RCW 29A.08

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IS A VOTER'S REGISTRATION INFORMATION PUBLIC?

Following items are public information and available on request.

- Name and address.
- Political jurisdiction (precinct/district).
- Gender.
- Date of birth.
- Voting record.
- Date of registration.
- Registration number.

Following items are **not** available to the public:

- Department of Licensing (DOL) office of registration.
- State agency office of registration.
- Declination of registration.
- Phone number.
- Anything else on the registration form that isn't specified as public information.

REGISTRATION DEADLINES

Voters must register or update address information in order to participate in an election. Deadlines do not apply to overseas or service applicants wishing to register to vote in Washington State. Deadlines for updates to existing records apply to all voters including service and overseas voters.

The postmark, or date of receipt, by the elections office is the date of registration. No postmark? If an application by mail does not have a postmark, but received by a County Auditor by the end of the fifth day after the deadline, consider the application as meeting the deadline.

29-DAY DEADLINE

New applications, changes of address (transfers), name changes and voluntary cancellations must be received or postmarked by the 29th day before an election. The same deadlines for registration by mail apply to registrations received by fax, email, or online.

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8-DAY DEADLINE

Applicants not currently registered in Washington State may register **in person** at his or her County Auditor’s office up to eight days before an election. This extended registration period is only available to voters not currently registered in Washington, and includes those that were once registered but are currently cancelled.

All transfers must meet the 29-day deadline. No exceptions.

EXCEPTION

If members of the armed forces (as defined by RCW 29A.04.163) and overseas electors (defined in 29A.04.109) consider Washington State their last residence, **new** applicants are exempt from all registration deadlines. This exception does not automatically apply to dependents and spouses of military and overseas voters.

VOTER APPLICATIONS

ACCEPTABLE APPLICATIONS

- Washington State mail-in/paper form.
- Online voter registration (OLVR).
- Motor Voter (based on National Voter Registration Act, NVRA).
- Agency-based form.
- In-person (registration drives, over-the-counter).
- Federal applications.

REQUIRED INFORMATION FOR NEW APPLICANTS

- Name.
- Residential address.
- Date of birth.
- Affirmation of US citizenship.
- Signature attesting to truth of information provided on the form.

Note: ID is not a piece of required information to register an applicant.

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PROCESSING A COMPLETED APPLICATION

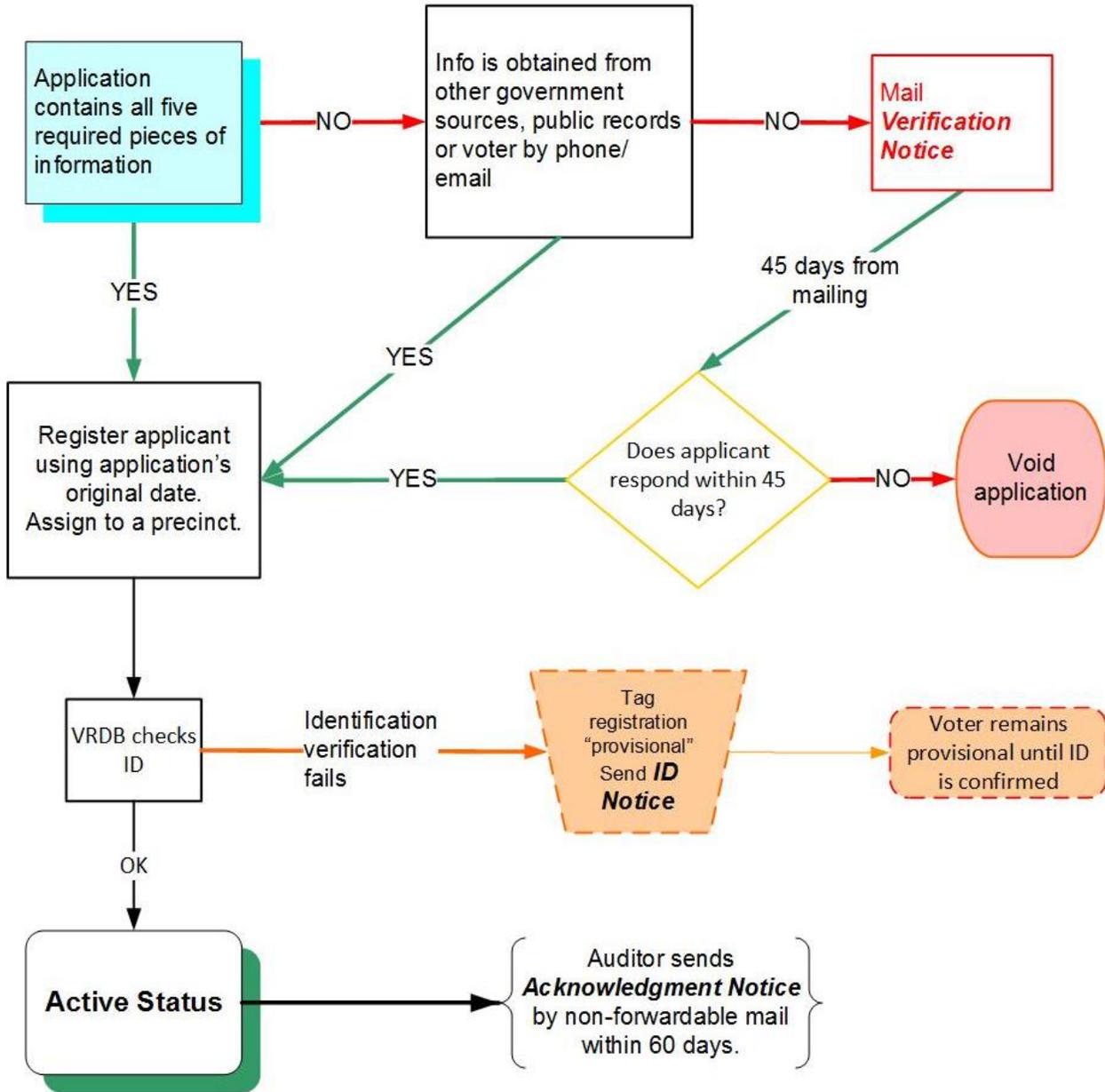
After verifying an application contains all five pieces of **required** information, register the voter.

- Enter the applicant's information into your county database.
- If it is a paper form, scan it and be sure to save an image of the signature.
- Confirm the VRDB verified the state driver's license, state ID, or social security number. (When the ID is not confirmed or provided, register the voter provisionally.)
- Send an **Acknowledgment Notice** (voter ID card) to the voter within 60 days of receiving the application.

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PROCESSING REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS

RCW 29A.08 & WAC 434-324



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APPLICATION IS MISSING **REQUIRED** INFORMATION

- Do not register the voter.
- Hold the application until either the missing required information is received, or the deadline of **45 days** has passed.

Send a **Verification Notice** to an applicant missing one or more pieces of required information.

Never send a Verification Notice to a voter that is already registered. The Verification Notice must **not** be used for requesting identification.

If the applicant responds within 45 days:

- Enter the voter into your county database and send an Acknowledgment Notice.
- The date of registration for the voter is the date you received the **original** application.

When an applicant fails to respond within 45 days, the voter cannot be registered and the application is not valid.



REGISTERING A UOCAVA VOTER

To qualify as a **Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act** (UOCAVA) voter in our state, the voter must claim Washington State as his or her last known U.S. residence. An overseas voter, as defined in RCW 29A.04.109, is any elector of the state of Washington outside the territorial limits of the United States on Election Day.

Deadlines for **new** voter registration do not apply to citizens overseas or active duty service electors, dependents, or spouses that are away from their residence due to an active duty assignment. A service or overseas voter may register to vote by providing one of the following items.

- A voter registration application issued by Washington State.
- A federal post card application (FPCA) issued by the Federal Voting Assistance Program ([FVAP](#)).
- A federal write-in absentee ballot (FWAB) issued by FVAP.
- A national mail voter registration form issued by the Election Assistance Commission ([EAC](#)).

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- A ballot with a valid signature on the ballot declaration.

PROCESSING UOCAVA APPLICATIONS

If an application from a UOCAVA elector lacks a Washington State address, contact the applicant to request the address of his or her last known residence in Washington State. An address of a relative may be used if the applicant has never lived in the United States.

After the election or primary, if the voter does not provide a Washington address, the County Auditor must place the voter on inactive status.

A UOCAVA voter is not required to provide ID when registering. UOCAVA dependents are not included in the exemption and must provide valid identification.

UOCAVA voters must be offered the option of receiving ballots electronically or by postal mail. If the registration application does not indicate a choice, you must try to contact the voter. Send the ballot by mail if the voter has not responded by the mail date.

Rules for processing UOCAVA voter registrations and issuing ballots are located in “Service and Overseas Voters,” [Clearinghouse 14-05](#).

REGISTERING AN ACP VOTER **RCW 40.24 & WAC 434-840**

Some applicants must **not** be entered into your voter registration system. The **Address Confidentiality Program** (ACP) protects victims of domestic violence. Participants of the program may register to vote, but their registration and balloting information is strictly confidential. Their information must not be coded into your county database.

The County Auditor sends a ballot to the registered program participant at the mailing address provided. Neither the name nor the address of a participant is included on any list available for public disclosure.

Only designated personnel in the County Auditor’s Office may process these registrations and ballots.

IS ID REQUIRED TO REGISTER A NEW VOTER? **WAC 434-324-045**

When an application is missing ID only, the voter must be provisionally **registered**. All provisionally registered voters receive ballots.

- Voters lacking ID are registered to vote, but only provisionally.

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- *Exception:* UOCAVA voters are not required to provide ID when registering to vote.

IDENTITY VERIFICATION

HAVA requires verification of ID through the statewide Voter Registration Database (VRDB). The ID numbers **requested** on the form are from the Department of Licensing (DOL) or Social Security (SSN).

If the voter does not provide a DOL or SSN number, or the VRDB is unable to verify the ID numbers provided, the County Auditor should follow these steps.

1. Provisionally register the voter in your county system and flag the registration.
2. Use other government resources and public records to confirm the voter's ID. If confirmed, remove provisional status from the registration.
3. If unable to verify using other sources, you may contact the voter by phone, email or other means. If the voter provides valid ID, remove provisional status from the registration.
4. If after these attempts, you are unable to verify the voter's identity, send an **ID Notice**.
5. When the voter provides ID, remove the provisional registration status and change to active.
6. The county elections department should cancel any provisional voter registration that has been consistently provisional through two federal elections.

ALTERNATE FORMS OF ID ARE ACCEPTABLE!

- Valid photo ID.
- Valid tribal enrollment card of a recognized tribe in Washington.
- Current utility bill.
- Current bank statement.
- Current paycheck.
- Current government check.
- Any government document that shows the registrant's name and current address.

When a voter provides an alternate form of ID, save a notation of the document source in the voter's registration record.

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NOTICES TO VOTERS

NVRA, HAVA

Whenever a voter’s registration is accepted or updated, the voter receives a notice. Voters must receive affirmation of registration. Applicants must be notified when an application is incomplete, a residence address appears to be incorrect, or ID verification fails. For these purposes, we use:

- Acknowledgment Notices
- Confirmation Notices
- Verification Notices
- ID Verification Notices

ACKNOWLEDGMENT NOTICE

When a voter registers, transfers, changes his or her name, or reactivates an inactive registration, the County Auditor must mail a notice to the voter.

The County Auditor sends an **Acknowledgment Notice** whenever a voter is assigned to “active” status. It must be:

- Sent by first-class, non-forwardable mail.
- Mailed to the voter within 60 days of receipt of the application.

A voter registration card may serve as the Acknowledgment Notice. It must list:

- Voter’s full name.
- Mailing address.
- County name.
- Precinct name and/or number.
- Registration date.
- The County Auditor may include additional information.



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VERIFICATION NOTICE

When an application lacks any one of the five required pieces of information **do not register the voter** (name, residential address, date of birth, a mark affirming citizenship, signature attesting to truth of info provided on the form).

Try one or all of the following to locate missing information (other than a signature or confirmation of citizenship):

- A government resource.
- A public resource.
- Phone or email the applicant.

A Verification Notice is sent to the applicant when the form is missing a signature, a citizenship affirmation, or when you're unable to obtain missing information any other way. The purpose of the notice is to obtain the missing piece of information and to notify the applicant that a **45-day deadline** exists in which the application is viable. The notice must:

- Be sent by forwardable mail.
- Include a postage paid, preaddressed return form.
- Notify the applicant that he or she must respond within 45 days or, the application is void and he or she must re-apply.
- Request missing information only. Applicants are not obliged to provide required information more than once, so the Verification Notice should only ask for the missing piece(s) of registration information.

CONFIRMATION NOTICE

The County Auditor sends a **Confirmation Notice** when the voter is assigned to "inactive" status because of the return of undeliverable mail.

The notice provides the voter with an opportunity to update his or her address.

Required elements:

- Request voter verify his or her current address.
- Request voter sign the oath in RCW 29A.08.230.
- Includes either the voter's date of birth, county voter ID number, or state voter ID number.

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- Informs voter if he or she fails to confirm or update the address with the County Auditor, or, does not vote within two federal general elections, the registration will be cancelled.
- Mailed as first class, forwardable mail.
- A postage paid, preaddressed return form.
- Mailed to the address of registration and each address where the voter could reasonably expect to receive mail.
- If returned, a Confirmation Notice may serve to update a voter's address either within the county, or transfer the voter's registration to another county in Washington State.

IDENTIFICATION NOTICE

The County Auditor sends an **Identification Notice** when a voter is registered provisionally. This occurs when ID is not provided with the application, or, the ID provided could not be verified.

Before sending an Identification Notice, the County Auditor may attempt to obtain ID information by contacting the voter or utilizing other government sources. If after these attempts, you are still unable to verify the provisionally registered voter's ID, send the Identification Notice prescribed in WAC 434-250-045.

WHICH NOTICE SHOULD I USE?

Each notice serves a **distinct** purpose. The activity or stage of the registration process determines which notice to use. To understand which notice to send to an applicant or voter, start with the voter's application... Is required information missing? Did the ID check fail? Did you receive an undeliverable ballot from a registered voter? Each requires a different notice.

EACH VOTER IS ASSIGNED A REGISTRATION "STATUS"

A voter's registration status falls into one of the following categories.

- Active – Voter is fully qualified to vote.
- Pending – The record is processing or an issue must be resolved.
- Provisionally Active – The voter is issued a ballot, but must provide ID prior to the ballot being counted.
- Inactive – The voter's residential address is questionable due to information from the USPS.

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- Cancelled – The voter is no longer registered.

ACTIVE AND INACTIVE STATUS

The default status for voters is **active** – meaning, each is eligible to vote.

A voter’s status changes from active to inactive when:

- USPS provides an out-of-county change of address.
- Any undeliverable document mailed by the County Auditor and returned without address correction information.
- Any official state agency that registers voters reports an out-of-state address for an active voter. This includes information from the USPS, Department of Licensing and Department of Human Services.

In these cases, send a Confirmation Notice.

Reactivate a voter by changing the status from inactive to active when the voter:

- Attempts to vote.
- Requests a mail ballot.
- Updates registration information.
- Responds to a Confirmation Notice by providing a residence address located within the same county.

Unless specified by law, only the number of active registered voters determine qualifying numbers such as voter turnout or the number of votes needed to validate (*see Chapter 5*).

WHEN THE INACTIVE VOTER RESPONDS TO A CONFIRMATION NOTICE

When an inactive voter responds to the notice by providing a residence within the county, change the voter’s status to “active.”

When the inactive voter returns the Confirmation Notice to the County Auditor and indicates he or she has moved out of the county, but within Washington, the voter’s status remains “inactive.”

- The former county of residence does not cancel the registration; and
- Should immediately date stamp and forward the notice to the new county.

The new county confirms the transfer and activates the voter. For detailed requirements and procedures, see Clearinghouse 12-06, “[Voter Registration Transfers](#).”

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WHEN THE INACTIVE VOTER *DOESN'T* RESPOND TO THE CONFIRMATION NOTICE

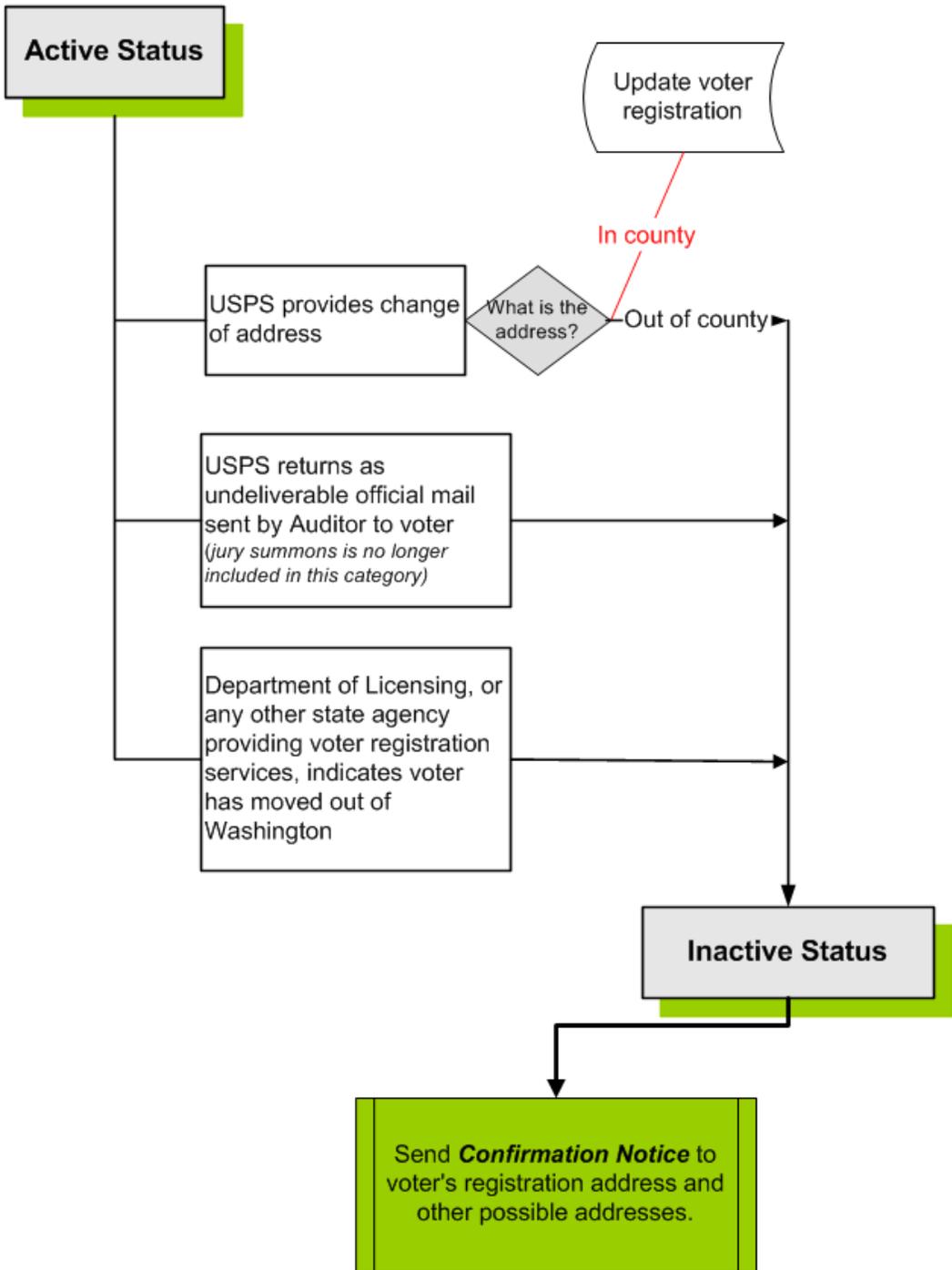
The County Auditor must wait for the inactive voter to take any of the following actions.

- Voter votes or attempts to vote: change status to active.
- Voter confirms the address or provides a new one within the state: follow procedures for transfers.
- Voter makes no contact through two federal elections: cancel registration.

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ACTIVE TO INACTIVE STATUS

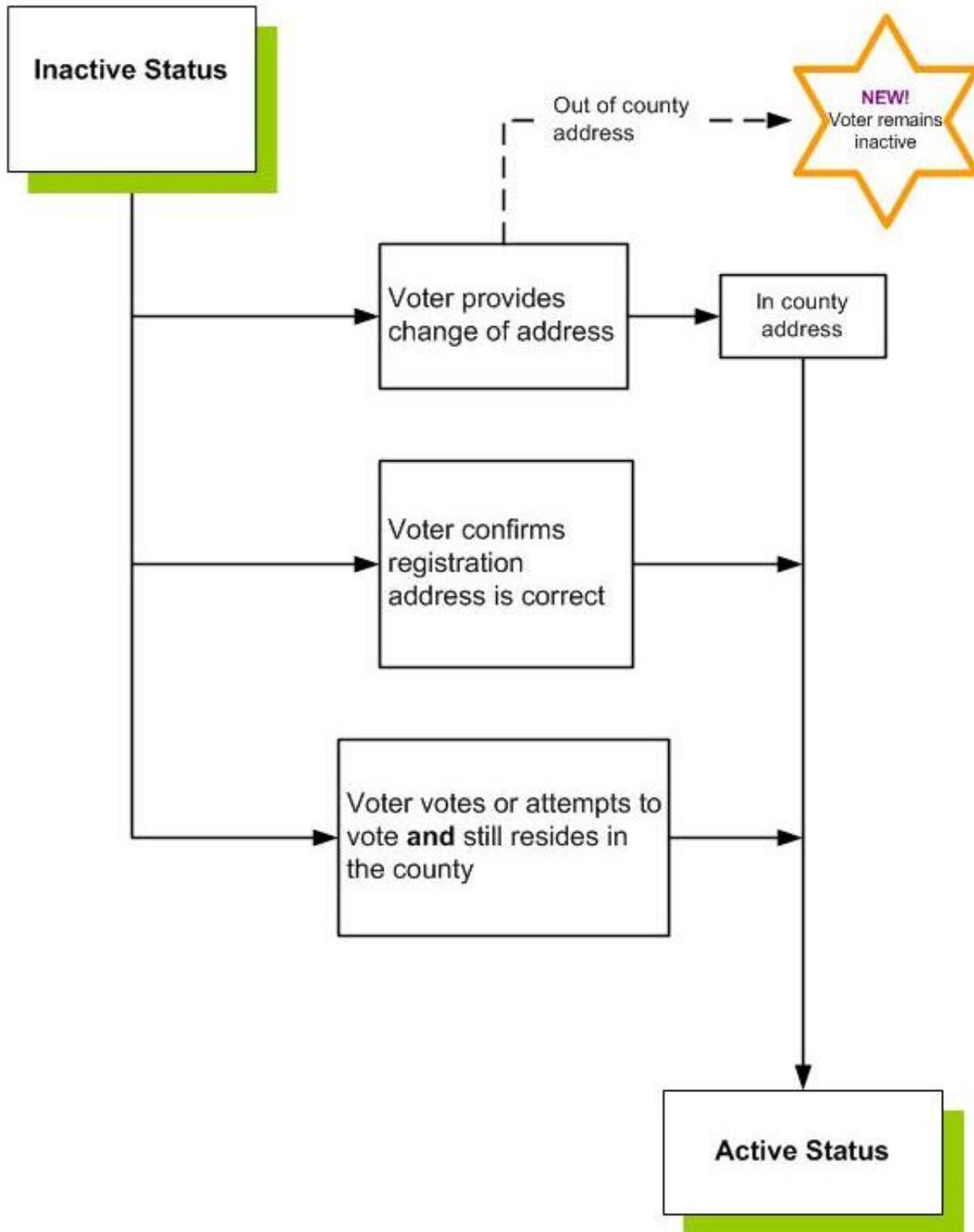
RCW 29A.08.620



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INACTIVE TO ACTIVE

RCW 29A.08.630 & 29A.08.640



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VOTER REGISTRATION DATABASE (VRDB)

The official record of each voter resides in the state **Voter Registration Database (VRDB)**. Each county's system connects to the VRDB to exchange voter registration information.

Voters move, change their name, register, pass away, or become ineligible to vote daily. Voter registration data is fluid, not static. For this reason, the VRDB is a dynamic system and requires daily review by counties.

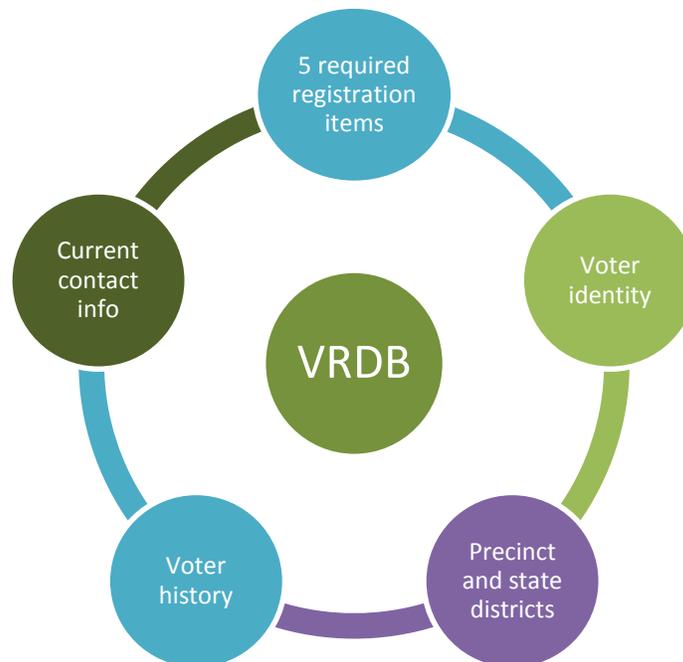
DEFINITIONS

VRS: Any county Voter Registration System that administers voter registration maintenance (election management system). Currently, counties are use one of three systems: DIMS, VOTEC, or DFM.

VRDB: The State Voter Registration Data Base is the official list of all Washington State voters.

VRDB Admin: The website that allows county users to search voter registrations and audit the information in the VRDB.

VRDB Help Manual: A dynamic electronic help manual that will become your best friend. It is available at <http://weihelp.sos.wa.gov/help/vrdb/Pages/VRDBHome.aspx>.



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VRDB TO COUNTY SYSTEMS

The VRDB is the official list of voters in Washington State. Although the county records may contain more detail, basic voter records **must** mirror the state system.

VRDB DATA ENTRY

Data entered into the county voter registration system pushes up to the VRDB queue.

- New voter registrations.
- Updates to existing voter registration information.
- Cancellations.

The VRDB pulls data from the queue, creates an ID number and begins various processes depending on the type of record.

COUNTY RECORDS

The VRDB completes the county record when processed data is picked up from the VRDB queue.

The county server must remain connected to the VRDB queue. View the *County Connectivity* report in VRDB Admin to verify that information is exchanging with the state VRDB. If the report shows no data exchanged, notify VR Support (VRsupport@sos.wa.gov).

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION AND ADDRESS CORRECTIONS

Online voter registration and motor voter registrations depend on the Department of Licensing (DOL) for all required voter information, including the signature of the voter.

Process online registrations the same as other types of voter registration.

VRDB DATA INTEGRITY PROCESSES

WAC 434-324-045

The VRDB reduces opportunities for fraud and mistakes by conducting periodic data integrity checks. Voter records verify against other county, state, and federal databases to validate voter ID, locate duplicate records, and clear the active voter rolls of non-qualified registrants.

The integrity checks identify “possible” issues. The county then researches and resolves each of the flagged records.

Validate Voter ID: For new registrations, the VRDB must validate DOL ID and Social Security numbers with the issuing agency. If the ID verification fails, the voter’s record is still active. The

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county elections department must assign a status of “provisionally registered,” pending verifiable ID. County Auditors may verify voter ID using other governmental information or the acceptable documents listed in WAC 434-250-045.

Duplicate Voter Search: A duplicate record check runs nightly in the VRDB to identify possible duplicate records, including voters transferring between counties.

Review and resolve duplicate and transfer reports daily.

Cancellations: The VRDB compares lists of deceased voters with the Department of Health, and Social Security Death Index.

The county must research those matches for potential cancellations.

Felons and the VRDB: The Secretary of State handles the cancellation of all felons through the VRDB and the Washington State Department of Corrections. For more information, see [Felons and Voting Rights](#) on the Washington Secretary of State’s website.

If you receive notification of a felony conviction, contact the Secretary of State’s Office (OSOS). Felons should not be cancelled at the county level.

DAILY MAINTENANCE

Counties must resolve data integrity issues in the VRDB Admin before making any data entries in the county’s VRS. Except for the **Felon Maintenance** report, review each report every day. Resolving issues in the VRDB before working in the VRS, prevents inaccurate, incomplete, and “ghost” records.

Daily maintenance should include the review and resolution of the following management lists.

- Duplicate.
- Transfer.
- Address.
- Online.
- Deceased.
- ID.



See the VRDB Help Manual for more complete information on daily maintenance and reports.

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VRDB REPORTS – PREPARE FOR AN ELECTION

Before creating ballot mailing lists, verify that VRS records match those in the VRDB.

Any voter records remaining in the **Data Audit** or **Voter Status** reports will not be included on the voter lists and will not receive a ballot. Counties must resolve data audit and voter status issues prior to an election.

ASSISTANCE

- *VRDB section* in the [WEI Help Manual](#)
- *VRSupport* at (360) 902-4194, or VRsupport@sos.wa.gov

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MAINTENANCE OF VOTER RECORDS

HOW DOES A VOTER TRANSFER WITHIN THE SAME COUNTY?

To transfer (change residence address) **within the county**, the voter may:

- Update address by contacting the County Auditor in writing, in person, by phone, or email.
- Submit an update through MyVote or DOL.
- Provide a change of address to USPS. The new address is forwarded to County Auditor.
- Respond to a Confirmation Notice with a new address within the county.

HOW DOES A VOTER TRANSFER TO ANOTHER COUNTY?

To transfer into a **new county**, the voter may:

- Submit a new paper registration application.
- Submit an electronic update using MyVote or DOL.
- Respond to a Confirmation Notice that will be forwarded by the former county to the new county of registration.

The County Auditor of the new county will use the VRDB to verify whether the registration is a transfer.

For such **county-to-county transfers**, a voter is only required to provide the minimum information necessary to complete the transfer.

- Name.
- Residential address.
- Signature to the oath in RCW 29A.08.230.
- Either the voter's DOB or voter ID number.
- For detailed procedures regarding Confirmation Notices and transfers, refer to Clearinghouse 12-06 "[Voter Registration Transfers](#)."

WHAT IF A VOTER WISHES TO CHANGE HIS OR HER NAME?

Voters must provide the following information to the County Auditor in writing (written note, VR application, etc.).

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- Name on current registration.
- New name.
- Residence.
- New signature.

A **signed ballot envelope** or a **Confirmation Notice** containing all the required elements is acceptable for updating a voter's name. Retain a copy of the envelope or notice for updating the county's VRS.

WHAT CANCELS A VOTER'S REGISTRATION RECORD?

Active and inactive voter cancellation:

- Signed request for cancellation from the voter.
- A completed transfer out of your county.
- Duplicate records in the VRDB.
- Successful challenge to a voter's registration.
- Obituary information.
- Notification of death with signature from another registered voter.
- OSOS receives information from the Department of Corrections (DOC).
- Incapacitation, Guardianship.

Inactive voter cancellation only:

- Failure to vote or confirm registration address for a period of two federal general elections.

FELONS

RCW 29A.08.520

OSOS compares records in the VRDB with the Department of Corrections. The OSOS flags the felon as **PENDING**, and sends a letter to the voter. He or she has 30 days to respond before the registration record is cancelled.

HOW ARE VOTING RIGHTS RESTORED?

For the purposes of this section, a person is under the authority of the DOC if the person is:

- Serving a sentence of confinement in the custody of the DOC, or
- Subject to community custody as defined in RCW 9.94A.030 (5).

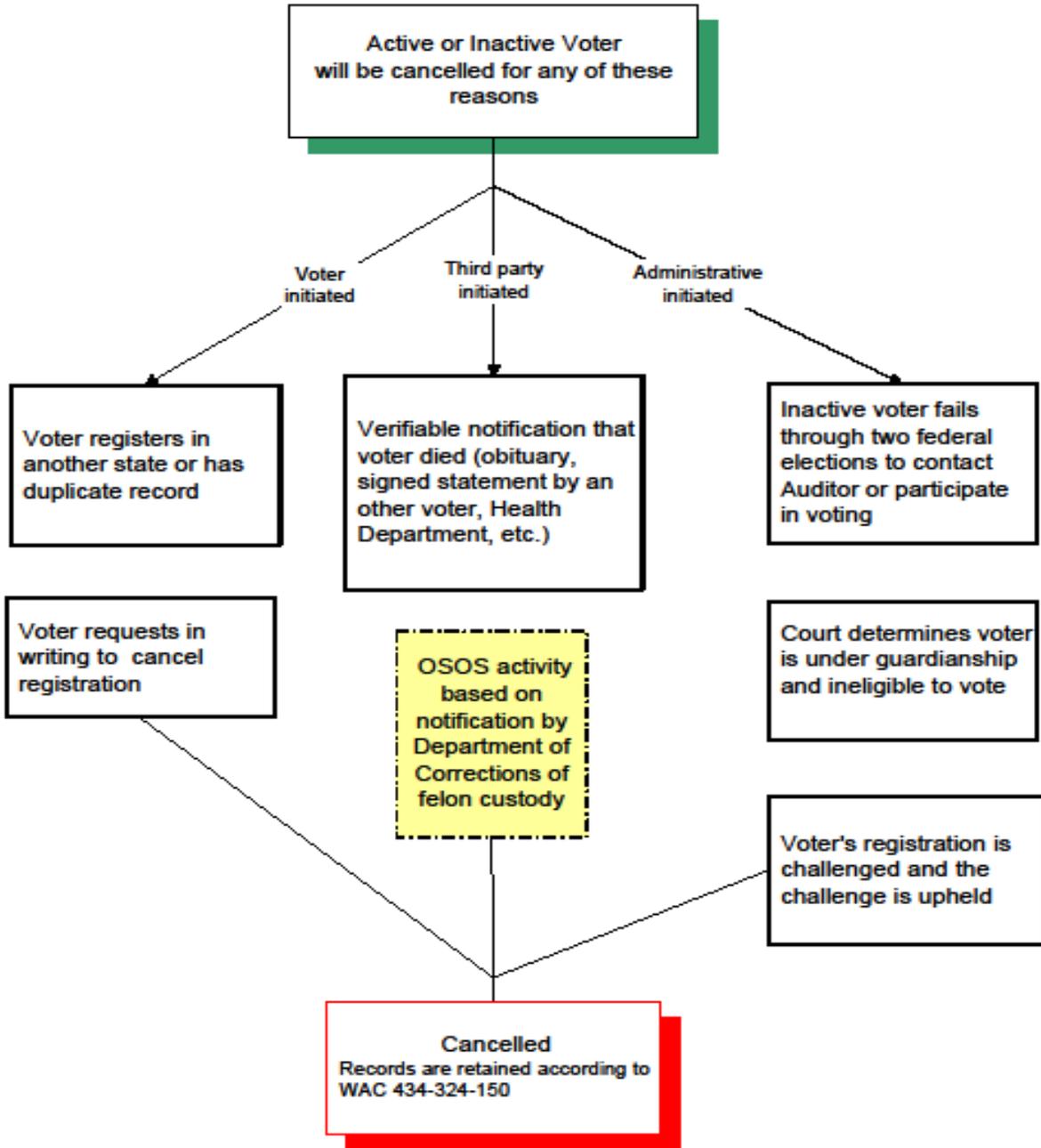
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The civil rights of felons, including voting rights, are restored provisionally whenever a felon is no longer under the authority of the DOC. Provisional restoration is revocable if the sentencing court determines a person has willfully failed to pay legal financial obligations.

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CANCELLING VOTERS

RCW 29A.08.630 & 29A.08.640



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2.2 PRECINCTS AND DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

RCW 29A.16

PRECINCT BOUNDARY RULES

Each precinct must be entirely within a single

- Congressional district.
- State legislative district.
- County legislative district.
- City.

Physically, a precinct must be, as nearly as practicable

- Contiguous or “touching” -- A single precinct may not be made up of separate parts.
- Compact -- For instance, precincts should not be long, narrow, or have parts that significantly extend beyond the main precinct body.

Use visible physical features to describe precinct boundaries

- Streets.
- Power lines.
- Bodies of water.
- Ridges.
- Exceptions:
 - City/town boundaries.
 - Use of physical features would substantially impair election administration in the involved area.

Precincts cannot exceed a maximum of 1500 active registered voters.

The county legislative authority may establish a different limitation, but it must be less than the maximum established by state law.

MAKING CHANGES TO PRECINCT BOUNDARIES

The county legislative authority adopts precinct lines (unless otherwise stated in a county charter).

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Precinct line changes must follow certain rules.

- Permanent changes may be adopted as long as sufficient time exists to make the changes.
- No permanent changes are allowed beginning 14 days prior to candidate filing until the end of the general election.
- Temporary precinct changes may accommodate a city or town annexation.
- Cities and towns may annex at any time. If the annexation affects an election, the voters are eligible to vote in the city or town election even if the annexation is just a few days before Election Day.

REDISTRICTING **RCW 29A.76**

Redistricting apportions congressional, legislative, and internal director/commissioner districts' *population* based on the US Census. This happens at least every 10 years to guarantee equal representation. The county legislative authority must adopt new precinct lines to comply with the State Redistricting plan and the county commissioner or council internal district boundaries.

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