



*Washington Secretary of State*

# CLEARINGHOUSE

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## ELECTIONS NOTICE

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### **Voters without Traditional Residential Addresses**

A voter's ballot type is determined by a voter's residential address. A voter who lacks a traditional residence address should be registered at an identifiable location which the voter considers to be his or her residence. Such voters, for example, may be homeless, residing in RVs or boats, or living with friends. Military and overseas voters are not considered voters without traditional residential addresses and are registered under different rules.

RCW 29A.08.112 provides that a voter registration applicant who meets all the qualifications to be registered, but lacks a traditional residential address will not be disqualified from registering to vote. The RCW also states, "A voter who lacks a traditional residence will be registered and assigned to a precinct based on the location provided."

Previously, such voters were registered to vote at the courthouse address. In 2006, state law was changed to allow these voters to provide an "identifiable location" and receive the correct ballot based on that location.

To assist you in registering these voters, please consider the following questions and answers:

- **What is considered an "identifiable location" in order to appropriately precinct the voter?**  
An identifiable location is anywhere the voter currently considers his or her residence. It may be the location at which they spend most of their time, or where they sleep at night. The location may be a description, such as a specific bridge or park. To determine the correct precinct and ballot style, you may choose a street address closest to the location indicated by the voter.
- **What about voters who do not indicate a specific location that they regularly inhabit?**  
Encourage the voter to choose a location that they consider to be their home or residence. Again, this may simply be a location where they currently spend most of their time.
- **Must a voter have a mailing address?** Yes. RCW 29A.08.112 requires voters with a nontraditional address to provide a valid mailing address. This means they may choose to receive their mail through USPS "General Delivery" with a specific post office address. The post office will hold any mail for 30 days, and then discard, or return to sender.

- **Is it correct to register and precinct the voter at a government building, such as a United States Post Office?** No. Unless the voter considers a specific government building his or her location of residence, the voter must not be arbitrarily registered at a government building such as a post office or courthouse.
- **Is it correct to register and precinct a voter at a business?** The voter may be registered at a business address only if he or she considers the location to be his or her residence.
- **What should we do with a voter currently registered at the courthouse?** We suggest contacting the voter for more information.

## **RCW 29A.08.010**

### **Minimum information required for voter registration**

(2) The residential address provided must identify the actual physical residence of the voter in Washington, as defined in RCW 29A.04.151, with detail sufficient to allow the voter to be assigned to the proper precinct and to locate the voter to confirm his or her residence for purposes of verifying qualification to vote under Article VI, section 1 of the state Constitution. A residential address may be either a traditional address or a nontraditional address. A traditional address consists of a street number and name, optional apartment number or unit number, and city or town, as assigned by a local government, which serves to identify the parcel or building of residence and the unit if a multiunit residence. A nontraditional address consists of a narrative description of the location of the voter's residence, and may be used when a traditional address has not been assigned to the voter's residence.

## **RCW 29A.08.112**

### **Voters without traditional residential addresses**

No person registering to vote, who meets all the qualifications of a registered voter in the state of Washington, shall be disqualified because he or she lacks a traditional residential address. A voter who lacks a traditional residential address will be registered and assigned to a precinct based on the location provided.

For the purposes of this section, a voter who resides in a shelter, park, motor home, marina, or other identifiable location that the voter deems to be his or her residence lacks a traditional address. A voter who registers under this section must provide a valid mailing address, and must still meet the requirement in Article VI, section 1 of the state Constitution that he or she live in the area for at least thirty days before the election.

A person who has a traditional residential address must use that address for voter registration purposes and is not eligible to register under this section.