

December 22, 2009

Columbia County Canvassing Board
c/o Sharon Richter, Columbia County Auditor
341 E Main St, #2
Dayton, WA 99328

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 Columbia County during the 2008 Primary Election.

The RCW also requires the Secretary of State's Office to verify steps have been taken to correct the problems noted in the report. The following recommendations were discussed during my follow-up visit:

1. **Precinct Boundaries** *Columbia County needs to alter precinct boundaries in the precincts where the boundaries are not compact after the 2010 census. If precinct lines need to be altered following the 2010 census, precinct lines should follow visible physical features. Precinct lines changes need to follow visible, physical features whenever possible, even in the rural areas. (RCW 29A.16.050)*

Follow Up: The Census has not yet occurred, but Columbia County plans to alter precinct boundaries at that time.

2. **Voter Registration Notices** *Voter ID cards should be sent by nonforwardable mail, as required by RCW 29A.08.030 (2).*

Follow Up: Voter ID cards are now sent by nonforwardable mail.

3. **Questionnaire to Cities, Towns, and Districts.** *The questionnaire should ask for the annual salary instead of the filing fee. (WAC 434-215-005)*

Follow Up: Salary is now requested in the questionnaire.

4. **Political Party Observers.** *Prior to each primary or election, the number of observers required to observe all parts of the election process should be determined and requested from each party. Due to the size and layout of the County Auditor's Office, one observer from each party would be sufficient for most elections. (RCW 29A.40.100, WAC 434-250-110, & WAC 434-261-020)*

Follow Up: One political observer is now requested from each major political party.

5. **Absentee Ballot Materials.** *Remove the oath from the special absentee request form or use the form available on the Secretary of State's website. (WAC 434-250-030)*

Follow Up: The elections department now uses the request form found on the Secretary of State's website.

6. **Ballot Drop Site.** *At every county-wide election, an additional ballot deposit location needs to be added in a location that is geographically different than the County Auditor's Office. The location can be a permanent ballot deposit box or it can be a temporary deposit site for Election Day only. Different options are described in WAC 434-250-100. (WAC 434-250-320)*

Follow Up: A drop box has been purchased for the town of Starbuck and is waiting for installation of outside lighting.

7. **Disability Advisory Committee.** *Columbia, Garfield, and Asotin Counties have discussed forming a joint advisory committee, but have not made much progress in forming the committee. Columbia County may consider sharing the same members of another county's committee, such as Walla Walla. In any case, a committee must be formed to create a plan. The plan should include the number of voting centers required; the locations of voting centers and drop off facilities; outreach to voters with disabilities; implementation of the Help America Vote Act; and other election related functions necessary to maximize accessibility to persons with disabilities. The plan must be reviewed at least annually. (RCW 29A.46.260)*

Follow Up: Columbia, Garfield, and Asotin Counties have formed a disability committee. The committee has met and a plan has been developed for Columbia County.

Columbia County Auditor, Sharon Richter, and her staff should be commended for their obvious dedication to the election process and their desire to improve an already excellent operation.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 360.902.4146 or sheryl.moss@sos.wa.gov.

Sincerely,



Sheryl Moss
Election Certification and Training Program Manager