



Secretary of State

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Voting Centers and Ballot Deposit Sites

Clearinghouse Elections Notice

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Changes to WAC 434-250-100 and WAC 434-250-105 are in effect for all upcoming election cycles. This Clearinghouse summarizes important laws and rules pertaining to voting centers and ballot deposit sites, and replaces the information in Clearinghouse #12-03.

According to WAC 434-250-320 the County Auditor must provide at least *two* locations for voters to deposit ballots beginning eighteen days prior to Election Day and ending at 8:00 p.m. on Election Day. The locations may be a voting center or a ballot deposit site and must be located in different geographical locations.

The attached chart, "Voting Center and Deposit Site Requirements," specifies further requirements for voting centers, staffed and unstaffed deposit sites.

What is a voting center?

Any location that issues replacement ballots, provisional ballots, or offers voting on a direct recording electronic (DRE) device is considered a voting center. Each County Auditor opens a voting center each primary, special, and general election.

The voting center must be open during business hours during the voting period, which begins eighteen days before, and ends at 8:00 p.m. on Election Day. It is no longer a requirement to be open at 7:00 a.m. on Election Day.

Voting centers are fully accessible locations that offer voting in a manner that provides for voter privacy.

The Americans with Disabilities Act Checklist for Polling Places shall be used when determining the accessibility of a voting center.

For each voting center, the County Auditor must have a contingency plan to accommodate accessible voting in the event that an accessible voting unit (AVU) malfunctions.

If the voting center offers voting on a DRE, the County Auditor shall require the voter to sign the ballot declaration provided in WAC 434-230-015. Ballot declaration signatures may not be maintained in the same chronological order in which they were signed.

Before the voter votes on a DRE, the County Auditor must either verify the signature on the ballot declaration against the signature in the voter registration record, or require the voter to provide photo identification, consistent with RCW 29A.40.160.

Sample ballots that meet the requirements in RCW 29A.36.116 may be used as provisional ballots.

Other required materials include:

- Either a voters' pamphlet or sample ballot.
- Registration forms.
- HAVA voter information poster.
- Date of the election.
- Instructions on how to mark the ballot.
- Materials in alternative languages if required.
- Other required notices as applicable. (WAC 434-250-105)

Within a voting center, RCW 29A.84.510 prohibits practices that interfere with the voting process during the 18-day voting period and on Election Day. No person may:

- Attempt to suggest or persuade any voter to vote for or against any candidate or ballot measure.
- Circulate cards or handbills of any kind.
- Solicit signatures to any kind of petition.
- Engage in any practice which interferes with the freedom of voters to exercise their franchise or disrupts election administration.
- Obstruct the doors or entries to a building in which a voting center or ballot deposit site is located.

At exactly 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, all ballot boxes must be emptied or secured to prevent the deposit of additional ballots. However, any voter who is already in a voting center or waiting in line at a voting center at 8:00 p.m. must be allowed to vote and deposit his or her ballot.

All requirements for staffed deposit sites apply to voting centers. For further details about voting center availability, notices, or required materials please refer to the chart.

What is a ballot deposit site?

If a location only receives ballots and does not issue ballots, the site is either a staffed or unstaffed deposit site. Staffed ballot deposit sites must be staffed by at least two people.

Ballot boxes must be secured at all times with seals and logs that document each time the box is opened and by whom. The box must be emptied frequently enough to prevent damage or unauthorized access, and by *two* people authorized by the County Auditor. Secure ballots in a carrier, using seals and logs for transportation. Alternatively, ballots may be accompanied by at least two authorized people.

Ballot boxes located outdoors must be constructed of durable material able to withstand weather, removal, and vandalism.

No one may electioneer, circulate campaign materials, solicit petition signatures, or impede the voting process within twenty-five feet of a ballot deposit site that is not located within a voting center.

At exactly 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, all ballot boxes must be emptied or secured to prevent the deposit of additional ballots. However, any voter who is already in line at 8:00 p.m. may vote and deposit his or her ballot. If a ballot is returned after the ballot box is emptied or secured at 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, the ballot must be referred to the Canvassing Board.

For further requirements please refer to the attached chart, and please contact the [Certification & Training Program](#) if you have questions.

Ballot Deposit Site Types:	Voting Center <i>WAC 434-250-105, RCW 29A.40.160</i>	Staffed <i>WAC 434-250-100</i>	Unstaffed <i>WAC 434-250-100</i>
Receives Ballots	Yes	Yes	Yes
Issues Ballots	Yes – AVU and provisional ballots are required; replacement ballots optional. Ballot materials must include a voter declaration.	No	No
Staffing	Attended at all times by at least two staff members or qualified appointees. Must subscribe to oath.	Attended at all times by at least two staff members or qualified appointees. Must subscribe to oath.	Not staffed except when box is emptied; two staff members or qualified appointees must be present when box is accessed or emptied.
Appointee Qualifications If not county employees.	Representatives of different major political parties whenever possible, who subscribe to oath of duties.	Representatives of different major political parties whenever possible, who subscribe to oath of duties.	County Auditor employees or appointees.
Site Hours At least two locations open 18 days prior to and on Election Day.	As a voting center, the County Auditor’s Office must be open during regular office hours beginning the day ballots are mailed until Election Day (excluding weekends and legal holidays). Other locations – hours are established by the Auditor. On Election Day, all voting centers must remain open until 8:00 pm.	Dates and times as established by the County Auditor and open until 8:00 pm on Election Day.	May be open 18 days prior to the election and until 8:00 pm on Election Day.
Accessibility	Must be located in an accessible environment free of barriers to the mobility or functioning of voters. This includes the routes of travel to and through buildings used for voting. Offers accessible voting in a manner that provides for voter privacy. AVU is available during business hours, beginning 18 days before, and ends at 8 pm on Election Day.	As appropriate.	As appropriate.

Signage	Must display current HAVA poster, date of the election, instructions on how to mark a ballot, and signage outside the building indicating it as a place for voting.	As appropriate.	As appropriate.
Notices	<p>The Notice of Election must include information on how a voter can obtain a ballot. (RCW 29A.52.355)</p> <p>During a primary or general election that includes a partisan office, display the appropriate notice provided in WAC 434-230-015(3)(j) or (k).</p>		
Security	<p>Must conduct real time verification for DRE voters; require identification for DRE or provisional voters; provide declaration forms for voters to sign; ballot box secured at all times; documentation of access to ballots; and accountability of all ballots issued.</p> <p>At 8:00 pm on Election Day, all ballot boxes must be emptied or secured.</p> <p>Within the voting center, no person may impede the voting process. See <i>RCW 29A.84.510; WAC 434-250-150.</i></p>	<p>Must be secured at all times with seal logs that document each instance a box is accessed and by whom. Deposit boxes may be accessed by authorized staff only. Sealed containers must be used when transporting ballots. At 8:00 pm on Election Day, all ballot boxes must be emptied or secured.</p> <p>Within 25 ft., no person may electioneer or interfere with the voting process. The County Auditor may contact a law enforcement agency for assistance if necessary to maintain order.</p>	<p>Must be secured at all times with seal logs that document each instance a box is accessed and by whom. Deposit boxes must be emptied by authorized staff only; constructed to withstand weather, removal, and vandalism. Site must be emptied often enough to prevent damage to ballots and unauthorized access to ballots. Sealed containers must be used when transporting ballots. At 8:00 pm on Election Day, all ballot boxes must be emptied or secured.</p> <p>Within 25 ft., no person may electioneer or interfere with the voting process. The County Auditor may contact a law enforcement agency for assistance if necessary to maintain order.</p>
Other Supplies	Voters' pamphlet or sample ballot; voter registration forms; instructions on how to mark the ballot; election materials in alternate language(s) when mandated; notices as applicable.		