

# Ballot Format Checklist



2018

## Certification & Training Program

Requirements for overall ballot design, headings, instructions, use of color, partisan offices, office format, candidate format, unique offices, and additional instructions for ballot packets.

## OVERALL BALLOT LAYOUT

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### Overall Design | WAC 434-230-012, RCW 29A.36.161

- 1. Allow instructions to occupy their own column, if space allows.
- 2. Avoid use of ALL CAP letters, centered type, and using more than one font.
- 3. If space allows, use a 12-point type. Avoid type size lower than 8-point.
- 4. Consistent use of shading and/or color.
- 5. Consistent font and type size for all races.

### Main Heading | WAC 434-230-015(1)

- 1. County.
- 2. Date.
- 3. Primary, Special or General.

### Overall Instructions; printed on ballot itself | RCW 29A.36.161, WAC 434-230-015(2)

- 1. How to mark the ballot.
- 2. How to mark a write-in vote when candidate races appear.
- 3. Clear delineation between the instructions and the first ballot measure or office through the use of white space, illustration, shading, color, symbol, font size, or bold type.
- 4. PDC statement (or graphic); must be printed on the ballot unless it is printed on the envelope *and* in accompanying materials.

### Optional:

- 5. Party preference “Read” notice may be included here (see also Partisan Offices on a Ballot).

Instructions; printed on ballot in either overall instructions or in heading of each race |  
WAC 434-230-015

- 1. Number of candidates for whom the voter may vote (e.g., “vote for one”).

Color | WAC 434-230-015(7)

*Optional:*

- 1. May use varying sizes and colors of ballots if used consistently throughout the region, area, or jurisdiction; may also be used to differentiate between official ballots and provisional or sample ballots. Per RCW 29A.36.115 and WAC 434-230-010, provisional and sample ballots must be visually distinguishable from the official ballot.

## PARTISAN OFFICES ON A BALLOT

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Ballot Instructions; for a primary or general election with a partisan office | WAC 434-230-015(6)(a)

1. Party preference notice printed on the ballot:

“READ: Each candidate for partisan office may state a political party that he or she prefers. A candidate’s preference does not imply that the candidate is nominated or endorsed by the party, or that the party approves of or associates with that candidate.”

2. Print notice in bold print.

3. Print notice immediately **above** the first partisan congressional, state or county office.

Ballot Instructions; for a general election with President and Vice President on the ballot | WAC 434-230-015(6)(b)

1. Party preference notice printed on the ballot:

“READ: Each candidate for President and Vice President is the official nominee of a political party. For other partisan offices, each candidate may state a political party that he or she prefers. A candidate’s preference does not imply that the candidate is nominated or endorsed by the party, or that the party approves of or associates with that candidate.”

2. Print notice in bold print.

3. Print notice immediately **after** President and Vice President, but immediately **above** the first partisan congressional, state or county office.

## OFFICE FORMAT

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Office Name | WAC 434-230-035(1)

1. Name of each office

Office Descriptions | WAC 434-230-035(2)

1. "Partisan Office" must be printed either for each partisan office **or** as a heading above a group of partisan offices.
2. "Nonpartisan Office" must be printed either at each nonpartisan office **or** as a heading above a group of nonpartisan offices.

Term Description | WAC 434-230-035(3)

1. Required **only** if term is other than a full term. Print a description of the term (e.g., short/full, two-year unexpired) with the office name.

Write-in Area; following each list of candidates | WAC 434-230-035(4)

1. Response position (target area) and space to write in a candidate name.

Separator Line | WAC 434-230-035(5)

1. Bold line separating each office or position

## CANDIDATE FORMAT

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### List of Candidate Names | WAC 434-230-045(1) and (3)

- 1. For each office or position, list all candidates together.
- 2. Print candidates' names in a type style and point size that can be easily read. Fonts may be adjusted to fit a long candidate name if necessary.

### Order of Candidates; other than President & Vice President | WAC 434-230-045(2)(a) and (2)(b)

Party preferences stated by candidates do not affect the order in which candidate names are listed.  
WAC 434-230-045(2)(c)

- 1. Primary candidates listed in lot draw order.
- 2. General election candidates listed in vote-getting order, highest first. If the two candidates who received the most votes in the primary received exactly the same number of votes, the order in which their names are listed on the general election ballot is determined by lot.

### Partisan Candidates and Party Preference Format | WAC 434-230-045(4)(a-d)

Partisan candidates may state a political party preference; candidates are not required to state a preference. No nominations or endorsements are printed on the ballot.

#### **When a party preference is stated:**

- 1. Print preference exactly as noted on the declaration, "(Prefers \_\_\_\_\_ Party)"
- 2. Print preference below the candidate's name within parentheses.
- 3. Capitalize first letter of each word.
- 4. Print exactly the same preference on both primary and general election ballots.

#### *Optional:*

- 1. Preference may be indented or printed in smaller font.

#### **When no party preference is stated:**

- 1. Print "(States No Party Preference)"

- 2. Print information below the candidate's name within parentheses.
- 3. Capitalize first letter of each word.
- 4. Print exactly the same information on both primary and general election ballots.

*Optional:*

- 1. Information may be indented or printed in smaller font.

Nonpartisan Candidate Format | WAC 434-230-045(5)

- 1. Only the candidate's name is printed. Neither "nonpartisan" nor "NP" appears with the candidate's name.

## UNIQUE OFFICES

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President & Vice President; office and candidate format | RCW 29A.36.161, WAC 434-230-035(6), WAC 434-230-015

- 1. Pair the President and Vice President nominees' names by party.
- 2. Provide one response position (target area) for each political party's pair of nominees.
- 3. List candidates in political party order per RCW 29A.36.161.
- 4. Print full name of the political party for each pair, preceding the word 'Nominees.'
- 5. If not nominees of a political party, print description as "Independent Candidates."
- 6. Format does **not** use parentheses.
- 7. Capitalize first letter of each word.

*Optional:*

- 1. Information may be indented or printed in smaller font.

*Example:*

John Smith / Jane Doe  
Example Party Nominees

Precinct Committee Officers | RCW 29A.52.171, RCW 29A.80.051, WAC 434-230-100(2)

PCO races appear on the Primary ballot in each even-numbered year. Only contested races appear on the ballot. Candidates compete only against other PCO candidates of the same political party.

If only one candidate files for a position, that candidate is deemed elected and does not appear on the ballot. If no candidates file for a position, the race does not appear on the ballot.

PCOs – Office Location | RCW 29A.52.171, WAC 434-230-100(4)

- 1. Contested PCO races follow all measures and public offices on a consolidated ballot. If a physically separate ballot is used for PCO elections, it must be distinguishable from the Top Two Primary ballot.



PCOs – Office Format | RCW 29A.52.171, WAC 434-230-100(4)

- 1. Clear delineation from other races.
- 2. PCO explanation printed before the list of candidates:  

“For this office only: In order to vote for precinct committee officer, a partisan office, you must affirm that you are a Democrat or a Republican and may vote only for one candidate from the party you select. Your vote for a candidate affirms your affiliation with the same party as the candidate. This preference is private and will not be matched to your name or shared.”
- 3. If all candidates are listed under one heading, the applicable party abbreviation “Dem” or “Rep” must be printed next to each candidate’s name, or, if candidates are listed under a major political party heading, the applicable heading of either “Democratic Party Candidates” or “Republican Party Candidates” must be printed above each group.
- 4. The applicable affirmation statement must be printed directly below each candidate’s name: “I affirm I am a Democrat,” or “I affirm I am a Republican.”
- 5. Lines/spaces for write-in candidates must **not** be printed for PCO races.

PCOs – Order of Candidates | WAC 434-230-100(3)

- 1. When both party positions qualify to appear on the same ballot, candidates of the political party that received the highest number of votes for President at the last presidential election must appear first.
- 2. **Within** each party, PCO candidates appear in lot draw order.

*PCO Examples:*

**For this office only:** In order to vote for precinct committee officer, a partisan office, you must affirm that you are a Democrat or a Republican and may vote only for one candidate from the party you select. Your vote for a candidate affirms your affiliation with the same party as the candidate. This preference is private and will not be matched to your name or shared.

Vote for one

- Jimmy Smith          Dem  
I affirm I am a Democrat
- Sue Thomas          Dem  
I affirm I am a Democrat
- Charlie Miller      Rep  
I affirm I am a Republican
- Jane Doe              Rep  
I affirm I am a Republican

**For this office only:** In order to vote for precinct committee officer, a partisan office, you must affirm that you are a Democrat or a Republican and may vote only for one candidate from the party you select. Your vote for a candidate affirms your affiliation with the same party as the candidate. This preference is private and will not be matched to your name or shared.

Vote for one

- Jimmy Smith - Dem  
I affirm I am a Democrat
- Sue Thomas - Dem  
I affirm I am a Democrat
- Charlie Miller - Rep  
I affirm I am a Republican
- Jane Doe - Rep  
I affirm I am a Republican

## ADDITIONAL REQUIRED INSTRUCTIONS

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These instructions may be located on the ballot, on a separate insert, or on the security or return envelopes.

Additional Instructions | WAC 434-230-015

1. How to cancel/correct/change a vote by drawing a line through the text of the candidate's name or ballot response. Graphic is optional. Wording should not require the voter to mark another choice.
2. Notice about overvoting.
3. How to complete and sign the declaration on the return envelope.
4. Explanation on how the voter may make a mark, witnessed by two other people, if the voter is unable to write their signature.
5. Explanation that power of attorney cannot be used to sign a ballot for someone else.
6. How to place the ballot in the security envelope/sleeve, and the security envelope/sleeve into the return envelope.
7. How to obtain a replacement ballot if the original ballot is destroyed, spoiled, or lost.
8. Explanation that postage is required, or exactly how much postage is required. For exceptions and more details about return postage, see WAC 434-250-200.
9. Notice that in order to be counted, the ballot must be either postmarked no later than Election Day or deposited at a designated deposit site no later than 8pm Election Day.
10. How a voter can learn about the locations, hours, and services of voting centers and ballot deposit sites, including accessibility of AVUs.
11. If PDC statement (or graphic) is not printed on the ballot, it must be printed in two locations on the accompanying ballot materials.

*Optional:*

1. Any further information the County Auditor deems necessary.

Separate Insert Required – Primary | WAC 434-230-015(j)

1. For a primary with a **partisan office**, a separate insert must be printed:

“In each race, you may vote for any one candidate listed. The two candidates who receive the most votes in the Primary will advance to the General Election.

Each candidate for partisan office may state a political party that he or she prefers. A candidate’s preference does not imply that the candidate is nominated or endorsed by the party, or that the party approves of or associates with that candidate.”

Ballot Packet Instruction Required – General Election | WAC 434-230-015(k)(i) and (k)(ii)

1. For a general election with a **partisan office**, these instructions must be provided, but can be included anywhere in the ballot packet (on the ballot, envelope, or an insert):

“If a primary election was held for an office, the two candidates who received the most votes in the Primary advanced to the General Election.

Each candidate for partisan office may state a political party that he or she prefers. A candidate’s preference does not imply that the candidate is nominated or endorsed by the party, or that the party approves of or associates with that candidate.”

2. For a general election with **President & Vice President**, these instructions must be provided, but can be included anywhere in the ballot packet (on the ballot, envelope, or an insert):

“If a primary election was held for an office, the two candidates who received the most votes in the Primary advanced to the General Election.

Each candidate for partisan office may state a political party that he or she prefers. A candidate’s preference does not imply that the candidate is nominated or endorsed by the party, or that the party approves of or associates with that candidate.

The election for President and Vice President is different. Candidates for President and Vice President are the official nominees of their political party.”

When the County Auditor is a Candidate | RCW 29A.40.091(5)

1. The **County Auditor’s** name may not appear on the security envelope, return envelope, or any voting instructions or materials included with the ballot when the Auditor is a candidate during the same year.