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Klickitat County Canvassing Board
205 S. Columbus
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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 Klickitat County during the 2006 Primary Election.

The RCW also requires a follow-up visit prior to the next Primary or General Election to verify the County Auditor's Office has taken the steps necessary to correct the changes recommended in the review report.

Polling Places

Several of the recommendations made in the review report pertained to polling places. Those recommendations are no longer an issue as Klickitat County now votes entirely by mail.

Precinct Boundaries

Recommendation: Whenever Klickitat County changes precinct lines in the future, the lines should follow visible, physical features (such as rivers, streets, power lines, etc.) and the areas of the precincts should be compact and contiguous.

Follow Up: In the future, when changes to precinct boundaries are made, every effort will be made to create contiguous and compact areas. Physical features will be followed whenever possible.

Ballot Proofing

Recommendation: Prior to each fall, the election staff should review the ballot requirements for each office. Ballots should be proofed by several different people to detect errors in printing ballots.

Follow Up: New procedures include using county staff outside of the elections department to assist in the ballot proofing process and testing ballot proofs for readability by the vote tabulation system prior to the actual printing and mailing of ballots to voters.

Auditor's Office

Recommendation: The Auditor's Office is a poll site under this WAC and should have all the posters, logs, etc. required for a poll site.

Follow Up: Proper signage, logs, etc. was posted and available as required for this election.

Voter Registration Challenge Form

Recommendation: The form should be in substantially the same form as found in WAC 434-324-115.

Follow Up: This form now includes all of the required elements.

Political Party Observers

Recommendation: Klickitat County should determine the number of observers needed to adequately cover each step of ballot processing. This number and when they will be needed should be added to the request for political party observers. The date and time of the county's observer training should also be included in the letter. They should offer this training before each primary and general election, even if no one attends.

Follow Up: Elections staff members are working to prepare a policies and procedures manual for the training of political party observers, but have not contacted the party's nor do they have any trainings scheduled.

Special Absentee Ballots

Recommendation: Special absentee ballots should be provided to any voter filling out a special absentee ballot request form.

Follow Up: The procedures manual has been updated and special absentee ballots are now provided to any voter that completes the request form.

Hospital Absentee Ballots

Recommendation: A letter from a hospital administrator is no longer required to receive a ballot on Election Day. The procedures manual should be changed to reflect current practice.

Follow Up: The procedures manual has been updated to allow a resident of a health care facility, who is a registered voter, to request and receive an absentee ballot by messenger.

Instructions

Recommendation: Add the two required parts to the absentee ballot instructions. The county reports that these are now included on the instructions printed on the ballot.

Follow Up: In the future these instructions will be printed on the ballot security envelope.

Unsigned Absentee Ballots

Recommendation: Any communication with voters about unsigned or unmatched signatures on absentee ballot envelopes should give the voter until the day before certification to correct the problem.

Follow Up: The form letter used to communicate to voters for unsigned or unmatched signatures on absentee ballot envelopes has been changed to give the voter until the day before certification to correct the problem.

Replacement Ballots

Recommendation: Klickitat County should treat requests for replacement ballots the same as original requests for absentee ballots.

Follow Up: This practice was discontinued after the reviewer discussed the issue with elections staff.

Faxing Voted Ballots.

Recommendation: The option of returning a voted ballot electronically should not be included as an option in the military ballot instructions. Voters requesting to send their ballot electronically should be provided with a waiver of secrecy to sign and include with their electronic ballot.

Follow Up: The option of returning a voted ballot electronically has been removed from the military ballot instructions. A waiver of secrecy for the voter to sign has been prepared and is included with each ballot sent electronically.

Voter Cancellations

Recommendation: RCW 29A.08.510 specifically lists the ways a voter may be cancelled. Writing the information on an absentee envelope does not meet the requirements of this statute. This procedure should be discontinued; voter registrations should only be canceled for the reasons listed in statute.

Follow Up: Procedures have been updated to include the specific ways a voter may be cancelled.

Election Certification

Recommendation: The reconciliation report is intended to account for all ballots received by the County Auditor. The number of ballots received should equal the number counted plus the number rejected. If the numbers do not match, the county should indicate why. This process is extremely important. It verifies that all ballots that should have been counted were counted. The elections staff should verify all the numbers on the reconciliation form are correct before submitting it to the county canvassing board to be included with the official results.

Follow Up: Procedures now include the audit of results by a minimum of two office staff to verify that the numbers are correct and balance before submitting them to the county canvassing board as part of the official results.

The Klickitat County Elections Department has been made great progress in reviewing, updating and streamlining their procedures in accordance with election law and current best practices. I commend the elections department for their obvious dedication to the election process and their desire to improve an already good operation.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 360.725-5785 or kramsay@secstate.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Ramsay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "y".

Kay Ramsay
Elections Program Specialist
Office of the Secretary of State
Certification & Training Program