

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 11-24-064, filed 12/6/11, effective 1/6/12)

**WAC 434-250-080 Replacement ballots.** The county auditor ((may)) shall issue a replacement ballot, as authorized by RCW 29A.40.070, if the request is received prior to 8:00 p.m. on election day. Requests may be made in person, in writing, by telephone, or electronically, by the voter, a family member, or a registered domestic partner.

Each county auditor shall allow access to an electronic ballot system to both active and inactive voters for replacement ballots no later than the eighth day prior to election day.

If a voter appears in person at a county auditor's office before 8:00 p.m. election day and requests a ballot, the county auditor must determine if the voter is registered to vote in Washington.

(1) If the voter is registered in the same county, issue a replacement ballot.

(2) If the voter is registered in another county, access and print a replacement ballot from that county, if the electronic ballot system is available.

(3) If the voter is not registered within the state or the electronic ballot system is not available, the county auditor must offer the voter a provisional ballot.

Replacement ballots or the original ballot, whichever is received first, shall be credited to the voter's registration file and tabulated if the ballot meets all requirements for tabulation. If the auditor receives additional ballots from a voter, as indicated by the fact that the voter is already credited with voting, the additional ballots shall not be counted and shall be forwarded to the county canvassing board for rejection.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 14-06-040, filed 2/26/14, effective 3/29/14)

**WAC 434-250-110 Processing ballots.** (1) "Initial processing" means all steps taken to prepare ballots for tabulation. Initial processing includes, but is not limited to:

(a) Verification of the signature and postmark on the ballot declaration;

(b) Removal of the security envelope from the return envelope;

(c) Removal of the ballot from the security envelope;

(d) Manual inspection for damage, write-in votes, and incorrect or incomplete marks;

(e) Duplication of damaged and write-in ballots;

(f) Scanning and resolution of ballots on a digital scan voting system; and

(g) Other preparation of ballots for final processing.

(2) "Final processing" means the reading of ballots by an optical scan voting system for the purpose of producing returns of votes cast, but does not include tabulation.

(3) "Tabulation" means the production of returns of votes cast for candidates or ballot measures in a form that can be read by a person, whether as precinct totals, partial cumulative totals, or final cumulative totals.

(4) Prior to initial processing of ballots, the county auditor shall notify the county chair of each major political party of the time and date on which processing shall begin, and shall request that each major political party appoint official observers to observe the processing and tabulation of ballots. If any major political party has appointed observers, such observers may be present for initial processing, final processing, or tabulation, if they so choose, but failure to appoint or attend shall not preclude the processing or tabulation of ballots.

(5) Initial processing of voted ballots(~~(, which may include scanning and resolving ballots on a digital scan voting system,)~~) may begin as soon as voted ballots are received. Initial processing includes digital scanning and resolution of ballots where tabulation does not take place. All ballots must be kept in secure storage until final processing. Secure storage must employ the use of numbered seals and logs, or other security measures which will detect any inappropriate or unauthorized access to the secured ballot materials when they are not being prepared or processed by authorized personnel. The county auditor must ensure that all security envelopes and return envelopes are empty, either by a visual inspection of the punched hole to confirm that no ballots or other materials are still in the envelopes, or by storing the envelopes with a tie, string, or other object through the holes.

(6) Final processing of voted ballots, which may include scanning ballots on an optical scan voting system, may begin after 7:00 a.m. on the day of the election. Final processing may begin after 7:00 a.m. the day before the election if the county auditor follows a security plan that has been submitted by the county auditor and approved by the secretary of state to prevent tabulation until after 8:00 p.m. on the day of the election.

(7) Tabulation may begin after 8:00 p.m. on the day of the election.

(8) In counties tabulating ballots on an optical scan vote tallying system, the vote tallying system must reject all overvotes and blank ballots.

(a) All rejected ballots shall be outstacked for additional manual inspection.

(b) The outstacked ballots shall be inspected in a manner similar to the original inspection with special attention given to stray marks, erasures, and other conditions that may have caused the vote-tallying device to misread and reject the ballot.

(c) If inspection reveals that a ballot must be duplicated in order to be read correctly by the vote tallying system, the ballot must be duplicated.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 14-06-040, filed 2/26/14, effective 3/29/14)

**WAC 434-250-120 Verification of the signature and return date.**

(1) A mail ballot shall be counted if:

(a) The ballot declaration is signed with a valid signature. A valid signature may be the voter's name or a distinctive mark or symbol signed by the voter.

(i) If the voter is unable to sign his or her name, the voter may make a mark or symbol with two witnesses' signatures. A signature stamp accompanied by two witness signatures is an acceptable mark.

(ii) A power of attorney cannot be used as a signature for a voter;

(b) The signature has been verified pursuant to WAC 434-379-020(~~(, or if the voter is unable to sign his or her name, two other persons have witnessed the voter's mark)~~); and

(c)(i) The envelope is postmarked not later than the day of the election and received not later than the day before certification of the election. A postmark is any official mark, imprint, or application that verifies when a ballot entered the U.S. postal system. The postmark on the envelope is the official date of mailing. If there are two postmarks, the earlier postmark is the date of mailing. A hand cancellation by an agent of the U.S. Postal Service is a postmark.

If the postmark is illegible or missing, the date of the voter's signature is the date of mailing as per RCW 29A.40.110. If the postmark is illegible or missing and the voter did not include a date with their signature, county auditors may use available U.S. Postal Service tools to verify the date of mailing;

(ii) The ballot is deposited in a ballot drop box no later than 8:00 p.m. on election day; or

(iii) The ballot is received by fax or email no later than 8:00 p.m. on election day. If the ballot is from a voter who is neither a service nor overseas voter, a hard copy of the ballot and ballot declaration must also be received no later than the day before certification of the election.

(2) Postage that includes a date, such as meter postage or a dated stamp, does not qualify as a postmark. If an envelope lacks a postmark or if the postmark is unreadable, the date to which the voter has attested on the ballot declaration determines the validity of the ballot, per RCW 29A.40.110. If a ballot is from a service or overseas voter, the date to which the voter has attested on the ballot declaration determines the validity of the ballot, per RCW 29A.40.100.

(3) The signature on the ballot declaration must be compared with the signature in the voter's voter registration file using the standards established in WAC 434-379-020. The signature on a ballot declaration may not be rejected merely because the signature is not dated, unless the date is necessary to validate the timeliness of the ballot. The signature on a ballot declaration may not be rejected merely because the name in the signature is a variation of the name on the voter registration record. The canvassing board may designate in writing representatives to perform this function. All personnel assigned to the duty of signature verification shall subscribe to an oath administered by the county auditor regarding the discharge of his or her duties. Personnel shall be instructed in the signature verification process prior to actually canvassing any signatures. Local law enforcement officials may instruct those employees in techniques used to identify forgeries.

(4)(a) For ballots returned by fax or email, the county auditor must apply procedures to protect the secrecy of the ballot. If returned by email, the county auditor must print the email and attachments; the printed email and signed declaration page must be processed and retained like other ballot declarations, and the printed ballot must be processed and retained like other ballots. The electronic versions of the email, ballot declaration, and ballot are exempt from public disclosure in order to maintain secrecy of the ballot. Voted

ballots returned by email may be returned with multiple attachments or as multiple emails.

(b) If the ballot is from a voter who is neither a service nor overseas voter, the voter must also return a hard copy of the ballot and ballot declaration no later than the day before certification.

(i) Consistent with WAC 434-250-080, the first valid ballot and declaration received is counted; subsequently received versions are not counted.

(ii) In order to maintain secrecy of the ballot, the hard copy ballot may not be compared to the ballot received electronically.

(iii) Voted ballots returned electronically no later than 8:00 p.m. on election day are timely even if the hard copy subsequently returned contains a postmark after election day.

(c) Ballots returned electronically with a missing or mismatched signature are processed as established in RCW 29A.60.165 and WAC 434-261-050.

(5) The signature verification process shall be open to the public, subject to reasonable procedures adopted and promulgated by the canvassing board to ensure that order is maintained and to safeguard the integrity of the process.