



Secretary of State

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Missing and Mismatched Signatures on Ballot Declarations

Elections Clearinghouse Notice

Issue# 21-05

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This clearinghouse is reissued to reflect WAC amendments and to clarify language and procedure. It replaces Clearinghouse #21-04 "Missing and Mismatched Signatures on Ballot Declarations" issued May 18, 2021.

A ballot is counted if the ballot declaration signature matches the signature in the voter's voter registration file. A ballot declaration signature may not be rejected merely because the signature is not dated, unless the date is necessary to validate the timeliness of the ballot.

Name Variations

If the signature on the declaration does not match the signature on the registration record because the last name is different or the voter signed with a middle name, nickname, or initials, the ballot may be counted as long as either the first or last name (whichever is applicable) and handwriting are clearly the same. (RCW 29A.60.165(2b-c)) (WAC 434-261-050(4a-b))

Different Signer

If it is determined that the signature on the declaration does not match the printed name on the ballot envelope nor the signature on file because it was signed by another registered voter, the ballot may be counted for the voter who signed the declaration if:

- The signer can be identified (voter registration record located in VoteWA)
- The signature on the declaration matches the signature in their voter registration record
- The signer does not already have an accepted ballot for that election

Only count the races and measures for which the voter who signed the declaration is eligible to vote. (WAC 434-261-050(5a-c))

If the voter who signed the declaration already has an accepted ballot for that election, refer the ballot to the county canvassing board for rejection. If the ballot was identified by staff on or before Election Day, contact the voter to whom the ballot was issued by phone, email, or if time allows, by mail and provide the voter a replacement ballot. (WAC 434-261-050(6b))

What are the requirements for curing an unsigned ballot declaration?

If the voter neglects to sign the ballot declaration or signs with a mark or signature stamp and fails to have two witnesses attest to the signature, the voter must either:

- Appear in person and sign the declaration no later than the day before certification of the primary or election; or
- Sign a copy of the declaration, or mark the declaration in front of two witnesses, and return it, by mail or electronically, no later than the day before certification of the primary or election. The [Missing Signature Form](#) on the Secretary of State’s website is provided for this purpose.

What are the requirements for curing a mismatched signature?

If the signature on the ballot declaration does not match the signature on the voter registration record, the voter must either:

- Appear in person and sign a new registration form no later than the day before certification of the primary or election. The updated signature becomes a signature in the voter registration record for both the current election and future elections; or
- Sign a signature update form that includes **both** the ballot declaration required by WAC 434-230-015 and the voter registration oath required by RCW 29A.08.230. The form must be returned no later than the day before certification of the primary or election. The signature on the update form must match the signature that was returned with the ballot. The new signature on the update form becomes a signature in the voter registration record for both the current election and future elections. The [Signature Update Form](#) on the Secretary of State’s website is provided for this purpose. (WAC 434-261-050(3))

Witness requirements remain for voters who are unable to sign voter registration forms and ballot declarations.

Electronically Submitted Forms

To cure their signatures, voters may electronically submit signed ballot declarations, signature update forms, and voter registration forms—hard copies are not required. (WAC 434-208-060(1)(d) and (g))