

Election Security in Washington

Before an Election

Voting systems certification and testing



Ballot counting equipment is tested and certified by an independent testing authority and the State of Washington.

Voting systems are not connected to the internet.

Pre-election audit: logic & accuracy tests

Before every election, counties test their voting systems to make sure the machines are correctly set up and accurately counting votes.

Voter registration database

Washington's statewide voter registration database is constantly maintained and updated as voters become registered, move, change their name, pass away, or are no longer eligible to vote.

All eligible voters are automatically mailed ballots. Only one ballot per voter is accepted.

Contact your local county elections office to learn more



sos.wa.gov/county-elections-offices

During an Election

Paper ballots



Voting on paper ballots allows election officials to audit results of an election after votes are counted.

Signature verification

Trained election officials compare your signature to your voter registration file to confirm your identity and eligibility.

If your signature is missing or doesn't match, your ballot is "Challenged" and you are notified. Once your signature is verified, your ballot status will update to "Accepted".

VoteWA

Check the status of your ballot at VoteWA.gov. Once your ballot status is updated to "Accepted," your ballot will be opened and scanned. Only one ballot per voter is accepted.

Chain of custody

Ballots are sealed in secure, tamper-evident containers and at least two staff are present whenever your ballot is handled.

Scanning and tabulation

Ballot scanners and vote counting machines are physically secured in locked rooms. Election staff sign in and out each time the room is opened, and always in groups of two or more.

After an Election

Random batch audits



Your local election officials hand count randomly selected precincts or ballot batches and compare those numbers to the voting system totals to make sure the vote counting machines counted correctly.

Random ballot audits

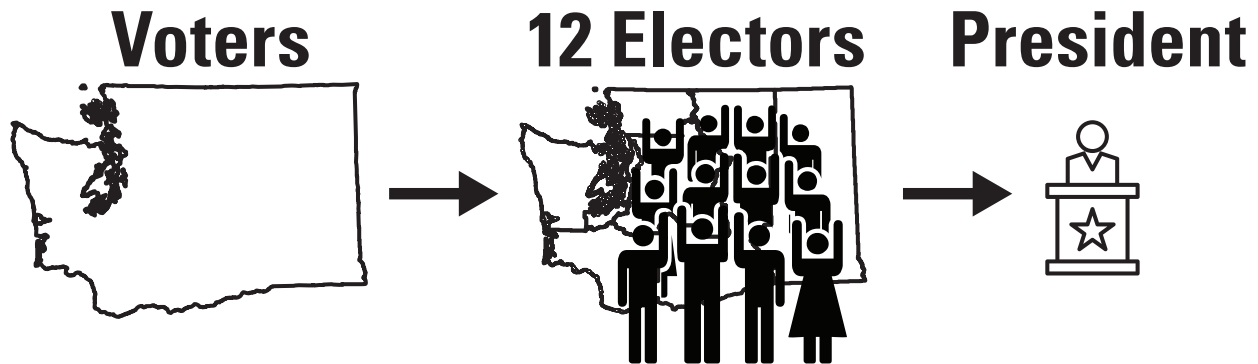
Your local election officials examine a statistically significant, randomly selected sample of ballots to help ensure the reported outcome is correct.

Full ballot reconciliation

Your local election officials keep detailed records of the steps taken to process each ballot or group of ballots, creating an audit trail.

A final report at the end of the process includes a summary of the ballots received and counted.

What is the Electoral College?



The Electoral College is a process, not a place

When you vote for President and Vice President, you determine a group of people called electors (also known as a slate) to represent Washington state in the Electoral College. The electors gather in December to cast votes for President based on the state's election results.

Each major political party chooses their own electors through the caucus and convention process.

Washington has 12 presidential electors

Every state starts with two because every state has two U.S. Senators. Based on population, each state receives an additional elector for every U.S. House Representative.

2 U.S. Senators
+10 U.S. House Representatives
=12 Total electors

The magic number

There are a total of 538 electoral votes in the nation. A presidential ticket needs at least 270 electoral votes nationwide to win. If no presidential ticket receives a majority of electoral votes, the U.S. House of Representatives elects the President and the U.S. Senate elects the Vice President.

How electoral votes are distributed

Washington state is one of 48 states that uses a "winner-take-all" system; the presidential ticket that wins the popular vote in the state is entitled to all 12 of Washington's electoral votes.

Why is my signature important?

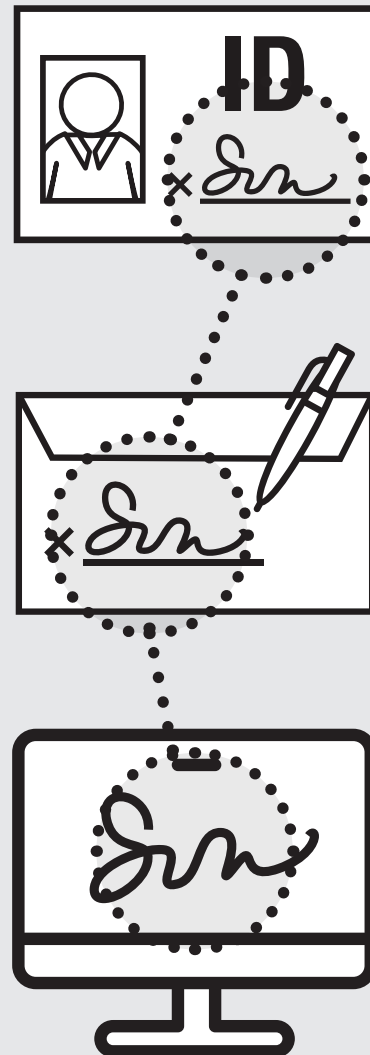
Your signature is needed to make sure your ballot gets counted.

The signature on your return envelope is compared to the signature on your voter registration record. Trained election officials are responsible for verifying each and every signature.

If your signature is missing or does not match your voter registration record, the county elections office will contact you by mail **before results are certified**. They may call or email if you gave them this info.

If you registered to vote online or through Department of Licensing, the signature from your driver's license, permit, or state ID will be on your voter registration record.

Voters can track and check their ballot status at **VoteWA.gov**.



How do I register to vote as a...

New Washington resident

Welcome! Register to vote online, by mail, in person, or when you get your new driver's license, permit, or ID at the Department of Licensing. You may not vote in more than one place, so cancel your previous voter registration.



Military or overseas voter

Register to vote anytime on or before Election Day. You may receive your ballot by mail, email, or fax. Spouses and dependents also away from home have the same voting rights.



College student

Register to vote using either your home or school address, but you may not vote in more than one place. Your ballot can be mailed to you anywhere in the world; however, your residential address must remain in Washington.



Non-traditional address voter

Use any physical location you consider your residence such as a shelter, park, or marina. Your mailing address can be general delivery at a local post office, a PO Box, or an address of a trusted friend or relative. A federally recognized tribe may designate tribal government buildings to serve as residential or mailing addresses for voters living on tribal lands.



Seasonal resident

Vote in Washington even if you're away during an election. To ensure you receive your ballot, update your mailing address at **VoteWA.gov** or with a county elections office. Your ballot can be mailed to you anywhere in the world; however, your residential address must remain in Washington. You may not vote in more than one place.



Person convicted of a felony

Your right to vote is automatically restored once you're no longer serving a sentence of total confinement in any state or federal prison, including for federal or out-of-state felony convictions. Register to vote upon your release from prison. Even if you were previously registered to vote, or voted before your felony conviction, you will need to re-register to receive a ballot.

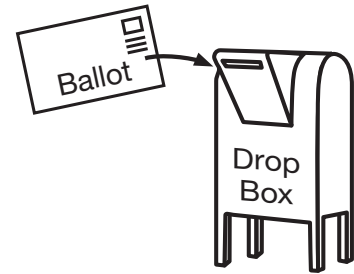


How is my ballot counted?

1

Your county receives your ballot

Deposit your ballot in an official drop box by 8 p.m. on Election Day, or return your ballot by mail — postage paid — but make sure it's postmarked by Election Day! Don't let a late postmark disqualify your ballot. The USPS recommends that you mail it back at least one week before Election Day.



Election staff will contact you before your ballot is processed if:

- Your signature is missing
- Your signature doesn't match your voter registration record

2

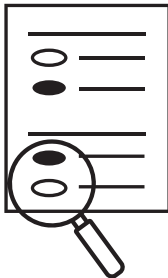
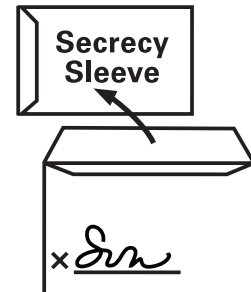
Your signature is verified

Your signature is important and we need it to accept your ballot. The signature on your return envelope is compared to the signature on your voter registration record. If the signature matches, your ballot is accepted and you are credited for voting to ensure **only one** ballot is counted for you.

3

Envelopes and sleeves are separated

The return envelope is opened and the secrecy sleeve containing your ballot is removed. They are separated to ensure the secrecy of your vote.



4

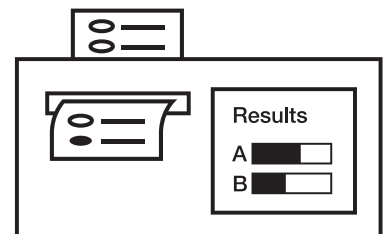
Your ballot is reviewed and scanned

The ballot is removed from the secrecy sleeve and election staff verify that it can be successfully scanned. Each voting system is certified and tested before every election.

5

Your ballot is counted

After 8 p.m. on Election Day all scanned ballots are tallied. Ballots will be scanned and tallied over the next several days until all the votes are counted. Every county conducts a post-election audit.



What are ballot measures?

Initiatives and referenda are used by the people to create state laws.

Initiative

Any registered voter may propose an initiative to create a new state law or change an existing law.

Initiatives to the People are proposed laws submitted directly to voters.

Initiatives to the Legislature are proposed laws submitted to the Legislature.

Before an **Initiative to the People** or an **Initiative to the Legislature** can appear on the ballot, the sponsor must collect...



308,911
registered voters'
signatures

8% of all votes in the last
Governor's race

Referendum

Referendum Bills are proposed laws the Legislature has referred to voters.

Referendum Measures are laws recently passed by the Legislature that voters have petitioned to be referred to the ballot.

Any registered voter may petition that a law proposed by the Legislature be referred to voters before taking effect.

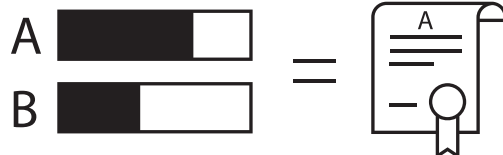
Before a **Referendum Measure** can appear on the ballot, the sponsor must collect...



154,455
registered voters'
signatures

4% of all votes in the last
Governor's race

**Initiatives and referenda
become law with
more than 50%
of the vote.**



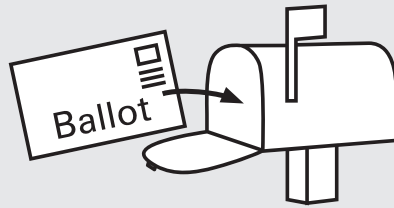
What is different about voting in Washington?

1

Vote by mail

Washington votes by mail every election.

We were the second state in the nation to adopt vote by mail and the first to provide all postage paid. A ballot is mailed at least 18 days before each election, ensuring you have time to cast an informed ballot without waiting in line.



2

Online voter registration

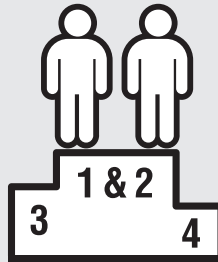
We offer online voter registration. Register to vote or update your address at **VoteWA.gov**.



3

Top 2 Primary

Washington uses a Top 2 Primary system where the two candidates who receive the most votes in the August Primary Election advance to the November General Election, regardless of their party preference.



4

No party affiliation

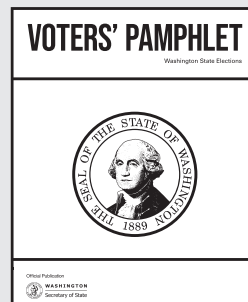


Washington voters do not register by party affiliation. Vote for any candidate regardless of their party preference.

5

Voters' Pamphlet

Only a few states produce a Voters' Pamphlet like this one. The state pamphlet is mailed to every household before each General Election.



6

Same day registration



Citizens can register and vote a ballot in person during the voting period until 8 p.m. on Election Day.

Visit a county elections office (listed at the end of this pamphlet).

Your Voting Information

VoteWA

Use VoteWA.gov to:



Register to vote at 18 or sign up as a Future Voter as early as 16



Check or update your voter registration information

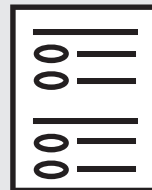
View a list of your elected officials



Contact your county elections office

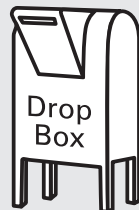


View your personalized Voter Guide



Print a replacement ballot

Find an official ballot drop box



Check the status of your ballot



Sign in to **VoteWA.gov** to access your customized voting information.

Tracking your ballot is easier than ever! Sign up for text notifications when you register or update your info at **VoteWA.gov**.

How do I register to vote in Washington?

How do I register to vote?

Online: Register at VoteWA.gov.

By mail: Request a paper form be mailed to you or print your own at sos.wa.gov/elections.

No internet access? Call 1 (800) 448-4881.

In person: Visit a county elections office (listed at the end of this pamphlet).

Registration deadlines



By mail or online:

Your application must be received no later than October 27.

In person: Visit a local voting center no later than 8 p.m. on November 4.

Check your registration info at VoteWA.gov.

Qualifications

To vote, you must be at least 18 years old, a U.S. citizen, a resident of Washington, and not currently serving a sentence of total confinement in prison for a felony.



What if I'm not 18 yet?

If you are 16 or 17, become a Future Voter!

Sign up with your Washington state driver's license, permit, ID, or the last four digits of your Social Security number. You'll be automatically registered to vote when you qualify.

#FutureVoter

Past felony conviction?

Get registered to vote.

Washington now restores voting rights to citizens with felony convictions immediately upon release from prison.

You must **re-register** to vote to receive a ballot.



Moved? Update your voting address

Contact a county elections office to request a ballot at your new address.

By October 27: Have your application received by mail or updated online.

Or

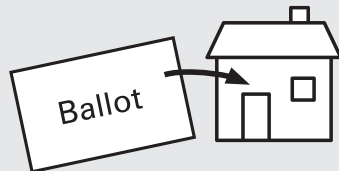
By November 4: Visit a local voting center in person.



How do I vote and return my ballot?

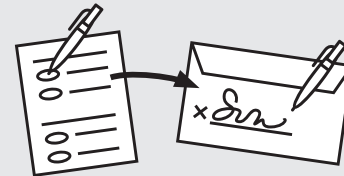
1

If you're registered to vote, there is no need to request a ballot. Your ballot will be mailed by **October 17** to the address you provided on your voter registration. If you need a replacement ballot, contact a county elections office listed at the end of this pamphlet.



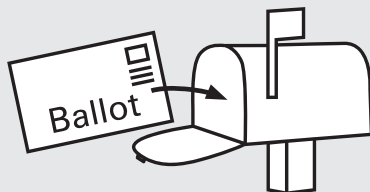
2

Vote your ballot and sign your return envelope. We need your signature to accept your ballot. You are not required to vote every race on your ballot. We encourage using this pamphlet to help you decide.

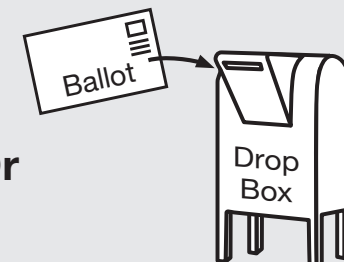


3

Return your ballot by mail, no stamp needed. If mailed, your ballot must be postmarked by **November 4**. Don't let a late postmark disqualify your ballot. The USPS recommends that you mail a week before Election Day.



Or



If you cannot personally return your ballot, only let people you trust deliver it for you.

4

Check the status of your ballot on **VoteWA.gov** to see if it has been received by your county elections office.



Election staff will contact you before your ballot is processed if:

- Your signature is missing
- Your signature doesn't match your voter registration record

View election results online

After 8 p.m. on election night, tallied results from each county are posted at **results.vote.wa.gov**.

Results are updated as counties report and are unofficial until certification.

How do I know if something is true?

When reviewing online or printed information, think about:

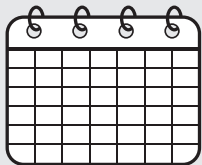
Who made this, and who is it for?

Was it a company, or an individual person? Who is the intended audience?



Why did they make it?

Think about the purpose. Is it to inform, entertain, or persuade?



When was this made?

Is the information relevant today?



What makes it believable?

Is there evidence from a reputable source or expert?

How might other people read this message?

Consider how someone with a different background might interpret it.



Ask the experts

Get trusted info from your county auditor or elections office. Consult a fact-checking site or ask an official source.



What does this mean?

Certification Day

The date when election results are finalized by state or county officials.

Logic and Accuracy Test

A test completed before each election to ensure the accuracy of voting equipment.

Nonpartisan Office

An elected position in which candidates do not state a political party preference and candidates for the office are not officially associated with a political group. Office appears on the ballot as “Nonpartisan.”

Partisan Office

An elected position in which candidates may state their preferred political party. A candidate may also choose “States No Party Preference.” Their preference is printed on the ballot.

Postmark

A postmark indicates the location and date the Postal Service accepted custody of a ballot. Ballots must be postmarked by Election Day to be accepted. Placing your ballot in a mailbox on Election Day does not guarantee a postmark of the same day.

Post-election Audit

A test completed before the certification of results to ensure the security and accuracy of the voting system. Counties perform a post-election audit each election.

Term Type

How much of a term a candidate will be serving for an office. It is split into regular, unexpired, and short-and-full.

Voter Registration Database

The official list of registered voters maintained in every state to conduct safe and secure elections. Our database in Washington is known as VoteWA.

Voting Center

A county-run facility where you can receive voting assistance from trained elections staff. Some services include registering or updating voter information, requesting and returning a ballot, or finding an accessible voting unit.

Voting System

Ballot counting equipment that must be tested by an independent testing authority and certified by the state of Washington before it can be used.