

Voters without Traditional Addresses

Elections Clearinghouse Notice

Issue #25-06

July 17, 2025

This notice replaces Clearinghouse Notice #19-04, Voters without Traditional Addresses, issued April 8, 2019.

Background

A voter registration must be based on where the voter resides; however, a traditional residential address (e.g., house or apartment with a numbered street address) is not required. Voters without such an address—including those experiencing homelessness or residing in shelters, parks, motor homes, marinas, unmarked homes, or other identifiable locations—are still eligible to register to vote.

[RCW 29A.08.112\(1\)](#) specifies that an applicant who meets all other qualifications for voter registration may not be disqualified solely for lacking a traditional residential address.

Business Address

If a voter provides a known business address:

- Process the registration as submitted.
- **Best Practice:** Notify the voter that business addresses are only valid if they also serve as the voter's residential address.
- If the notice is returned undeliverable, inactivate the voter and send a confirmation notice to all known addresses.
- **Do not** consider the registration incomplete or place it into Pending status.

If there is evidence the voter does not reside at the submitted address, the registration may be challenged under applicable state laws. ([RCW 29A.08.810 – 29A.08.850](#))

Residential Address Not Found (RCW 29A.08.010(2))

If the provided address cannot be located in the election management system (VoteWA), temporarily precinct the voter until the registration can be reviewed. Place a temporary pin at the location the voter specifies and add any narrative or notes to aid research.

Note: Do not place the pin at the closest identifiable address – use the location specified by the voter.

Best Practice: Use all tools available to help identify where to drop the pin, such as maps or county assessor office information.

State law requires only a narrative description with enough detail to assign the correct precinct. This can include:

- Where the voter spends most of their time or sleeps at night
- Descriptions like a specific bridge, park, or intersection
- Any place the voter currently considers their residence

Mailing Address Required for Non-Traditional Address

When a voter provides a non-traditional residential address (such as a narrative description), a **valid mailing address is required** under [RCW 29A.08.112](#). Acceptable mailing addresses include:

- A traditional mailing address
- “General Delivery” at a specified post office

If **no mailing address** is provided:

- Send a verification notice to the provided address or your best approximation of it.
- The voter has 45 days to respond ([RCW 29A.08.110\(4\)](#)).
- The County Auditor may also attempt contact the voter by phone, email, or other means to obtain the mailing address.

Tribal Government Buildings

Federally recognized tribes may designate one or more tribal government buildings to serve as residential and/or mailing addresses for voters who live:

- “On an Indian reservation, or
- On Indian lands”

The designated building **must** be located in the **same precinct** as the voter’s permanent residence.