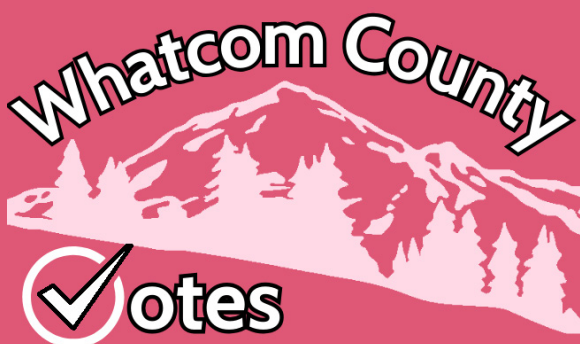


2024/2025 Jurisdiction Manual

an election guide for local districts

About this guide

Use this guide in conjunction with state and local laws, not in place of them. The Revised Code of Washington (RCW), Washington Administrative Code (WAC) and other notations are offered as references for additional research. The material contained herein may change due to new legislation, judicial determinations, or rule changes.



Whatcom County Auditor's Office
Election Division

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www.whatcomcounty.us/elections

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Election Calendar

Important dates and deadlines

Chapter 01



Every year, there are four possible elections and a candidate filing period

February Special Election

- Resolution Deadline: 60 days prior to the date of the election
- Election Date: 2nd Tuesday in February
- Election Certification: 10 days after a special election

April Special Election

- Resolution Deadline: 60 days prior to the date of the election
- Election Date: 4th Tuesday in April
- Election Certification: 10 days after a special election

Candidate Filing Week

- In May; starts the first Monday in May and ends the following Friday.
- What offices are open for election each year?
 - In even numbered years; Public Utility District 1 Commissioners, District Court Judges, and the county Prosecuting Attorney are the only local offices open for election.
 - In odd numbered years; All other local districts (minus PUD 1) will have office(s) open for election in odd years.
- See page 7 for information about candidate filing.

August Primary Election

- Resolution Deadline: no later than the Friday immediately before the first day of candidate filing week
- Election Date: 1st Tuesday in August
- Election Certification: 14 days after election day

November General Election

- Resolution Deadline: no later than the day of the primary
- Election Date: 1st Tuesday after the 1st Monday in November
- Election Certification: 21 days after election day

	Election Type	Resolution Deadline	Ballots Mailed	Election Day	Election Certification
2024	Special	December 15, 2023	January 24, 2024	February 13, 2024	February 23, 2024
	Special	February 23, 2024	April 3, 2024	April 23, 2024	May 3, 2024
	Candidate Filing Week - Monday, May 6 - Friday, May 10				
	Primary	May 3, 2024	July 17, 2024	August 6, 2024	August 20, 2024
	General	August 6, 2024	October 16, 2024	November 5, 2024	November 26, 2024
2025	Special	December 13, 2024	January 22, 2025	February 11, 2025	February 21, 2025
	Special	February 21, 2025	April 2, 2025	April 22, 2025	May 2, 2025
	Candidate Filing Week - Monday, May 5 - Friday, May 9				
	Primary	May 2, 2025	July 16, 2025	August 5, 2025	August 19, 2025
	General	August 5, 2025	October 15, 2025	November 4, 2025	November 25, 2025



1 District Update Questionnaire

Every year in January, Whatcom County Elections mails a questionnaire to each district. Questionnaires need to be completed and returned by February 1st.

The survey will ask the district to update/confirm their contact information. It will also ask for any updates to district boundaries.

The Auditor's Office maintains a list of contact information for each jurisdiction. If there are updates to your district contact person throughout the year, notify the election division. See page 1 for contact information.

2 Verification of Elected Officials

Whatcom County Elections mails a survey:

- Prior to February 1 of odd numbered years, all districts should receive this letter (except Public Utility District 1)
- In February of even numbered years, only PUD 1 & Whatcom County will receive this letter.

Per WAC 434-215-005, jurisdictions must respond by providing the following information:

- Office title
- Incumbent's name
- Annual salary at the time of candidate filing
- Term expiration

Surveys must be completed prior to March 1st.

3 Notice of Election Dates and Deadlines

Every October, the Auditor's Office mails a notice containing information about submitting a ballot measure.

This notice includes the next year's election dates and deadlines for resolution submittal and committee statements. It also includes a brief explanation of how to submit a resolution.

Also included are the voter participation numbers, which details the number of voters participating in the last General Election. Districts will use the information to determine the number of votes required for bond and levy passage in the following year.

4 Oaths for Elected Candidates

The Auditor's Office will mail the necessary oath to the district contact. The oaths will be sent after certification of the general election.

It is the districts responsibility to ensure the oath is taken before the elected official assumes any duties. For more information on oaths, see page 5.



Term of Office

The term of office describes the length of time an elected official will serve.

Full Term; regular 2, 4, or 6 year term. The full term for each office is determined by statute or charter. Candidates elected to fill a full term will assume office at the beginning of the new term.

Unexpired Term; occurs when a full term is vacated. Candidates will be elected to fill an unexpired term and will take office once the general election is certified. Their term will fill/last the remainder of the regular term. They will take one oath of office before assuming the duties of office.

Short Term; occurs when a full term is vacated in the last year of the full term. Candidates will be elected to fill the short term (lasting about one month) and the full term. Candidates elected need to take two oaths;

1. one oath of office for the short term lasting from certification to the end of the year, and
2. one oath of office for the full term.

School directors never have a short-term position. All school director regular terms begin as soon as the election is certified.

Vacant Offices

Two things need to occur when an office is vacated due to resignation or death of an incumbent;

1. Notify the Auditor's Office in writing by mail or email (see page 1 for contact information). Include the incumbents name, position, and the effective date of resignation.
2. The remaining members of the districts governing body shall appoint a qualified person to fill the vacant position. Districts need to complete a Certificate of Appointment form, signed by members and appointee. The form can be found on page 15. Return the form to the Auditor's Office. *(If our office receives a Certificate of Appointment form with an incorrect term end date for the appointee, we will edit and notify the district contact person).*

If the district's remaining members fail to appoint a qualified person after 90 days, the Auditor's Office will notify the County Council who shall appoint a qualified person to fill the vacancy.

Appointed Officers

Three important things regarding appointments;

1. Persons appointed to fill an office need to take an oath of office before assuming any duties. See page 5 for oath of office information.
2. Appointed officers only serve until the day before the certification of the general election where an officer is elected.
3. Appointed officers aren't assigned a term type. Full, unexpired, and short terms are used to describe those elected to the office, not appointees.

Oath of Office Rules

Who is required to take an oath of office?

Every person elected or appointed to an office in the State of Washington is required to take an oath prior to serving in office. RCW 29A.04.133

Who administers the oath of office?

The oath of office shall be administered and certified by any officer or notary public authorized to administer oaths, without charge. Five positions are specifically qualified by statute to administer oaths:

Judges and Notary Publics	RCW 5.28.010
County Council or Officers	RCW 36.32.120
County Auditors or Deputies	RCW 36.22.030
Clerks of the Courts	RCW 2.32.050
School Officials	RCW 28A.343.360

When should the oath of office be administered?

The oath may be taken either up to ten days prior to the scheduled date of assuming office; or at the last regular meeting of the governing body of the applicable county, city, or special district held before the winner is to assume office.

Where do I get an oath?

District contacts are mailed the oath of office for the winning candidate after the election is certified. An oath of office for persons appointed to office are provided to the district contact when our office is notified of a vacancy.

What is a short term oath?

When the winning candidate is filling a short term and a full term, that candidate will need to take two oaths;

1. one oath of office for the short term lasting from certification to the end of the year, and
2. one oath of office for the full term.

What do I do with completed oaths?

Send completed oaths of office to Auditor's Office, Recording Division. The oath will be recorded at no charge.

Oath of office administration and repository

Offices	Regular Term Begins	Administration and Repository of Oath	Applicable Citations
County Officials -Executive Officers	2nd Monday in January	No earlier than 10 days prior to assuming office. Oath recorded by County Auditor and returned to County Clerk.	Whatcom County Chapter Article 4 Section 4.6
District Court Judges	2nd Monday in January	Prior to entering the duties of office. Oath recorded with County Auditor and returned to officiant.	RCW 3.34.070 RCW 3.34.080 RCW 3.50.050
Municipal Court Judges	January 1	Prior to entering the duties of office. Oath recorded with County Auditor and returned to the officiant.	RCW 3.50.097
City Officials -Mayor -Council	January 1	No earlier than 10 days prior to assuming office, or at the last regularly scheduled meeting. Oath recorded with County Auditor and returned to the district.	RCW 29A.60.280 RCW 35.23.081 RCW 35.27.120 RCW 35A.12
Port District -Commissioners	January 1	No earlier than 10 days prior to assuming office, or at the last regularly scheduled meeting. Oath recorded with County Auditor and returned to the district.	RCW 29A.60.280 RCW 53.12.172
Public Utility District -Commissioners	January 1	Administered by an officer of the county in which the district is situated. No earlier than 10 days prior to assuming office, or at the last regularly scheduled meeting. Oath recorded with County Auditor and returned to the district.	RCW 29A.60.280 RCW 54.12.100
School Directors	Begins at first official meeting following certification of election.	School officials are authorized to administer all oaths or affirmations. Oath recorded with County Auditor and returned to the district.	RCW 28A.343.360
Fire Protection District -Commissioners	January 1	No earlier than 10 days prior to assuming office, or at the last regularly scheduled meeting. Oath recorded with County Auditor and returned to the district.	RCW 29A.60.280 RCW 52.14.070 RCW 52.14.080
Water, Hospital Districts -Commissioners	January 1	No earlier than 10 days prior to assuming office, or at the last regularly scheduled meeting. Oath recorded with County Auditor and returned to the district.	RCW 29A.60.280 RCW 57.12.030 RCW 70.44.040
Cemetery Districts -Commissioners	January 1	No earlier than 10 days prior to assuming office, or at the last regularly scheduled meeting. Oath recorded with County Auditor and returned to the district.	RCW 29A.60.280 RCW 68.52.260
Park and Recreation -Commissioners	January 1	No earlier than 10 days prior to assuming office, or at the last regularly scheduled meeting. Oath recorded with County Auditor and returned to the district.	RCW 29A.60.280 RCW 35.61.050
Jurisdictions requiring land ownership (e.g. diking/flood control districts)	Upon certification of election	No statutory reference available.	RCW 85.24.070 RCW 85.38.070 RCW 86.09.301



Candidate Filing

General information about candidate filing

Helpful Information for District Administrators about Candidate Filing Week;

- Jurisdiction administrators are not active participants in the candidate filing process. All candidates are responsible for ensuring they meet the requirements of the office and submitting their Declaration of Candidacy.
- Information is available for candidates, including a Candidate Filing Guide. **Visit *Candidate Resources* at www.whatcomcounty.us/1730/Candidate-Resources**
- A list of offices open for election is available on the WA Secretary of State’s website throughout the year, visit <https://voter.votewa.gov/ScheduledRaces.aspx>
- The Auditor’s Office uses the information provided in the Verification of Elected Officials (page 3) to determine the filing fee for candidates (*if the office has a filing fee*).
- If an office becomes vacant, refer to page 4 for procedures.
- If filing week passes, and no candidates file for office, read about voids and lapses below.

Candidate Filing - Voids and Lapses

A void in candidacy occurs when no valid Declarations of Candidacy have been filed for a position. If a void in candidacy occurs after the regular candidate filing period, but before the day of the primary, a special three-day candidate filing period will be held. The date of the special filing period will be determined by the Auditor’s Office. Notice of the void in candidacy will be given, and include the time and place for individuals to file a Declaration of Candidacy.

All candidates that file a valid Declaration of Candidacy during the special candidate filing period will appear on the general election ballot. A primary election will not be held for that office. The candidate receiving the most votes for that office in the general election is deemed elected.

If, after the regular and special candidate filing periods have passed, no candidate has filed a valid Declaration of Candidacy, the election for that office is deemed lapsed. The office will not appear on the ballot.

If a lapse of election occurs, the current office holder will remain in office and continue to serve until the next succeeding general election that the office is allowed by law to have.

2024/2025 Candidate Filing Week Dates & Deadlines

Filing Year	First Day to File by Mail (if unable to file online during the filing period)	Candidate Filing Begins	Candidate Filing Ends	Lot Draw to Determine Ballot Order	Last Day to Withdraw	Last Day to Submit Local Voters’ Pamphlet Content
2024	April 22, 2024	May 6, 2024	May 10, 2024	May 10, 2024	May 13, 2024	May 17, 2024
2025	April 21, 2025	May 5, 2025	May 9, 2025	May 9, 2025	May 12, 2025	May 16, 2025



Submitting a Resolution

Filing a resolution to place a measure on the ballot

Chapter 06

For a measure to appear on the ballot, a local jurisdiction must submit a resolution to the Auditor's Office calling for an election.

Deadline for Submitting a Resolution

Resolutions must be received by Whatcom County Auditor's Office by 4:30 pm on the day of the deadline. Jurisdiction responsibilities, including resolution, and committee responsibilities with deadlines can be found on page 9.

Where to Submit

Resolutions can be submitted to the Auditor's Office Elections Division by mail, in person, email, or fax (see page 1 for contact information).

What to Submit

1. The resolution with original signatures, or a certified copy of the resolution. Included within the resolution should be:
 - The election date for the ballot measure.
 - The ballot title. Formatting requirements can be found on page 10.
2. Completed Ballot Measure Cover Sheet.
3. An explanatory statement that explains the measure's purpose, the financial impact, and the laws/statutes that will be affected by the measure's passage. Explanatory statements should not exceed 100 words. All formatting requirements can be found in the attached *Local Voters' Pamphlet: Administrative Rules for Jurisdictions*.
Prepared by:
 - District - the attorney for the district.
 - City - the city attorney.
 - County - the Prosecuting Attorney.
4. Completed Committee Appointment Form for **each** committee, even if a committee hasn't been formed.

Forms are on pages 14-16 and are also available on the Auditor's website.

Withdrawing a Resolution

If a jurisdiction wishes to withdraw a resolution, the jurisdiction must do so in writing no later than 7 business days after the submission deadline.

2024/2025 Submission Deadlines at a Glance



2024 Submission Deadlines - Deadlines are 4:30 p.m. on each designated day				
Election Dates	Feb. 13, 2024	Apr. 23, 2024	Aug. 6, 2024	Nov. 5, 2024
Jurisdiction's Responsibility and Deadlines				
Resolution	Dec. 15, 2023	Feb. 23, 2024	May 3, 2024	Aug. 6, 2024
Resolution Cover Sheet	Dec. 15, 2023	Feb. 23, 2024	May 3, 2024	Aug. 6, 2024
Explanatory Statement	Dec. 15, 2023	Feb. 23, 2024	May 3, 2024	Aug. 6, 2024
For and Against Committee Appointment Forms	Dec. 15, 2023	Feb. 23, 2024	May 3, 2024	Aug. 6, 2024
Committee's Responsibility and Deadlines				
Statement For and Statement Against written by the appointed committee members	Dec. 20, 2023	Feb. 28, 2024	May 8, 2024	Aug. 12, 2024
Rebuttal Statements	Dec. 26, 2023	March 4, 2024	May 13, 2024	Aug. 15, 2024

2025 Submission Deadlines - Deadlines are 4:30 p.m. on each designated day				
Election Dates	Feb. 11, 2025	Apr. 22, 2025	Aug. 5, 2025	Nov. 4, 2025
Jurisdiction's Responsibility and Deadlines				
Resolution	Dec. 13, 2024	Feb. 21, 2025	May 2, 2025	Aug. 5, 2025
Resolution Cover Sheet	Dec. 13, 2024	Feb. 21, 2025	May 2, 2025	Aug. 5, 2025
Explanatory Statement	Dec. 13, 2024	Feb. 21, 2025	May 2, 2025	Aug. 5, 2025
For and Against Committee Appointment Forms	Dec. 13, 2024	Feb. 21, 2025	May 2, 2025	Aug. 5, 2025
Committee's Responsibility and Deadlines				
Statement For and Statement Against written by the appointed committee members	Dec. 18, 2024	Feb. 26, 2025	May 7, 2025	Aug. 11, 2025
Rebuttal Statements	Dec. 23, 2024	March 3, 2025	May 12, 2025	Aug. 14, 2025



Ballot Title

Formatting requirements for local ballot measures.

Ballot Titles for Local Measures

The official ballot title for measures submitted to the voters of a local district shall be prepared by the attorney for the district. For measures submitted by a city, the ballot title shall be prepared by the city attorney. For measures submitted by Whatcom County, the ballot title shall be prepared by the Prosecuting Attorney.

The format and content requirements for local measure ballot titles are very specific and must conform to state law (RCW 29A.36.071). Each ballot title must contain the following elements:

1. identification of the enacting legislative body.
2. a statement of the subject matter not exceeding 10 words in length.
3. a concise description of the measure not exceeding 75 words in length. Word count starts after "This measure would...".
4. a question.

The number above correlates with format and content requirements in the sample ballot title on the right. Numbering is not required upon submittal. The proposition number will be assigned by the County Auditor.

Sample Ballot Title

1. Whatcom County Fire Protection District 21 Proposition 1
2. Authorizing Regular Property Tax Levy

The Board of Fire Commissioners of Whatcom County Fire Protection District 21 (the "District"), adopted Resolution No. 2021-04 concerning a proposition to authorize the District's regular property tax levy. This measure would 3. authorize a regular property tax levy of \$1.45 per \$1,000.00 of assessed valuation in 2021 (for collection in 2022) and would thereafter be subject to any otherwise applicable statutory dollar rate limitations. The dollar amount of this levy would be used for the purpose of computing the limitations for subsequent levies under RCW 84.55.050.

4. Should this proposal be approved?

Yes []
 No []

Upon receipt of the final official ballot title from the Prosecuting Attorney, city attorney, the Auditor's Office will notify the jurisdiction contact person and anyone else who requests a copy via letter or email. The language on the ballot and explanatory statement is approved by the Auditor's Office before publication.

Ballot Title Appeal

Persons dissatisfied with the ballot title for a local measure written by the city attorney, or Prosecuting Attorney may appeal to the Whatcom County Superior Court, pursuant to RCW 29A.36.090. Each ballot title must be accompanied by an explanatory statement, pursuant to RCW 29A.32.241.



Ballot Title

Formatting requirements for local ballot measures.

Chapter 07



Explanatory Statement

The explanatory statement explains the measure's purpose, the financial impact, and the laws/statutes that will be affected by the measure's passage. Explanatory statements must be 100 words or less.

The Prosecuting Attorney will prepare an explanatory statement for any county ballot measure and the attorney for the city or jurisdiction will prepare an explanatory statement for the city or jurisdiction measure. All explanatory statements for city or jurisdiction measures will be reviewed and approved by the Prosecuting Attorney. The Prosecuting Attorney will discuss any changes with the attorney for the city or jurisdiction prior to approving the final explanatory statement. Notification of the accepted or rejected explanatory statement will be made via e-mail or standard mail to the “district contact person #1 and #2” from the Ballot Measure Coversheet.

Any appeal to the rejection of an explanatory statement must be filed no later than 5 business days after the notice of rejection. The appeal must be in the form of a petition to the Superior Court of Whatcom County with a copy to the Auditor's Office and the attorney who prepared or reviewed the statement. The Superior Court decision will be final.

Any challenge to an explanatory statement from an individual not associated with the district that developed the statement must be filed no later than 5 business days after the due date for explanatory statement submission. The challenge must be in the form of a petition to the Superior Court of Whatcom County with a copy to the Auditor's Office and the attorney who prepared or reviewed the statement. The Superior Court decision will be final.

Statement Formatting Criteria

	Word Limit	Formatting Allowed	Formatting Not Allowed
Explanatory Statement	100	<i>Italics</i> , one paragraph	bold , ALL CAPS, <u>underlining</u> , lists, bullets, more than one paragraph



Election Costs

Information about calculating the cost of participating in an election and the cost of publishing a local voters' pamphlet

Chapter 08

Cost of Participating in an Election

Election costs are based upon a jurisdiction's proportionate share. Each jurisdiction's cost is determined by taking the total number of registered voters in the jurisdiction and dividing it by the total number of all registered voters in all participating jurisdictions in the election.

Election costs vary from one election to the next depending on a variety of factors. For instance, whether or not the election is held in an odd or even-numbered year is a significant factor for determining costs in a primary or general election; but less of a factor for a special election held in February or April. This is primarily due to the number of participating jurisdictions in an odd-numbered year as opposed to an even-numbered year.

Although the overall cost of a primary or general election from one year to the next is somewhat comparable, a general election shared by five jurisdictions is going to cost more per voter for each jurisdiction than an election shared by fifteen jurisdictions.

Special elections in February and April are often shared by a smaller number of jurisdictions, thus the proportional share is often greater. In the case of a single jurisdiction election, the cost would be 100% to that jurisdiction.

Whatcom County Elections will prepare and send billing notifications to participating jurisdictions following certification of the election once all costs are known.

Prior to deciding when to place a measure on the ballot, jurisdictions may contact Elections to request a cost estimate. Estimates will be based on a reasonable range, taking historical information into account. A specific cost or quote cannot be provided, as there are unknown factors such as the number of jurisdictions participating in an election.

Local Voters' Pamphlet Cost

All jurisdictions are automatically included in the local voters' pamphlet, which is printed and mailed every election to each household in Whatcom County. Costs are allocated between the jurisdictions participating in the election based in the jurisdictions proportionate share.

For all elections, Whatcom County Elections will provide an online voters' guide. There is no additional cost to the jurisdiction.



General Election Turnout for Validation

Information about bond and levy validation



Financial Hardship

The Whatcom County Council has the authority to waive financial responsibility of any jurisdiction where participation in the local voters' pamphlet would create undue financial hardship. A petition from a jurisdiction must be submitted to the Whatcom County Council and County Auditor no later than 60 days before the publication of the local voters' pamphlet.

A jurisdiction receiving a financial hardship waiver for local voters' pamphlet costs will continue to be responsible for their remaining portion of the cost of the election.

If a waiver is granted, the district's candidate(s) and/or ballot measure(s) will not be included in the local voters' pamphlet. There will be no mention of the missing candidates/ballot measures in the pamphlet. Publication of the pamphlet is defined as the date on which the County Auditor signs the final pamphlet proof and sends it to the printer.

Bond and Levy Election Validation and Passage Requirements

It is up to the district to consult with their attorney to determine validation and passage requirements for the measure. Passing a levy or bond issue is not always a simple matter of majority rules. State law requires bond issues and some types of levies to have a “super majority” in order to pass; while other levies, such as a levy lid lift, only require a simple majority. Some measures also require a specific number of voters to turn out based on the turnout in a prior election in addition to the passage requirement.

WAC 434-262-017 General election turnout for validation of bonds and levies.

Following each general election, the county auditor must determine the number of voters participating in the general election for each taxing district in the county and provide this number to each district. Districts may use that number to determine the number of votes required for bond and levy passage in the next year.

The county auditor is not responsible for determining minimum turnout or yes votes required for ballot measures and shall not determine if ballot measures meet requirements for passage.

General Election Turnout

Following certification of the general election each year, Whatcom County Elections will publish the voter turnout report for each taxing district to the Elections website under the heading “District Resources”; usually in January of the following year. This report will also be provided to each district.

This report includes the following for each jurisdiction:

- The number of votes cast for the general election.

In compliance with WAC 434-262-017, the County Auditor is not responsible for determining minimum turnout or yes votes required for ballot measures and will not determine if ballot measures meet requirements for passage. The district is responsible for making the final legal determination of whether a measure passed or failed based on the certified vote totals, validation requirements and applicable law.



Whatcom County Auditor's Office

Ballot Measure Coversheet

District Information

District Name: _____

District Address: _____

Contact Person 1	Contact Person 2
_____ Name & Title	_____ Name & Title
_____ Phone & email	_____ Phone & email

Attorney Information

Name

Phone & email

Has your attorney prepared this ballot measure?

Yes No

Are the following *required* documents included?

Resolution with original signatures or a certified copy	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Explanatory Statement prepared by your attorney, not to exceed 100 words	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Committee Appointment Forms separate forms for each committee	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Completed Ballot Measure Coversheet	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No

Auditor's Office Use

Date Stamp

Missing document(s):

I understand that the submittal deadline date for the missing documents is _____ and the Auditor's Office will not begin processing this ballot measure until all documents have been submitted.

Proposition/Initiative Number



Whatcom County Auditor's Office

Committee Appointment Form

District & Ballot Measure Information

District Name: _____

Proposition Name: _____

Appointment of: <input type="checkbox"/> Committee FOR <input type="checkbox"/> Committee AGAINST	No Committee Formed: <input type="checkbox"/> Committee FOR <input type="checkbox"/> Committee AGAINST
<p>NOTE:</p> <p>The Chair of the committee will serve as the contact person for Auditor's staff. The Chair will also be the recipient of the opposing committee's statement so the rebuttal can be prepared.</p> <p>The phone numbers and e-mail addresses listed below will not be published. However, the information provided on this form is subject to public disclosure laws under RCW 42.56 and 42.17. A copy of this form will be released to anyone requesting it.</p>	<p>Actions taken to solicit committee members (required, select at least 3 and provide documentation when applicable):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Posting the request on the jurisdiction's website, if they have one <input type="checkbox"/> Requesting volunteers to serve at any commissioner meeting when the proposal is being discussed <input type="checkbox"/> Making direct phone calls to potential individuals <input type="checkbox"/> Putting up flyers on bulletin boards in libraries, grocery stores, or other community boards <input type="checkbox"/> Submitting a news release or letter to the editor to the newspapers (whether for printed version or online version) requesting volunteers (A "paid ad" in the Legal Notices is not required) <input type="checkbox"/> Posting on a reader board or sandwich board <input type="checkbox"/> Recruiting at any district events (i.e. monthly pancake feed) <input type="checkbox"/> Putting notice in emails or newsletters sent to individuals in the district <input type="checkbox"/> Inserts in bills <input type="checkbox"/> Other direct mail/email notifications <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Committee:

	Name	Phone	email
1. Chair	_____	_____	_____
2. Member	_____	_____	_____
3. Member	_____	_____	_____

I hereby certify the above name individuals have been appointed and have consented to serve as indicated, or at least 3 actions have been taken to solicit committee members.

 Authorized Signature (individual with authority to sign for the district)

 Date



CERTIFICATE OF APPOINTMENT

State of Washington)
) ss.
County of Whatcom)

The undersigned officers of _____ do
(Commission, Council, or Board Making Appointment)

hereby appoint _____ of
(Person Appointed)

(Appointee's Address)

to the office of _____.
(Office and Position)

This appointment will end on _____.

Signed this _____ day of _____, 20_____.

(Signature)

(Printed Name and Title)

(Signature)

(Printed Name and Title)

(Signature)

(Printed Name and Title)

ballot!

Whatcom County Local Voters' Pamphlet

Administrative Rules For Jurisdictions



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Amended February 2024

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Establishing a Local Voter's Pamphlet



Purpose of Administrative Rules

(RCW 29A.32.230)

The Administrative Rules explain the procedures and requirements for participation, production, and distribution of the local voters' pamphlet for jurisdictions.

Notice of Intent to Publish a Local Voters' Pamphlet

(RCW 29A.32.220)

The Whatcom County Auditor's Office will print and distribute a local voters' pamphlet for every election. Annually, Whatcom County will notify all jurisdictions within the county of its intent to publish a local voters' pamphlet for each election. Notification will be sent at least 90 calendar days before the printing date of the local voters' pamphlet. Notification will be made by email or standard mail to the district contact person on file with the Auditor's Office.

Content

(RCW 29A.32.241)

All jurisdictions with a race or measure on the ballot will be included in the local voters' pamphlet.

The local voters' pamphlet will include, at a minimum:

1. A cover page containing the words "Official Local Voters' Pamphlet," "Whatcom County," and the date of the election.
2. A list of jurisdictions that have measures or candidates in the pamphlet.
3. Information on how a person may register to vote and obtain a ballot.
4. The text of each measure accompanied by an explanatory statement prepared by the prosecuting attorney for any county measure or by the attorney for the jurisdiction submitting the measure if other than a county measure. All explanatory statements for city, town, or district measures not approved by the attorney for the jurisdiction submitting the measure shall be reviewed and approved by the county prosecuting attorney or city attorney, when applicable, before inclusion in the pamphlet;
5. Arguments for and against each measure submitted by committees selected pursuant to RCW 29A.32.280.
6. Statements and photos submitted by Whatcom County candidates with races on the ballot.
7. Location and hours of the student engagement hub in the county.
8. For partisan primary elections, information on how to vote the applicable ballot format and an explanation that minor political party candidates and independent candidates will appear only on the general election ballot.



Local Jurisdictions are Included

(RCW 29A.32.220)

For each local ballot measure, the jurisdiction must provide information that will be included in the pamphlet. The information includes the ballot title and an explanatory statement. The local jurisdiction is also responsible for appointing committees to develop for and against statements for each ballot measure.

Distribution

Primary and General election pamphlets will be mailed separately a few days before ballots go in the mail. For February & April special elections the pamphlet will usually be an insert mailed with the ballot.

Costs Associated with the Local Voters' Pamphlet

(RCW 29A.04.410)

The cost of preparing a local voters' pamphlet is billed to local jurisdictions included in the pamphlet. It is prorated and charged in the same manner as other election costs. Each jurisdiction is responsible for paying its proportionate share of costs.

Financial Hardship (undue hardship waiver)

(RCW 29A.32.220)

The Whatcom County Council has the authority to waive financial responsibility of any jurisdiction where participation in the local voters' pamphlet would create undue financial hardship. A petition from a jurisdiction must be submitted to the Whatcom County Council and County Auditor no later than 60 days before the publication of the local voters' pamphlet.

A jurisdiction receiving a financial hardship waiver for local voters' pamphlet costs will continue to be responsible for their remaining portion of the cost of the election.

If a waiver is granted, the district's candidate(s) and/or ballot measure(s) will not be included in the local voters' pamphlet. There will be no mention of the missing candidates/ballot measures in the pamphlet. Publication of the pamphlet is defined as the date on which the County Auditor signs the final pamphlet proof and sends it to the printer.

Submissions by Local Jurisdictions



Ballot Titles for Local Measures

The official ballot title for measures submitted to the voters of a city shall be prepared by the city attorney. The official ballot title for measures submitted to the voters of a local government other than a city (e.g., a county, fire district or school district) shall be prepared by the Whatcom County Prosecuting Attorney.

The format and content requirements for local measure ballot titles are very specific and must conform to state law (RCW 29A.36.071). Each ballot title must contain the following elements:

1. **identification of the enacting legislative body.**
2. **a statement of the subject matter not exceeding 10 words in length.**
3. **a concise description of the measure not exceeding 75 words in length. Word count starts after “This measure would”.**
4. **a question.**

The number above correlates with format and content requirements in the sample ballot title on the right. Numbering is not required upon submittal. The proposition number will be assigned by the County Auditor.

(RCW 29A.36.071)

Sample Ballot Title

1. Whatcom County Fire Protection District 21 Proposition 1
2. Authorizing Regular Property Tax Levy

The Board of Fire Commissioners of Whatcom County Fire Protection District 21 (the “District”), adopted Resolution No. 2021-04 concerning a proposition to authorize the District’s regular property tax levy. This measure would **3.** authorize a regular property tax levy of \$1.45 per \$1,000.00 of assessed valuation in 2021 (for collection in 2022) and would thereafter be subject to any otherwise applicable statutory dollar rate limitations. The dollar amount of this levy would be used for the purpose of computing the limitations for subsequent levies under RCW 84.55.050.

4. Should this proposal be approved?

Yes []

No []

Upon receipt of the final official ballot title from the Prosecuting Attorney, city attorney, the Auditor’s Office will notify the jurisdiction contact person and anyone else who requests a copy via letter or email. The language on the ballot and explanatory statement is approved by the Auditor’s Office before publication.

Ballot Title Appeal

(RCW 29A.36.090)

Persons dissatisfied with the ballot title for a local measure written by the city attorney, or Prosecuting Attorney may appeal to the Whatcom County Superior Court, pursuant to RCW 29A.36.090. Each ballot title must be accompanied by an explanatory statement, pursuant to RCW 29A.32.241



Explanatory Statements

(RCW 29A.32.241; 29A.32.230)

The explanatory statement explains the measure’s purpose, the financial impact, and the laws/statutes that will be affected by the measure’s passage. Explanatory statements must be 100 words or less.

The Prosecuting Attorney will prepare an explanatory statement for any county ballot measure and the attorney for the city or jurisdiction will prepare an explanatory statement for the city or jurisdiction measure. All explanatory statements for city or jurisdiction measures will be reviewed and approved by the Prosecuting Attorney. The Prosecuting Attorney will discuss any changes with the attorney for the city or jurisdiction prior to approving the final explanatory statement. Notification of the accepted or rejected explanatory statement will be made via e-mail or standard mail to the “district contact person #1 and #2” from the Ballot Measure Coversheet.

Any appeal to the rejection of an explanatory statement must be filed no later than 5 business days after the notice of rejection. The appeal must be in the form of a petition to the Superior Court of Whatcom County with a copy to the Auditor's Office and the attorney who prepared or reviewed the statement. The Superior Court decision will be final.

Any challenge to an explanatory statement from an individual not associated with the district that developed the statement must be filed no later than 5 business days after the due date for explanatory statement submission. The challenge must be in the form of a petition to the Superior Court of Whatcom County with a copy to the Auditor's Office and the attorney who prepared or reviewed the statement. The Superior Court decision will be final.

Statement Formatting Criteria

	Word Limit	Formatting Allowed	Formatting Not Allowed
Explanatory Statement	100	<i>Italics</i> , one paragraph	bold, ALL CAPS, <u>underlining</u> , lists, bullets, more than one paragraph



Jurisdictions to Appoint Committees

(RCW 29A.32.280)

The jurisdiction will formally appoint a committee of not more than three who are "for" the measure to prepare a statement advocating voters' approval of the measure and a committee who are "against" the measure to prepare a statement advocating voters' rejection. While each committee will have no more than three members, a committee may seek the advice of any person or persons. Each committee will identify a chair who will serve as the primary contact for the Auditor's Office.

Persons drafting statements "for" or "against" measures appearing in the local voters' pamphlet who are officers, employees, or a representative of any organization may only be designated as such if that organization has taken an official action to support or oppose the measure, as the case may be.

The deadline for the appointment of committees is 12:00pm (noon) on the resolution deadline for the election in which a ballot measure will appear. Requests must be emailed to elections@co.whatcom.wa.us.

The appointed committee must abide by the specified timelines for submitting statements for that election.

It is not the responsibility of the Auditor's Office to coordinate communications between committee members or to arbitrate disagreements among them.

If a committee member wishes to withdraw, he or she must notify the Auditor's Office by email at least 24 hours prior to the submittal deadline for the statement.

If the jurisdiction is unable to appoint either a For or Against Committee, a list of efforts made is required when submitting the measure to the Auditor's Office. The Auditor will review the efforts, confirming at least three of the suggestions were tried. Review "When Committees are not Formed" (next page) for list of acceptable efforts.



When Committees are not Formed

(RCW 29A.32.280)

A district that fails to appoint “For” and “Against” committees by the deadline is required to complete the committee appointment form and provide proof of the diligent efforts made. Diligent efforts are defined as attempting to solicit participation by at least three of the following means:

- Posting the request on the jurisdiction’s website.
- Requesting volunteers to serve at any commissioner meeting when the proposal is being discussed.
- Making direct phone calls to potential individuals.
- Putting up flyers on bulletin boards in libraries, grocery stores, or other community boards.
- Submitting a news release or letter to the editor to the newspapers (printed version or on-line version) requesting volunteers. (A “paid ad” in the Legal Notices is not required.)
- Posting on a reader board or sandwich board.
- Recruiting at any district events, i.e. monthly pancake feed, etc.
- Putting notice in emails or newsletters sent to individuals in the district
- Inserts in bills
- Other direct mail/email notifications

The Auditor’s office, in its sole discretion, may seek to fill vacant committee appointments through press releases, notices on the Election Division’s website, and any other means necessary. The following criteria will be used when appointing members:

- * Must be a registered voter in the district proposing the measure
- * Have an email address and the demonstrated ability to communicate rapidly by email
- * Agree to work collaboratively with other committee members
- * Agree to abide by specified election timelines

Committee appointments are made in order of received email to the auditor’s office by a qualified person. The first person appointed will be designated the chairperson for the committee. Appointed committee members will be notified by email.

If the committee is unable to agree or if multiple statements are submitted, the statement submitted by the chairperson will be the statement printed in the local voters’ pamphlet.

Committee Statement & Rebuttal Requirements

Word Limits;

- Statements are allowed up to 200 words, using up to 4 paragraphs.
 - If the statement is over the 200-word limit, the Auditor’s Office will attempt to notify the committee Chair with a request to reduce the word count. If there is no reply within 24 hours, the Auditor’s Office will simply remove the words that are in excess from the end of the statement until a sentence break is reached that falls within the word count.
- Rebuttals are allowed up to 75 words, using only one paragraph.
 - If the rebuttal is over the 75-word limit, it will be shortened by full sentences, beginning with the last sentence, to be within the word limit.
- Microsoft Word will be used to determine word count.

Formatting;

- Allowed: use of italics
- Not Allowed: bold, underlining, all caps, tables, lists, bullets.
 - If the statement or rebuttal contains formatting not allowed, it will be removed and left as plain text.

General Rules for statements and rebuttals;

- Committee member names will be printed in the local voters’ pamphlet. Names will be printed as submitted on the committee appointment form. If the committee indicated a name on the form, it will be included in the pamphlet. Titles of committee members will not be published in the local voters’ pamphlet.
- If both “For” and “Against” statements are submitted, the Election Division will email the text of the statement to the chair of the committee for the opposing committee listed on the committee appointment form. Other members will be copied (cc’d).
- Once submitted, statements may not be withdrawn or changed.
- The failure of a committee to submit a “For” or “Against” statement will disqualify the committee from submitting a rebuttal statement.
- Rebuttal statements are not required; however, it gives each committee an opportunity to provide a response to the opposing statement.
- Rebuttal statements may not interject new issues or arguments and are limited to addressing issues and arguments raised in the opposing statement.

	Word Limit	Formatting Allowed	Formatting Not Allowed
Statements For & Against	200	<i>italics</i> and up to four paragraphs.	bold, ALL CAPS, underlining, lists, bullets, more than four paragraphs
Rebuttal Statements	75	<i>Italics</i> , one paragraph	bold, ALL CAPS, <u>underlining</u> , lists, bullets, more than one paragraph
Committee Contact Info.	No limit	Committee name & member names	Titles of committee members (Dr., President, Ph.D etc.)



Content Rejection Process

(RCW 29A.32.230)

The Auditor's Office reserves the right to reject any submission to the local voters' pamphlet if it does not meet submission requirements. Material submitted for publication in the local voters' pamphlet may be rejected if it:

- is obscene;
- is libelous;
- contains a commercial advertisement;
- contains matter prohibited by law from distribution through the mail;
- contains matter not relevant to the measure;
- contains matter that is otherwise inappropriate or does not comply with applicable law; or
- was received after the submittal deadline.

If an explanatory statement, “for” or “against” statement, rebuttal statement, or contact information is rejected by the Auditor a written notice of rejection shall be sent to the committee chair by email within 48 hours after receipt thereof that shall explain specific grounds for rejection. The committee will have 24 hours (next business day) from the time of notification to submit an revised statement or contact information as long as their rejected material was submitted on time.

Content Appeal Process

The committee chair of a rejected explanatory statement, “For” or “Against” statement, rebuttal statement, or contact information may appeal the Auditor’s decision. A written notice of appeal shall be submitted by email (elections@co.whatcom.wa.us) no more than 48 hours after the notice of rejection was sent and shall explain the specific grounds for appeal. A written decision shall be issued granting or denying the appeal by email no more than 48 hours after receiving the notice of appeal. The decision to grant or deny an appeal shall be final.

If material is rejected, the local voters’ pamphlet will be printed with the rejected material omitted and the appropriate space left blank.

Contents Sole Responsibility of Authors

The contents of explanatory statements, “For” and “Against” statements, and rebuttal statements are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not represent the position of the Auditor or Whatcom County regarding the measure or of any material contained therein; neither the Auditor nor Whatcom County is responsible for the validity or accuracy of the statements.

The following statement is printed on each page containing a local ballot measure; *Statements For, Statements Against, and Rebuttals are the opinions of the authors and have not been checked for accuracy by any government agency.*

Public Inspection of Statements

(RCW 29A.32.100)

Statements submitted for publication in the local voters’ pamphlet shall not be available for release to the public until all statements pertaining to the specified ballot measure have been received, unless a committee was not appointed for one side, or the deadline for submission has elapsed. Requests for public inspection of arguments or statements shall be made in the same manner as requests for public records.