

SKAGIT COUNTY
ELECTIONS
Community Outreach
Plan: Signature
Verification

Skagit County Elections' ongoing practices related to signature verification.

2024
OUTREACH
PLAN

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SECTION 1:

INTRODUCTION

In June 2024, RCW requirements were updated to require that election offices produce a document detailing how they inform the public about signature verification requirements. Skagit County Elections will update this document as necessary.

The following document outlines our office's current and ongoing practices, as well as projects occurring related to outreach about signature verification.

OVERVIEW OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS PROCESS

A voter's signature is a unique identifier used in vote-by-mail elections to verify identity.

Citizens may register to vote in Washington State via a paper registration form, the DOL, or online. For a registration to be valid, a signature is required. That signature is added to the voter's record in the Statewide Voter Registration Data Base (VoteWA). Each voter is given a unique voter identification number when they are registered.

VoteWA generates a ballot for all eligible voters for each election. The issues/races on a ballot itself are based on the voter's precinct, which is determined by their residential address. Along with the ballot, a postage-paid return envelope which the voter must sign is included. The envelope has a unique ballot ID number printed on it. If a voter requests a replacement ballot or moves during the voting window, a new ballot will be generated with its own unique ballot ID number.

After the voter receives their ballot packet, they vote the ballot and place it inside the secrecy sleeve, which goes inside the return envelope. They then sign the return envelope and return it to County Elections either through the mail or by depositing it in a ballot drop box.

SIGNATURE VERIFICATION & CURE PROCESS

On the ballot return envelope, there is a signature line the voter must complete. The signature on the ballot envelope must match the signature on file in VoteWA for the envelope to be accepted and opened for ballot processing.

Upon initial receipt, ballot envelopes are processed through a mail sorter, which captures an image of the signature side of the return envelope, including the signature, unique ballot ID, and date.

Images are uploaded into VoteWA. Signatures from the return envelopes are then compared to the signature the voter has on file. Employees are trained in signature verification standards with annual training from the Office of the Secretary of State. Every signature is reviewed with the presumption that the signature on the ballot declaration is the voter's signature.

Signatures with a challenge status must undergo a second review, which is done by a team of two. This includes a review of previous signatures available in VoteWA and a review of other voters in the household.

If the secondary review team determines that the ballot envelope should remain challenged, they begin the notification process notated in the steps below.

The challenged envelope is placed into secure storage and remains unopened. The envelope will only be opened when/if a cure form is returned that matches the signature on the ballot envelope.

If the secondary review team determines the signatures match, the challenge is removed, and the ballot envelop continues to processing.

In Skagit County, ensuring every eligible vote is counted is of utmost importance. When a signature is challenged, staff take immediate steps to inform the voter and provide them with an opportunity to correct the issue. To facilitate this, voters are asked to provide a phone number and email address on their ballot envelope.

Step 1: Notification of Challenge: When a signature is challenged or the return envelope isn't signed, staff attempt to contact the voter. Multiple communication channels are utilized to ensure that the voter is aware of the issue as quickly as possible. This includes:

Mail: A physical letter along with a cure form is mailed within 2 days of a challenge, explaining the issue and the necessary steps to resolve it.

Phone: Phone calls to the voter are made if the information is in the voter record or on the return envelope. If the voter does not answer, a voicemail is left detailing the steps needed to cure their ballot envelope.

Email: Email notifications are sent to voters with instructions for curing their ballot envelope for voters who have provided an email address.

Text: If a voter has signed up to receive text notifications, a text message is sent letting the voter know there is an issue with their envelope.

Step 2: Verification of Cure Forms: Once the voter returns the completed cure form, the signature on the form is compared to the signature on the ballot envelope.

If the signatures match:

- The form is scanned and uploaded into VoteWA, adding the signature for all future elections.
- The ballot envelope continues to processing.

If the signature still does not match staff attempts to contact the voter again.

Step 4: Deadline: Cure forms must be received by 4:30 PM on the day before the certification of an election.

SECTION TWO:

CURRENT OUTREACH PRACTICES

CURE FORMS AND SIGNATURE UPDATE REQUEST FORMS

Skagit County Elections maintains essential forms for voter interaction during election cycles: for example, the cure form and the signature update request form (refer to Appendices 2).

These forms are available in physical form at our office and sent to a voter upon request. Elections encourages proactive engagement from voters, allowing them the option to update their signature voluntarily at any point.

During signature checking staff identify voters with signatures that appear to be changing. As these signatures are identified a signature update notice is sent, requesting the voter provide an updated signature. The inclusion of more signatures, particularly recent ones, enhances the accuracy and integrity of the voter database.

Step 2: Mailing Cure Forms: Every voter with a challenged signature receives a cure form. This form is essential for the voter to update or confirm their signature. The cure form includes:

- A line for the voter to sign on.
- Clear instructions on how to fill out the form.
- A postage-paid return envelope.

VOTER PAMPHLET ADS

Skagit County Elections produces a Local Voters Pamphlet (LVP) for every election. During Primary and General Elections, County Elections produces a book-style LVP. One of the advertisements frequently included emphasizes the importance of signatures.

[WAC 434-261-053](#)

Ballot declaration signature cure process.

(1) If a ballot declaration signature is not accepted following secondary review, the voter used a mark or signature stamp but did not include witnesses, or if the ballot declaration was not signed, the ballot cannot be counted until the voter cures their signature. The voter identified on the ballot return envelope must be notified as soon as practicable, but no later than three business days following receipt, of the procedure for curing their signature by:

(a) A notice letter package sent by first class mail with a signature update form or a missing signature form. The forms must include the ballot declaration required by WAC [434-230-015](#). The notice letter package must also include a prepaid envelope in which to return a completed signature update or missing signature form. The notice letter must:

(i) Be in substantially the same form as the sample notice letter created by the secretary of state; and

(ii) Be available in all languages required by the Department of Justice.

(b) Phone (if the voter has provided a phone number);

(c) Text message (if the voter has opted into text message notifications); and

(d) Email (if the voter has provided an email address).

(2) The voter may cure their ballot signature no later than the close of business the day before the election is certified.

(3) A voter may cure a missing signature by:

(a) Returning a signed missing signature form. The signature on the form must be compared to the voter's signature in the voter registration record using the process described in WAC [434-261-052](#); or

(b) Appearing in person and signing the ballot declaration. The signature on the ballot declaration must be compared to the voter's signature in the voter registration record using the process described in WAC [434-261-052](#).

(4) A voter using a mark may cure a failure to have two witnesses attest to the ballot declaration signature by returning a missing signature form. The form must contain the voter's mark and the signatures of two witnesses.

(5) A voter may cure a nonmatching signature by either:

(a) Returning a signature update form or appearing in person and signing a new registration form.

(i) The signature on the form must be compared to the signature on the ballot declaration using the process described in WAC [434-261-052](#);

(ii) The signature on the form is saved as a new signature in the voter registration record for the current and future elections; or

(b) Providing valid secondary identity verification. The county auditor must verify the secondary identification is for the voter who signed the ballot declaration. Secondary identification may be:

(i) The last four digits of the voter's Social Security number or the voter's full driver's license number or state identity card number;

(ii) Photo identification, valid enrollment card of a federally recognized Indian tribe in Washington state, copy of a current utility bill or current bank statement, copy of a current government check, copy of a current paycheck, or a government document, other than a voter registration card, that shows both the name and address of the voter; or

(iii) A multifactor authentication code, from a system approved by the secretary of state, the county auditor sent to the voter's phone number or email address that has previously been provided by the voter.

If a voter successfully provides secondary identity verification and confirms, orally or in writing, that the voter in fact returned the ballot, the ballot must be accepted unless two persons who have received signature verification training under WAC [434-261-051](#)(7) conclude beyond a reasonable doubt that a person other than the voter signed the ballot declaration. This conclusion may be based on evidence including, but not limited to, other ballots in the same election bearing the same signature.

(6) If the registered voter asserts that the signature on the ballot declaration is not the voter's signature prior to 8:00 p.m. on election day, the voter may vote a provisional ballot.

(7) If the voter does not successfully cure their signature by close of business the day before certification of the election, the ballot must be sent to the canvassing board.

(8) A record must be kept of the process used to cure ballot envelopes with missing and mismatched signatures. The record must contain the date on which each voter was contacted, the notice was mailed, and the date on which each voter subsequently submitted a signature to cure the missing or mismatched signature.

[Statutory Authority: RCW [29A.04.611](#). WSR 24-07-018, § 434-261-053, filed 3/8/24, effective 5/4/24.]

Skagit County Elections
PO Box 1306
Mount Vernon, WA 98273



DATE
VOTER NAME
ADDRESS
CITY, STATE ZIP

Your Vote is Important! Additional Action Required

Dear Voter,

Thank you for submitting your PRIMARY 2024 Election ballot. However, you did not sign the back of your envelope. To count a ballot, state law requires a signature on the return envelope.

Please complete and return the form on the reverse side of this letter no later than 4:30 p.m. PST, Monday, August 19, 2024. We will compare your returned signature with the signature on your voter registration record.

If you have questions about this letter, please contact Skagit County Elections at 360-416-1702. Thank you for making the extra effort to ensure your vote is counted.

Thank you,

Skagit County Elections
360-416-1702
700 S. 2nd St, Ste 201
Mount Vernon, WA 98273



NOTICE ID

Signature Resolution Form - NS
VOTER NAME - VOTER ID

1. Read the ballot declaration

Ballot declaration

I do solemnly swear or affirm under penalty of perjury that I am: A United States citizen; A Washington state resident that meets the requirements for voting mandated by state law; At least 18 years old on election day, or 17 years old at the primary and 18 years old by the day of the November general election; Voting only once in this election and not voting in any other United States jurisdiction; Not serving a sentence of total confinement under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections for a Washington felony conviction or currently incarcerated for a federal or out-of-state felony conviction; Not disqualified from voting due to a court order; and Aware it is illegal to forge a signature or cast another person's ballot and that attempting to vote when not qualified, attempting to vote more than once, or falsely signing this declaration is a felony punishable by a maximum imprisonment of five years, a maximum fine of \$10,000, or both.

Voter oath

I declare that the facts on this voter registration form are true. I am a citizen of the United States, and I am at least sixteen years old. I am not disqualified from voting due to a court order, and I am not currently serving a sentence of total confinement under the jurisdiction of the department of corrections for a Washington felony conviction, and I am not currently incarcerated for a federal or out-of-state felony conviction.

2. Sign and date below (required)

The signatures on this form will be compared with the signature on your ballot return envelope; at least one must match for your ballot to be counted. All signatures below will be added to your voter registration record to be compared against in future elections. Providing different versions of your signature can help avoid a similar issue in the future.

Today's Date

X _____

____/____/____

Today's Date

X _____

____/____/____

Today's Date

If you are unable to write your signature, make a mark in the signature area above. Have your mark witnessed and signed by two people below. You may not use power of attorney to sign for someone else.

signature of witness 1

signature of witness 2

3. Provide your contact information (optional)

Please provide us with your contact information. This information is not public and would only be used by our office to contact you with questions about your voter registration or ballot.

Email: _____

Phone: _____

4. Return this form so we can count your ballot

We must receive this completed form before the deadline to count your ballot.

Here is how you can return it:

1. Email to scelections@co.skagit.wa.us – take a clear photo or scan of the entire form
2. Mail to PO Box 1306, Mount Vernon, WA 98273
3. In person at Skagit County Elections – 700 S 2nd St, Room 201, Mount Vernon, WA 98273

We must receive this form by 4:30 p.m. on Monday, August 19, 2024 to count your ballot.

Skagit County Elections
PO Box 1306
Mount Vernon, WA 98273



DATE
VOTER NAME
ADDRESS
CITY, STATE ZIP

Your Vote is Important! Additional Action Required

Dear Voter,

Thank you for submitting your PRIMARY 2024 Election ballot. However, the signature on your return envelope does not match closely enough with the signature we have on your voter registration record. To count your ballot, state law requires that the signature on your return envelope match the signature on your record.

We realize that signatures may change over time or that a person may have a different signature if they are signing a document in a hurry. If you have several variations of your signature, please feel free to sign the form with all versions.

By completing and returning the form on the back side of this page, you will enable the Elections Office to have multiple variations of your signature on file to compare with the current ballot and all future ballots.

Please complete and return the form on the reverse side of this letter no later than 4:30 p.m. PST, Monday, August 19, 2024.

If you have questions about this letter, please contact Skagit County Elections at 360-416-1702. Thank you for making the extra effort to ensure your vote is counted.

Thank you,

Skagit County Elections
360-416-1702
700 S. 2nd St, Ste 201
Mount Vernon, WA 98273



NOTICE ID

Signature Resolution Form - QS
VOTER NAME - VOTER ID

1. Read the ballot declaration

Ballot declaration

I do solemnly swear or affirm under penalty of perjury that I am: A United States citizen; A Washington state resident that meets the requirements for voting mandated by state law; At least 18 years old on election day, or 17 years old at the primary and 18 years old by the day of the November general election; Voting only once in this election and not voting in any other United States jurisdiction; Not serving a sentence of total confinement under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections for a Washington felony conviction or currently incarcerated for a federal or out-of-state felony conviction; Not disqualified from voting due to a court order; and Aware it is illegal to forge a signature or cast another person's ballot and that attempting to vote when not qualified, attempting to vote more than once, or falsely signing this declaration is a felony punishable by a maximum imprisonment of five years, a maximum fine of \$10,000, or both.

Voter oath

I declare that the facts on this voter registration form are true. I am a citizen of the United States, and I am at least sixteen years old. I am not disqualified from voting due to a court order, and I am not currently serving a sentence of total confinement under the jurisdiction of the department of corrections for a Washington felony conviction, and I am not currently incarcerated for a federal or out-of-state felony conviction.

2. Sign and date below (required)

The signatures on this form will be compared with the signature on your ballot return envelope; at least one must match for your ballot to be counted. All signatures below will be added to your voter registration record to be compared against in future elections. Providing different versions of your signature can help avoid a similar issue in the future.

Today's Date

X _____

____/____/____

Today's Date

X _____

____/____/____

Today's Date

If you are unable to write your signature, make a mark in the signature area above. Have your mark witnessed and signed by two people below. You may not use power of attorney to sign for someone else.

signature of witness 1

signature of witness 2

3. Provide your contact information (optional)

Please provide us with your contact information. This information is not public and would only be used by our office to contact you with questions about your voter registration or ballot.

Email: _____

Phone: _____

4. Return this form so we can count your ballot

We must receive this completed form before the deadline to count your ballot.
Here is how you can return it:

1. Email to sselections@co.skagit.wa.us - take a clear photo or scan of the entire form
2. Mail to PO Box 1306, Mount Vernon, WA 98273
3. In person at Skagit County Elections - 700 S 2nd St, Room 201, Mount Vernon, WA 98273

We must receive this form by 4:30 p.m. on Monday, August 19, 2024 to count your ballot.

Skagit County Elections
PO Box 1306
Mount Vernon, WA 98273



DATE
VOTER NAME
ADDRESS
CITY, STATE ZIP

Dear **VOTER NAME**,

Your ballot was counted for the **PRIMARY 2024** election. However, we recommend that you update your signature to help avoid problems with your signature in future elections. Please complete the form on the back of this letter and return as soon as possible.

Signatures may change for many reasons, such as a name change, the passage of time, physical changes or simply changing the way you sign your name. Each election we compare the signature on your return ballot envelope to the signature from your voter registration file. A ballot may only be counted if we can find a match between these two signatures. We are mailing this letter so you may update your signature in your voter registration record.

If you have any questions regarding your signature or voter registration status, please contact us at 360-416-1702 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday or by email at sselections@co.skagit.wa.us.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this important notice.

Skagit County Elections
360-416-1702

Signature Update Form

Voter ID: **4118233**

Instructions	Name
1. Confirm your personal information	VOTER NAME Is this your name? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
2. Please print all information clearly using black or blue ink	If not, print your name here: _____
3. Select one of the options below to provide/return this information.	Residential Address
	ADDRESS
	CITY STATE
	ZIP
	Is this where you live? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
How to Return your Information	If not, what's your residential address? _____ _____
Online	Mailing Address
- Visit www.votewa.gov	MAILING ADDRESS
- A Washington State drivers license or ID card is required	MAILING CITY STATE
	ZIP COUNTRY
	Is this where you get mail? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Email or Fax	If not, what's your mailing address? _____ _____
- Send a scanned copy of this completed form to scelections@co.skagit.wa.us	Contact Information
- Fax (360) 416-1699	Phone Number _____
	Email Address _____
Mail	Declaration
- Return form to: PO Box 1306 Mount Vernon, WA 98273	I declare that the facts on this voter registration form are true. I am a citizen of the United States, and I am at least 16 years old, I am not disqualified from voting due to a court order, and I am not currently serving a sentence of total confinement under the jurisdiction of the department of corrections for a Washington felony conviction, and I am not currently incarcerated for a federal or out-of-state felony conviction.
In Person Skagit County Elections 700 S. 2nd St, Room 201 Mount Vernon, WA 98273 Monday - Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm	_____ Sign here
	_____ Date here

Sample

UNSIGNED BALLOT SCRIPT

Hello, this is _____ from Skagit County Elections. This call is for _____.

We received your ballot for the August Primary Election; however, you forgot to sign it. You will receive a letter in the next couple of days. Please sign it and return it in the envelope we provide no later than 4:30 pm on Monday, August 19th to be sure your vote counts.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call us at 360.416.1702.

Thank you.

Sample

SIGNATURE DOES NOT MATCH SCRIPT

Hello, this is _____ from Skagit County Elections. This call is for _____.

We received your ballot for the August Primary Election; however, your signature does not match the signature we have on your voter's registration file. You will receive a letter in the next couple of days. Please sign the letter as you signed your ballot and return it in the envelope we provide, no later than 4:30 pm on Monday, August 19th to be sure your vote counts.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call us at 360.416.1702.

Thank you.

MATERIALS PREPARED IN SPANISH

The items listed below are part of the community outreach plan as defined in RCW 29A.60 and ESSB 5890 and will be translated into Spanish. This effort aims to ensure that all members of our community have access to important information and resources, regardless of their primary language.

- Voter Pamphlet Ad starting in the 2024 General Election
- Cure Letter
- Signature Update Letter