



Skagit County Local/Combined Voters' Pamphlet Administrative Rules

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01 Title

This document shall be known as the "Skagit County Local/Combined Voters' Pamphlet Administrative Rules." Hereinafter this document and its contents shall be referred to as "these rules."

02 Purpose

These rules establish the requirements for all participants involved in the production and distribution of a [voters' pamphlet](#) in Skagit County. These rules shall also serve as guidelines for the production of the [Online Voters' Guide](#), but they shall not be interpreted as requirements for the Online Voters' Guide.

As used in these rules, the generic term "voters' pamphlet" shall refer to both the [combined voters' pamphlet](#) and the [local voters' pamphlet](#). When a distinction between the two types of pamphlets is necessary or helpful, the term "Local Voters' Pamphlet" or "Combined Voters' Pamphlet" shall be used.

Before any primary or general election, or any special election held under RCW [29A.04.321](#) or [29A.04.330](#), each county auditor shall print and distribute a local voters' pamphlet.

03 Authority/References

These rules operate under the authority of RCW 29A.32 and [Skagit County Code](#) 1.28.

04 Conflict of Laws

It is intended that these rules shall be interpreted in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. In the event of any conflict between these rules and any state or federal laws or regulations, the federal/state laws or regulations shall control.

05 Definitions

The terms defined in this section shall have the following meanings throughout these rules.

- (1) "Auditor" or "Auditor's Office" shall mean the Skagit County Auditor, designee, or the Skagit County Elections Department.
- (2) "Ballot Title" shall mean the language that appears on a ballot regarding a question or proposition submitted to the Auditor's office to be voted upon by the registered voters in the district.
- (1) "Combined Voters' Pamphlet" shall mean a voters' pamphlet or [Online Voters Guide](#) produced in combination with the Washington State Secretary of State's Office that contains combined statewide and Skagit County issues.
- (3) "County" shall mean the Skagit County Government, including the Skagit County Board of County Commissioners, the Skagit County Auditor's Office, and any/all other elected and appointed officials and offices operating under the purview of this term. It shall not mean or refer to any cities, towns, or special taxing districts operating wholly or partially within the geographic confines of the county of Skagit, which jurisdictions shall be referred to separately.
- (4) "County Canvassing Board/Canvassing Board" shall mean the statutory board that examines and scrutinizes the conduct of an election, election results, questionable ballots, and other activities required by law or requested by the Auditor. The Canvassing Board includes: the Auditor, the Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners, and the Prosecuting Attorney, or their designated representatives.
- (5) "Days" shall mean calendar days when making reference to a deadline, such as "90 days prior to publication."
- (6) "Deadline" shall mean the close-of-business for the Skagit County Auditor's Office on a normal working day, 4:30 PM unless stated otherwise.
- (7) "District" shall mean any political or taxing district located in Skagit County participating in the publication and distribution of the Voters' Pamphlet.
- (8) "Elections Department" shall refer to the Skagit County Elections Department.

- (9) “Explanatory Statement” shall mean the statement prepared by the appropriate jurisdiction’s attorney stating the effect of a ballot measure if passed into law.
- (10) “Filing period” shall mean the period prescribed by law during which candidates for elective office file their candidate declarations with the appropriate filing offices.
- (11) “Jurisdiction” – See [District](#).
- (12) “Local voters' pamphlet” shall mean a [voters' pamphlet](#) or [Online Voters' Guide](#) containing only Skagit County candidates and measures, as opposed to the [Combined Voters' Pamphlet](#) that contains both statewide and county contests.
- (13) “Measure” shall mean any proposition or question submitted to the voters of a jurisdiction. It does not include the resolution language of the jurisdiction submitting the measure to the voters.
- (14) “Online Voters' Guide” or “Online Voters' Pamphlet” shall mean the electronic online document available on the County’s website that is roughly equivalent to the voters’ pamphlet in content, but that is not available in printed format.
- (15) “Publication date” shall mean the date on which the voters’ pamphlet material is sent by the Auditor’s Office to the printer, or to the Secretary of State’s Office, for publication; this date may vary from year to year.
- (16) “Skagit County Code” or “SCC” shall mean the codification of the permanent and general ordinances of Skagit County, Washington.
- (17) “Voters’ pamphlet” shall mean a printed and electronic document prepared by the Auditor's Office including, but not limited to:
 - (a) Statements from candidates running for office;
 - (b) Information about, and statements for or against, local ballot measures or initiatives;
 - (c) Registration information, voting procedures, and other important election-related information.

This document may also be made available online; when available online it shall be referred to herein as the “[Online Voters Guide](#)”. Voters' pamphlets in Skagit County can be either of the following types:

- (a) A “[Local Voters' Pamphlet](#)” that is produced with only Skagit County issues, as defined by RCW 29A.32; or
- (b) A “[Combined Voters' Pamphlet](#)”, so called because it is produced in combination with the Washington State Secretary of State’s Office and contains both State and Skagit County issues.

06 Scope

These rules apply to all persons or groups involved in the production of the voters' pamphlet, including:

- (1) Each city, town, and special taxing district located within Skagit County that has any office or [measure](#) on a given ballot (RCW 29A.32.220) in a given election; and
- (2) All candidates and statement committees participating in a Skagit County election (RCW 29A.32.220, RCW 29A.32.280).

07 Date of Adoption or Last Update

Following are the modification dates of this document, with brief descriptions of each modification (see RCW 29A.32.230).

Date	Description
8/3/2010	Initial rules formulated
9/7/2010	Skagit County Board of County Commissioners adopted resolution number 2010308 adopting the Voters' Pamphlet Administrative Rules as presented in the August 17 hearing.
4/26/2012	Changes in response to recent legislation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Under heading 10.02 and its sub-headings, the following changes were made:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Candidate materials submission deadline changed○ Candidate Statement Specifications:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Minor changes to wording▪ Added note about "No information submitted"○ Candidate Biography Specifications:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Eliminated category "Family"▪ Added note about "No information submitted"○ Candidate Photograph Specifications:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Added note about no picture submission, with example.○ Measure materials submission deadlines changed
3/20/2013	Updated for 2013
5/1/2015	Updated for 2015
3/30/2021	Changes in response to recent legislation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heading 08 wording updated to reflect required voters' pamphlet production• 09.02<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ (1) Updated voters' pamphlet requirement wording○ (8) Minor changes of wording○ (9) Clarified wording○ (10) Original text at this number deleted. No longer relevant due to law change• 10.01<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ (1) Changed wording to plain language

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (3) Removed “measure graphic or photograph” ○ 10.01.01 - Updated wording in regard to voters’ pamphlet requirements for all elections • 10.02.05 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Corrected grammatical error • 10.02.07 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Notes – updated photo for non-submission • 10.03.01 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Corrected which committee submits rebuttal • 10.03.04 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Removed measure photo requirement section
12/10/2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10.03.01 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clarified that committee members for measures must reside in the district for which they are participating. • 10.03.04 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Updated wording to clarify Rejections and Appeals

08 Intent and Notification

Before any primary or general election, or any special election, Skagit County shall print and distribute a local voters' pamphlet. The pamphlet shall provide information on all measures and candidates within that jurisdiction.

09 Responsibilities

This section describes the responsibilities of the various parties involved in the production of the voters’ pamphlet.

09.01 Board of County Commissioners

- (1) The Skagit County Board of County Commissioners has the authority to waive participation in the voters' pamphlet for any jurisdiction for which participation in the voters’ pamphlet would create undue financial hardship. Such waiver must occur not later than sixty days before the publication date of the pamphlet (RCW 29A.32.220).

09.02 Auditor's Office

Following are the responsibilities of the Auditor's Office in the production of the voters' pamphlet. The Auditor's Office:

- (1) Is required by law to produce and distribute a local voters' pamphlet per RCW 29A.32.210;
- (2) Shall ensure that the voters' pamphlet includes all required elements mandated by RCW 29A.32;
- (3) Is responsible for facilitating the production and distribution of the voters' pamphlet;
- (4) Is responsible for obtaining and maintaining any and all agreements with any and all vendors necessary to produce and distribute the voters' pamphlet;
- (5) Will notify all candidates when they file for office of all statement and photo deadlines;
- (6) Is responsible for the layout of all pages of the pamphlet for each election;
- (7) Is responsible for coordinating the proofing of all materials included in the pamphlet;
- (8) In the event that a jurisdiction fails to appoint either a For or Against committee by the prescribed deadline, the county auditor shall make the appointments whenever possible (RCW 29A.32.280);
- (9) Will, on a yearly basis, notify all jurisdictions within Skagit County of its intent to publish a local voters' pamphlet. The notice will be sent at least 90 days before the publication and distribution of the pamphlet (RCW 29A.32.220);
- (10) Will mail the pamphlet to every residence in each jurisdiction that has included information in the pamphlet, or to each registered voter in each jurisdiction that has included information in the pamphlet, thereby meeting the required published notice of election (RCW 29A.32.260). In the case of a combined pamphlet, we will partner with the Washington Secretary of State's Office;
- (11) Will distribute voters' pamphlets to other designated locations;
- (12) Will prepare all files required for distribution on the County website;
- (13) Is responsible for creating, maintaining, and updating all policies and procedures necessary to the production of the voters' pamphlet; these policies and procedures shall include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - (a) General content;
 - (b) All deadlines;

- (c) Statement specifications, including length limits, content prohibitions, rejection criteria, appeals process, and more;
- (d) Photograph specifications;
- (e) Participation of jurisdictions;
- (f) Distribution;
- (g) Online voters' guide specifications, where those differ from the voters' pamphlet specifications.

10 Policies

10.01 General Materials Submission Policies

- (1) All candidate and measure submissions must be electronic computer files compatible with the County's computer system – submissions in hard-copy format will not be accepted. Specific electronic format submission requirements will be distributed each year.
- (2) In this section and its sub-sections, the term "candidate materials" shall refer to candidate statements, biographies, and photographs.
- (3) In this section and its sub-sections, the term "measure materials" shall refer to measure statements, statements for and against, and rebuttals.
- (4) As a rule, the [Elections Department](#) will not correct errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Changes in content are not allowed once the statement is submitted.
- (5) Skagit County Elections retains the discretion to grant waivers or exceptions on a case-by-case basis.

10.01.01 Distribution

The voters' pamphlet for the General Election is distributed by the Washington Secretary of State's Office to every household in Skagit County. It will be mailed in early/middle October.

Voters' pamphlets for the Primary and Special Elections will be distributed by Skagit County Elections. The Elections Office reserves the right to choose whether pamphlets are sent to every household or each registered voter.

The online voter's guide will be on the Skagit County Elections website, www.skagitcounty.net/elections, for all elections. The guide will be available 30 days or 45 days prior to the election depending on election type.

10.02 Candidate Materials Submission Policies

10.02.01 Candidate Materials Description

Candidates may submit the following materials to Skagit County Elections for inclusion in the printed voters' pamphlet and online voters' guide:

- (1) A candidate statement;
- (2) A candidate biography;
- (3) A candidate photograph.

Specific instructions for each of the above are detailed below under the appropriate heading. Please remember that the candidate statement and the candidate biography each have their own guidelines.

10.02.02 Candidate Materials Submission Deadline

All statements, biographies, and photographs for any candidate appearing in any election must be received by Skagit County Elections no later than close of business on a date to be determined each year by the Elections Department; this date will be published online and in the Candidate Submission Guidelines.

10.02.03 Candidate Materials Order of Statements

- (1) For the printed voters' pamphlet, candidate statements will be listed under the district and position for which each candidate filed.
- (2) For the online voters' guide, candidate statements will be listed under the district and position for which each candidate filed.

10.02.04 Candidate Statement Specifications

Candidate statements must:

- (1) Be submitted as electronic computer files compatible with the County's computer system – submissions in hard-copy format will not be accepted; specific submission requirements will be distributed each year;
- (2) Not exceed the word count published each year in the Candidate Submission Guidelines;
- (3) Be in paragraph format without indentation;
- (4) Use the candidate's name exactly as it will appear on the ballot;

- (5) Be separate from the [candidate biography](#);
- (6) Be limited to candidates themselves and may not mention opponents by name or allude to opponents.

Note: *if you do not supply a candidate statement, the space for the statement will read, “No information submitted”.*

10.02.05 Candidate Biography Specifications

Candidate biographies must:

- (1) Be submitted as electronic computer files compatible with the County’s computer system – submissions in hard-copy format will not be accepted; specific submission requirements will be distributed each year;
- (2) Not exceed the word count published each year in the Measure Submission Guidelines;
- (3) Be separate from the [candidate statement](#);
- (4) Contain the appropriate information under each of the required headings published each year in the Candidate Submission Guidelines.

Note: *if you do not supply entries for each of the headings, any empty headings will carry the statement, “No information submitted”.*

10.02.06 Submission Advisory

The Elections Department may reject statements or biographies that do not meet the above guidelines. See section 10.03.04 for Rejections and Appeals.

10.02.07 Candidate Photograph Specifications

The following photograph criteria are designed to ensure a good quality image in the voters’ pamphlet. *We recommend using a professional photographer taking a high-quality studio photograph if possible.* Photographs must:

- (1) Be submitted as electronic computer files compatible with the County’s computer system – submissions in hard-copy format will not be accepted; specific submission requirements will be distributed each year;
- (2) Be in “jpeg” format;
- (3) Be high resolution (300 dpi minimum);
- (4) Not be smaller than 2.5 x 3 inches (750 x 900 pixels);

- (5) Be no more than 5 years old;
- (6) Be in color;
- (7) Show only the candidate's face, or face, neck and shoulders in the manner of a portrait, excluding the candidate's hands, anything held in the hands, and other people;
- (8) Not be cartoons or caricatures, or any other image that does not accurately portray the candidate;
- (9) Not reveal clothing or insignia suggesting the holding of a public office, such as: judicial robes, law enforcement or military uniforms, official seals or symbols, flags of the state of Washington or other jurisdictions, or other similar indicia of public office.

Note: if you do not supply a photograph, the following image will be used:



The Elections Department may reject photographs that do not meet the above guidelines. See section 10.03.04 for Rejections and Appeals.

10.03 Measure Materials Submission Policies

10.03.01 Measure Materials Description and Specifications

Measure statements are of the following types:

Table 1 – Voters' Pamphlet/Online Guide Measure Statement Types

Statement Type	Content	Statement Submitted By
Explanatory Statement	Explanation of the ballot measure	District submitting measure
Statement For	Arguments advocating the approval of the ballot measure	Committee in support
Statement Against	Arguments advocating the rejection of the ballot measure	Committee opposed

Statement Type	Content	Statement Submitted By
Rebuttal of Statement For	Arguments refuting the statements advocating approval of the ballot measure	Committee opposed
Rebuttal of Statement Against	Arguments refuting the statements advocating rejection of the ballot measure	Committee in support

All measure statement types must meet the following guidelines.

- (1) The Explanatory Statement is always required. The district submitting the measure must submit this statement.
- (2) Explanatory statements must be written in clear and concise language, avoiding legal and technical terms when possible.
- (5) The Explanatory Statement, Statements For, and Statements Against may not exceed the word count published each year in the Measure Submission Guidelines;
- (6) Rebuttals of Statements For and Against may not exceed the word count published each year in the Measure Submission Guidelines;
- (3) Each argument or rebuttal statement must be followed by the names of the committee members who submitted them, and may be followed by a telephone number that citizens may call to obtain information on the ballot measure;
- (4) All statements must be in paragraph format without indentation;
- (5) Rebuttals may not interject new points;
- (6) Photos, cartoons, or caricatures are not permitted.
- (7) Committee members must reside in the jurisdiction for which they are participating.

The Elections Department may reject statements that do not meet the above guidelines. See section 10.03.04 for Rejections and Appeals.

Statements must comply with all aspects of the law regarding all statement types. See especially the following RCWs: 29A.32.031, 29A.32.040, 29A.32.060, 29A.32.210, 29A.32.241(5), 29A.32.280.

10.03.02 Measure Materials Submission Deadlines

For all measures appearing in any election, submissions must be received by Skagit County Elections no later than the close of business on a date to be determined each year by the Elections Department; this date will be published online and in the Measure Submission Guidelines.

10.03.03 Measure Materials Order of Statements

For the printed voters' pamphlet and online voters' guide, statements will be listed by district. Districts will appear in the ballot order of that election's ballot.

10.03.04 Content Rejection and Appeal Process - RCW 29A.32.230

Rejection

The Auditor's Office reserves the right to reject any submission to the local voters' pamphlet, if it does not meet submission requirements, or is deemed to be libelous or otherwise inappropriate.

Material submitted for publication in the local voters' pamphlet may be rejected if:

- It is obscene
- It is libelous.
- Contains a commercial advertisement.
- Contains a matter prohibited by law from distribution through the mail.
- Contains a matter that is otherwise inappropriate or that does not comply with applicable law.
- Photo does not meet statutory or administrative criteria.
- Was received after the submittal deadline.

If a statement, photo or contact information is rejected, a written notice of rejection shall be sent to the candidate by email and shall explain specific grounds for rejection.

The candidate will have until the deadline stated in the email to submit an adjusted statement, photo, or contact information if their rejected material was submitted on time. If there is no response by the deadline, the Elections Department will correct as needed. Statements exceeding the length limit will be shortened by deleting full sentences from the end until the limit is reached.

Appeal

Any candidate whose submission is rejected may appeal the decision to the Skagit County Auditor. A written notice of appeal shall be submitted to the Auditor by email (scauditor@co.skagit.wa.us) not more than 48 hours after notice of rejection was sent and shall set forth the specific grounds for appeal. The Auditor shall issue a written decision granting or denying the appeal by email not more than 48 hours after receiving the notice of appeal.

The decision of the Auditor to grant or deny an appeal shall be final.