

Recount Elections

Frequently Asked Questions and Chart
RCW 29A.64.021

Q. What triggers a mandatory recount?

If the difference between the candidates is less than one half of one percent and also less than 2,000 votes, a recount is required.

Statute does not specify how to conduct the recount, manual or machine, unless the difference between candidates requires a manual recount.

Q. When is a manual recount required?

In a statewide race, the difference between the candidates is less than one quarter of one percent and also less than 1,000 votes.

In regional and local offices, the difference between the candidates is less than 150 votes and one quarter of one percent.

Q. Who can request a recount?

For offices, a candidate or officer of a political party for whom votes were cast may request a recount.

For issues or measures, a group of five or more registered voters may request a recount for any question or measure.

Q. Who pays for the recount?

The State reimburses the counties for mandatory recounts for State Measures. The counties pay for all other mandatory recounts.

In the case of a requested recount, the individual or group who makes the request pays for the recount unless the outcome is reversed, and then the county pays.

Q. Who calls for a recount?

The Office of the Secretary of State orders recounts for state offices, state measures and multi-county legislative, congressional and judicial offices.

The County Canvassing Board orders recounts for local offices and single jurisdictions.

Q. When is the recount conducted?

The County Canvassing Board(s) determine the date and time of the recount. If the Office of the Secretary of State orders the recount it may require counties to submit results of the recounts on a uniform date.

Q. Can a county prepare by sorting ballots before the official date of the recount?

Observers need the opportunity to observe the preparation work for the recount. Candidates need to have time to designate observers. For these reasons, a county should wait the two days for candidates to be notified before opening storage boxes and sorting ballots.

Are people allowed to observe the process?

Observers, appointed by the political parties, and the candidates or their representatives, are encouraged to observe all stages of the recount. They should ask questions to the appropriate person about their observations, but may not disrupt the process. Other members of the public may also be allowed to observe the process. If space is limited, WAC 434-264-030 provides a priority list for viewing space.

Q. What happens after the recount?

The County Canvassing Boards certify the results of the recount by submitting an amended abstract of votes. If the recount was for a statewide office, state measure, or multi-county legislative, congressional and judicial offices, County Canvassing Boards submit the results to the Office of the Secretary of State and the Office of the Secretary of State certifies the results.

Q. When is a recount not conducted?

There are no recounts for local measures. There are also no recounts if the first and second candidates are close in a primary election.

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| Machine Recounts: | | | | |
| All Offices | Less than 2,000 votes | and less than | .5% (.005) of the total votes cast for both candidates | RCW 29A.64.021(1) |
| Manual Recounts: | | | | |
| Statewide Offices | Less than 1,000 votes | and less than | .25% (.0025) of the total votes cast for both candidates | RCW 29A.64.021(1)(b)(i) |
| Regional/Local Offices | Less than 150 votes | and less than | .25% (.0025) of the total votes cast for both candidates | RCW 29A.64.21(1)(b)(i) |
| Primary v. General | | | | |
| Primary | A mandatory recount may be ordered if the results between the 2 nd and 3 rd place candidates meet the necessary threshold. | | | |
| General | A mandatory recount may be ordered if the results between the 1 st and 2 nd place candidates meet the necessary threshold. | | | |