

Write-in Voting | Questions of the Day

Certification & Training Program

August 6, 2014

We recently received three questions from county election administrators:

Q: How do I document a write-in mark when the target area is filled in for the write-in position, but the write-in line (space) is blank?

A: According to Rule K of the [Voter Intent Manual](#), marked write-in target areas with blank lines are not valid votes. However, if left alone, the tabulation system will count the marked target area as a valid vote.

If the target area is marked for the office of Governor, you must duplicate or resolve the mark so that it does not count as a vote. Write-in votes are included in the total votes cast, and determine the initiative signature requirements. It is essential that only true write-in votes are tabulated for this office.

For all other races and offices, you may choose one of the following actions.

1. Duplicate or resolve the mark; it does not count as a vote.
2. Allow the mark to tabulate as a vote. When tallying for individual candidates these votes need to be placed in a category such as "BLANK," "BLANK LINE," or "INVALID" indicating that no write-in vote was cast.

Q: How do I handle write-ins for fictitious characters?

A: Write-in votes for ineligible candidates must be included in the total number of write-ins cast for an office. Ineligible candidates include fictitious characters, animals, and terms such as "none of the above." If write-in votes for individual candidates must be tallied for an office, votes for ineligible candidates do not need to be tallied individually. The number of ineligible candidate votes plus the tallied votes for individuals should equal the total number of write-ins cast for the office.

Q: If an *undeclared* write-in candidate becomes one of the top two vote-getters, must the name appear on the General Election ballot? How does the name and party preference appear?

A: Yes, an undeclared candidate's name must appear on the general election ballot when he/she receives 1% of the total votes cast for that office, and is also one of the Top Two vote-getters. Total votes cast for that office = votes cast for candidate(s) printed on the ballot + valid write-in votes in that race. ([RCW 29A.36.170](#))

The WACs don't explicitly address how the name and party preference appear. Rather, the **only** way to provide a ballot name and declare a party preference is to file a Declaration of Candidacy. If the individual never filed a declaration, then the printed ballot name must come from the individual's voter registration record, and the party preference is listed as "States No Party Preference."

For additional information, see our [Clearinghouses](#) for Write-in Voting and Precinct Committee Officer Elections, and contact the Certification & Training program at ctsupport@sos.wa.gov or (360) 902-4165.