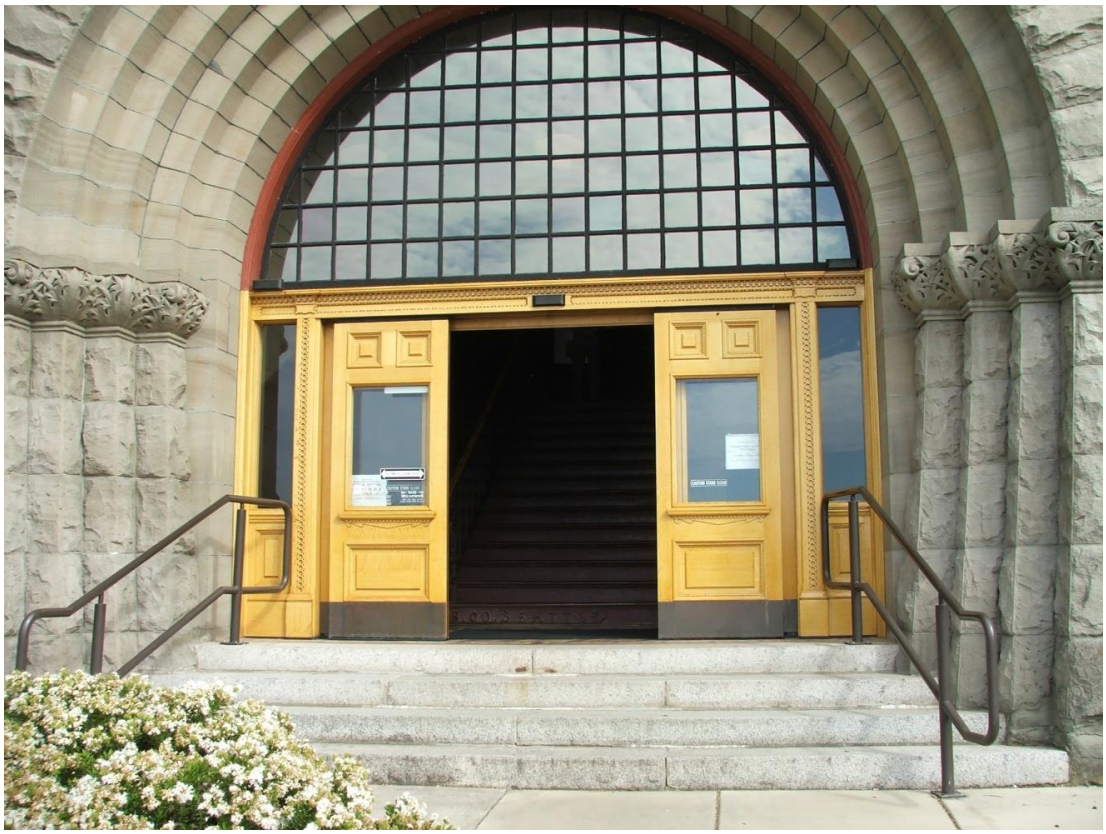
Jefferson County WASHINGTON

Election Observer's Guide

Welcome to our office, please come in.



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Introduction

Welcome to Jefferson County Elections. You have been appointed to observe the election process as an official representative of your political party. Your role is to provide a truly independent perspective of the election process. Observing the entire election process helps to build public confidence in the accuracy and integrity of elections.

The role of the observer is vastly different than that of the election worker. As an observer it is important for you to understand the election process but you are prohibited by law from touching or handling any ballots, whereas the election worker is at the Election Center to complete an individual task, but not necessarily know the complete process.

Please remember that the official observer program is dictated by State law and is a formal agreement between your party and the Jefferson County Auditor. If you have any questions, please direct them to the Election Staff.

State laws (RCW) and state regulations (WAC) referenced are in this guide. If you have questions regarding these statutes, please direct them to the Election Staff.

This guide is intended to explain the process of issuing, processing, and counting ballots. It is not intended to be a substitute for the statutes governing this process, but rather should be read in conjunction with them.

If, for any reason, you have any questions or concerns that we have not adequately addressed, you are encouraged to contact the Election Division at the Office of the Secretary of State.

Office of the Secretary of State
Elections Division
PO Box 40229
Olympia WA 98504
elections@sos.wa.gov
(800) 448-4881

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We've come a long way ….

(Jefferson County Auditor's Office – early 1900's)

Common Election Terms

Abstract of Votes: The official statement of votes cast at an election or primary, as prepared by the county auditor.

Accessible Voting Unit: The AutoMARK® is a touch screen which allows disabled voters to vote without assistance.

AutoMARK: The Accessible Voting Unit used by Jefferson County.

Ballot Counter: A machine that tabulates votes in a readable format. Also known as, a vote tallying system or ballot tabulator.

Ballot Counter Programming: The programming used to tell the ballot counter which marks equate to which votes.

Ballot Duplication: With teams of two, the process of transferring votes to a blank ballot from a ballot that cannot be read by the ballot counter. Duplicated ballots are marked with a corresponding control number. Anyone can match the new (duplicated) ballot with the one marked by the voter to verify it was duplicated exactly as the voter intended.

Ballot Inspection: Each ballot must be inspected for mistakes or damage that would prevent the votes from being counted correctly.

Ballot Style: For most elections, voters who live in different geographic areas receive different ballots. Ballots are designed to contain only those issues and offices for the voter's geographic area. Residence address determines the issues and offices that appear on your ballot.

Ballot Tabulator: Same as ballot counter.

Canvass: Final determination of questionable ballots by the County Canvassing Board.

Canvassing Board: Consisting of the County Auditor, County Prosecuting Attorney, and the Chairman of the County Commissioners (or their designee); responsible for canvassing and certifying all elections. Some duties may be designated.

Canvassing Board Designee: A person designated by the Canvassing Board to carry out one or more of the statutory responsibilities of the Canvassing Board.

Central Counting System: A system of counting ballots in which all ballots are brought to a central location on election night to be fed through the ballot counter -- usually the County Auditor's office.

Class C Felony: The classification of crime one is guilty of if he/she falsely signs a mail-in Ballot Declaration or affidavit of voter registration; 5 years in jail, $10,000 fine, or both such fine and imprisonment.

Counting Center: The location in a county where ballots are processed and counted.

Counting System: The method by which ballots are counted: Optical scan, paper-ballot, direct recording device, etc. This term is often used to identify the vendor of the ballot counting system.

Disability Access Voting Location: A location designated by the County Auditor for the conduct of in-person disability access voting.

Drop Box: A secured, unstaffed box designated for the return of voted ballots opened 24/7 - 20 days before an election and locked and secured by 8:00 p.m. Election night.

Election Board Worker: A generic term for election workers that perform any number of jobs. This term does not refer to elections department staff.

Election Center: Where all functions of the ballot processing and tabulation take place.

Election Observer: Those persons designated by the county political party central committee chairperson to observe the counting of ballots and related elections procedures. An official observer may not be an election worker hired to process ballots.

Electronic Vote Tallying System: An electronic system for tallying votes, such as an optical scan system.

Final Processing: The reading of ballots by an electronic vote tallying system, but does not include tabulation. This can begin after 7:00 a.m., the day before the election as long as the County Auditor has an approved Security Plan filed with the Secretary of State.

Gross Misdemeanor: The classification of crime committed when a person divulges the vote count prior to 8:00 p.m. on election night; one year in jail, $5,000 fine or both fine and imprisonment.

Header Card: A card fed into a ballot counter before a precinct's ballots; used to tell the ballot counter what precinct is being counted and what districts or contests are valid in that precinct.

Initial Processing: All steps taken to prepare mail ballots for tabulation, except for the reading of ballots by an electronic vote tallying system. Initial Processing includes, but is not limited to:

- Removal of the security envelope from return envelope;
- Removal of the ballot from the security envelope;

- Manual inspection for damage, write-in votes, corrections by the voter and incorrect or incomplete marks;
- Duplication of damaged and write-in ballots;
- And, other preparation of ballots for final processing.

Logic and Accuracy Test: An official test to verify that the ballot counter and the programming correctly count each style of ballot and produces cumulative totals. Using a pre-audited group of ballots, the ballot tabulating system is tested to verify that votes cast for all candidates and propositions are being counted correctly. The test also verifies that the machine is functioning to specifications.

Major Political Party: A political party is designated as a major party if one of its nominees received more than 5 percent of the total votes cast for President, United States Senator, or a statewide office in a general election in an even numbered year.

Mail Ballot Processing: The administrative handling of all mail ballots, including signature checking, assigning voting credit, the opening and inspecting of all mail ballots, and the feeding of ballots into the ballot counter, but excluding any action that produces, in any manner, election returns or vote tallies.

Manual Count: A process that may be requested jointly by political party observers representing each party; a precinct's ballots are counted by hand and then by machine; the results are compared and discrepancies corrected. This process may be requested three times on election night.

OP-SCAN System: An Optical Scan system of voting; Voters vote by marking with a pen or pencil on a paper ballot. The ballot is fed through a machine that "reads" (scans) the marks on the ballot and correctly allocates a vote to the name, or choice, next to the mark.

Overvote: A race or measure with more than the allowable number of votes cast by the voter on a ballot.

Pre-Inspection Board: Consists of teams of two who open the ballot envelope, separate the security envelope from the return envelope and inspect the ballot making sure it can be read by the tabulator.

Provisional Ballots: Ballots issued at the Auditor's Office to voters whose name does not appear in the voter file, were sent a ballot, or any other reason when a voter cannot vote a regular ballot.

RCW: The Revised Code of Washington is the compilation of all permanent laws now in force. It is a collection of Session Laws (enacted by the Legislature, and signed by the Governor, or enacted via the initiative process), arranged by topic, with amendments added and repealed laws removed. It does not include temporary laws such as

appropriations acts. The official version of the RCW is published by the Statute Law Committee and the Code Reviser.

Reconciliation Report: A report by the County Auditor and staff used to reconcile total votes cast, with total number of ballots returned and counted.

Recount: The process for re-counting (by hand or machine, as applicable) the votes for a specific office or issue on all valid ballots cast in a primary or election.

Secure Storage: Employs the use of numbered seals and logs or any other security measures, which will detect inappropriate access to secured materials.

Signature Checking: The process of verifying the signature on the declaration mail ballot envelope against the signature on the original registration card of the voter to whom the ballot was issued.

Spoiled Ballot: A ballot that cannot be read by the ballot tabulator because it was damaged or the voter changed their mind when filling in the oval.

System Log: A log produced by the ballot counter showing the activity of the counter and the operator; used to verify all activity during counting.

Tabulation: The production of returns of votes cast regarding candidates or measures in a form that can be read by a person, whether as precinct totals, partial cumulative totals, or final cumulative totals. This can begin no earlier than 8:00 p.m., Election night.

Test Deck: The group of ballots used to verify the accuracy of the vote tallying system during the Logic and Accuracy test.

Timing Tracks: Timing tracks tell the ballot counter which portions of the ballot represent valid votes and for which candidates or measures these votes are to be assigned.

Undervote: A race or measure with no vote cast.

UOCAVA: Acronym for the Federal **U**niformed and **O**verseas **C**itizens **A**bsentee **V**oting **A**ct. Voters flagged in the voter registration system as UOCAVA are mailed or emailed ballots 45 days before a Federal Election and 30 days before all other elections

Voting Center: Any location that offers replacement ballots, provisional ballots or an accessible voting device (AutoMARK®).

WAC: Washington Administrative Codes. Regulations of executive branch agencies are issued by authority of statutes. Like legislation and the Constitution, regulations are a source of primary law in Washington State. The WAC codifies the regulations and arranges them by subject or agency.

Duties and Responsibilities

Anyone has the right to observe any part of the election process. Observers may watch any, or all, aspects of the election. You are encouraged to observe:

- Logic and accuracy tests prior to Election Day.
- Signature comparison.
- Opening and inspection of ballots.
- Election Night procedures.
- Ballot duplication.
- Counting of ballots.
- Storing and securing the ballots.
- Processing of provisional ballots.
- Canvassing board meetings.
- Reconciliation of ballots.
- Certification of the election.
- Any other times when ballots are handled by the Election Staff.

There are a few things we ask of you:

- To provide a truly independent perspective of the election process.
- Be at the Election Center on time.
- Follow the Observer Guidelines.
- Wear your badge identifying you and your party.
- Bring questions and concerns to the attention of the Election Staff.
- Be aware and respectful of other functions of the Auditor's office and the public they are serving.

Official Observer Guidelines

We have included the following guidelines to help you understand the role of an Official Observer and what is expected of you, as an Official Observer.

1) Each major political party will be contacted prior to each election and given the work schedule of ballot processing. The Auditor shall request that each party appoint representatives to observe the process. Before final assignment as observers, the Auditor, who may refuse to approve any person so appointed, shall review the list of appointed party representatives.

2) Each party is responsible for recruiting and scheduling their own observers as they choose. Ballot processing will continue, regardless of whether observers are present or not. In order to avoid a conflict of interest, the county cannot be involved in the scheduling of observers. Parties will be notified of any schedule changes as they occur.

3) When more than one (1) observer has been requested, each party is to designate who acts as their party "Supervisor". The name badge shall indicate "Supervisor" as well as party affiliation.

4) Official observers are volunteer positions.

5) Official observers are required to wear a badge identifying you as the official observer of your party. You will be required to wear this badge while you are here as an official observer.

6) In order for you to effectively do your job, you need to understand what is happening around you. Please ask the Election Staff whenever you are unfamiliar with a certain process. Remember, as the official party observer, it is your responsibility to bring your questions or concerns to our attention.

7) Observers may view any process that occurs during their shift. Feel free to move about in the Election Center to observe staff at work, but please be careful not to interfere with processing.

8) By law, observers may not touch ballots, ballot containers, or vote tallying equipment. Please remember this while performing your duties.

9) Depending upon when you observe, you may be asked to sign a Certification of Witnesses when the processing of incoming ballots begins. Any observer who is present in the room while ballots are being processed signs this oath. The oath simply informs you of the strict laws concerning the secrecy and confidentiality of ballots and that no one will divulge any vote count prior to the tabulation of any ballot.

10) As an observer, you are expected to remain objective and independent from the Election Department. Please refrain from any actions which may jeopardize this status or appear as a conflict of interest

11) Due to time constraints and the critical nature of our job, we cannot allow workers to be disrupted. Please help us maintain a work environment free of distractions so that everyone can concentrate on their current task. This does not include speaking to the Election Staff. Part of our job is to answer your questions.

What is a Logic and Accuracy Test?

It is the process used to check and make sure our vote counting system is correctly counting votes cast for all candidates as well as all voting responses. The test also verifies the machine(s) are functioning to specifications.

Whenever possible, the equipment is operated during the test by the same persons who will be responsible for the actual ballot count that can start the day prior to Election Day.

We are required to test the voting machine(s) twice before an election.

1. The first test is done prior to the official test and before ballots are scheduled to be mailed. This test is referred to as our unofficial in-house logic and accuracy test.
2. The second test is our official logic and accuracy test and must be done at least three (3) days before each election. Notice is given to the local newspaper in accordance with RCW 42.30 (Open Public Meeting Act). Candidates, if applicable, political parties and the media are also given notice.

How do we test the machine?

We create a test deck using actual ballots. If multiple ballot styles are being used in an election, each style is marked using the same pattern. We mark votes for candidates, for and against measures, and mark overvotes (when two or more candidates are marked or both “yes” and “no” for a measure are marked) and undervotes (when nothing is marked for a measure or office).

Total votes cast for each candidate and measure and total votes cast for the test are pre-determined and is referred to as the logic and accuracy planning matrix.

The ballots are run through the vote counting system and the results for each candidate and measure are checked against the matrix to make sure they match. ALL TOTALS MUST MATCH for the test to be accurate.

The test deck is kept separate from the real ballots cast by voters during the election.

The official logic and accuracy test shall be certified by the county auditor or deputy, the secretary of state representative (if state issues are on the ballot), and any political party observers.

If for any reason, changes are made to the ballot counting programming after the official logic and accuracy test, an emergency logic and accuracy test must be conducted.

Recounts

Mandatory Recount

Statewide offices or measures
Machine recounts - the difference between the two candidates or choices must be:
- Less than 2000 votes difference AND;
- Less than ½ of one percent.

Hand recounts - the difference between the two candidates or choices must be:
- Less than 1000 votes AND;
- Less than ¼ of one percent.

Local Offices
Machine recounts – the difference between the two candidates must be:
- Less than 2000 votes difference AND;
- Less than ½ of one percent.

Hand recounts – the difference between the two candidates must be:
- Less than 150 votes difference AND;
- Less than ¼ of one percent.

Measures, other than statewide initiatives and referendums, do not qualify for mandatory recounts under state law. They may be recounted, however, as a requested recount.

All recounts require the re-examination of undervotes in the race being recounted. Re-examination of undervotes will detect any valid votes previously not tabulated.

Requested Recounts
A recount may be requested by an officer of a political party, a candidate of the office, or a group of five or more registered voters for any question or issue.

The request for a recount must be done in writing and filed within three business days after the certification. The request must state whether the recount will be done by hand or by the vote tally system and whether all ballots or selected precincts are to be recounted.

A deposit is required at the time of the request of 15 cents per ballot to be recounted by vote tally system or 25 cents per ballot for a hand recount or as determined by the canvassing board. The requester must pay the actual cost of the recount unless the recount changes the results of the election. In that case, the deposit is refunded.

Election Results Ending in a Tie

Whenever there is a tie between candidates, a mandatory recount will be conducted. If the race is still tied after the recount, the winner is decided by lot by the appropriate filing officer. “By lot” may be a flipping of a coin, drawing a number, or something similar.

Applicable RCW's

RCW 29A.12.120
Counting center personnel — Instruction, requirements.
(1) Before each state primary or general election at which voting systems are to be used, the county auditor shall instruct all counting center personnel who will operate a voting system in the proper conduct of their voting system duties.
(2) The county auditor may waive instructional requirements for counting center personnel who have previously received instruction and who have served for a sufficient length of time to be fully qualified to perform their duties. The county auditor shall keep a record of each person who has received instruction and is qualified to serve at the subsequent primary or election.
(3) No person may operate a voting system in a counting center at a primary or election unless that person has received the required instruction and is qualified to perform his or her duties in connection with the handling and tallying of ballots for that primary or election.

RCW 29A.12.130
Tallying systems — Programming tests.
At least three days before each state primary or general election, the office of the secretary of state shall provide for the conduct of tests of the programming for each vote tallying system to be used at that primary or general election. The test must verify that the system will correctly count the vote cast for all candidates and on all measures appearing on the ballot at that primary or general election. The test shall verify the capability of the vote tallying system to perform all of the functions that can reasonably be expected to occur during conduct of that particular primary or election. If any error is detected, the cause shall be determined and corrected, and an errorless total shall be produced before the primary or election.

Such tests shall be observed by at least one representative from each major political party, if representatives have been appointed by the respective major political parties and are present at the test, and shall be open to candidates, the press, and the public. The county auditor and any political party observers shall certify that the test has been conducted in accordance with this section. Copies of this certification shall be retained by the secretary of state and the county auditor. All programming materials, test results, and test ballots shall be securely sealed until the day of the primary or general election.

RCW 29A.40.100
Observers.
County auditors must request that observers be appointed by the major political parties to be present during the processing of ballots at the counting center. County auditors have discretion to also request that observers be appointed by any campaigns or organizations. The absence of the observers will not prevent the processing of ballots if the county auditor has requested their presence.

RCW 29A.60.170
List of observers — C**ounting center, direction and observation of proceedings — Manual count of certain precincts.**
(1) At least twenty-eight days prior to any special election, general election, or primary, the county auditor shall request from the chair of the county central committee of each major political party a list of individuals who are willing to serve as observers. The county auditor has discretion to also request observers from any campaign or organization. The county auditor may delete from the lists names of those persons who indicate to the county auditor that they cannot or do not wish to serve as observers, and names of those persons who, in the judgment of the county auditor, lack the ability to properly serve as observers after training has been made available to them by the auditor.

(2) The counting center is under the direction of the county auditor and must be open to observation by one representative from each major political party, if representatives have been appointed by the respective major political parties and these representatives are present while the counting center is operating. The proceedings must be open to the public, but no persons except those employed and authorized by the county auditor may touch any ballot or ballot container or operate a vote tallying system.

(3) A random check of the ballot counting equipment may be conducted upon mutual agreement of the political party observers or at the discretion of the county auditor. The random check procedures must be adopted by the county canvassing board prior to the processing of ballots. The random check process shall involve a comparison of a manual count to the machine count and may involve up to either three precincts or six batches depending on the ballot counting procedures in place in the county. The random check will be limited to one office or issue on the ballots in the precincts or batches that are selected for the check. The selection of the precincts or batches to be checked must be selected according to procedures established by the county canvassing board and the check must be completed no later than forty-eight hours after Election Day.

RCW 29A.64.041
Procedure — Request to stop — Observers.
(1) At the time and place established for a recount, the canvassing board or its duly authorized representatives, in the presence of all witnesses who may be in attendance, shall open the sealed containers containing the ballots to be recounted, and shall recount the votes for the offices or issues for which the recount has been ordered. Ballots shall be handled only by the members of the canvassing board or their duly authorized representatives.

The canvassing board shall not permit the tabulation of votes for any nomination, election, or issue other than the ones for which a recount was applied for or required.

(2) At any time before the ballots from all of the precincts listed in the application for the recount have been recounted, the applicant may file with the board a written request to stop the recount.

(3) The recount may be observed by persons representing the candidates affected by the recount or the persons representing both sides of an issue that is being recounted. Witnesses shall be permitted to observe the ballots and the process of tabulating the votes, but they shall not be permitted to handle the ballots. The observers may not make a record of the names, addresses, or other information on the ballots, declarations, or lists of voters unless authorized by the superior court. The secretary of state or county auditor may limit the number of observers to not less than two on each side if, in his or her opinion, a greater number would cause undue delay or disruption of the recount

Applicable WAC's

WAC 434-261-020
Political party observers.
Counting center operations shall be observed by at least one representative from each political party, if representatives have been appointed by the respective political parties and those representatives are present while the counting center is in operation.

Prior to the primary or election, the county auditor shall determine the number of observers required in order to observe all aspects of the counting center proceedings, and shall request, in writing, that each major political party appoint representatives to fill the requirements. Where more than one observer is to be appointed, the political party shall designate one of their observers as supervisor. The county auditor may require observers to receive training with respect to ballot processing procedures and the vote tallying system.

Before final assignment as observers, major political party representatives so appointed shall be reviewed by the county auditor, who may refuse to approve any person so appointed. In the event the auditor rejects a person designated, he or she shall promptly notify the political party concerned and request that a substitute observer be appointed, and shall ensure that the substitute observer is trained.

Representatives of the major political parties appointed as observers shall be identified by roster, including assigned observer stations if more than one in the counting center, and by identification tags which will indicate the observer's name and the party represented.

WAC 434-335-290
Logic and accuracy test observers.
The official logic and accuracy test must be observed by at least one representative of each major political party, if representatives have been appointed by the parties and are present at the test. The party observers must be instructed as election observers by the county auditor. The official logic and accuracy test must be open to candidates, the press, and the public. If any observer hinders or disturbs the logic and accuracy test process, the observer may be removed from the test area. An observer who has been removed from a logic and accuracy test may also be barred from future tests. The absence of observers may not delay or stop the test from being conducted.

WAC 434-335-330
Logic and accuracy test certification.
(1) The official logic and accuracy test shall be certified by the county auditor or deputy, the secretary of state representative, and any political party observers for a state primary or general election in accordance with RCW 29A.12.130. Additionally, the county auditor must verity in writing that the version numbers for all software, firmware, and hardware of the voting system used have not changed from the certified versions.

(2) The county auditor shall provide the secretary of state representative copies of the following documents:

(a) Test results;
(b) A zero report;
(c) Signed verification of the version numbers;
(d) Signed certification of the official logic and accuracy test;
(e) A test log of;
i) The number of accessible voting units to be used in the primary or election; and
ii) The electronic duplication system, if electronic duplication will be used in the primary or election; and
(f) Any other documentation requested by the secretary of state representative in advance of the official test.

(3) Copies of the certification documents must be retained by the secretary of state and the county auditor. All test results, test ballots, the signed certification, and a copy of the tabulation programming or the actual tabulation equipment must be kept in secure storage until the day of the primary or election. The secure storage must use numbered seals and logs that will detect any inappropriate access.
(4) If, for any reason, changes are made to the ballot counting programming after the official logic and accuracy test, an emergency logic and accuracy test must be conducted pursuant to WAC 434-335-310.

Ballot Path

Ballots received from printer:
Stored in secured storage location until ready to use.

Received Over The Counter -- Secured Ballot Box on Customer Counter: Two employees from the Auditor's Office will open and empty the box each morning using the seal log. Ballots are incorporated into the daily returns. Election night at 8:00 p.m. the box is removed from the counter and placed in a secure location. No voter is permitted to place a ballot in the box after 8:00 p.m. election night.

Received by mail: Two employees from the Auditor's Office pick up returned ballots from the post office on a daily basis. Time of day is approximately 8:30 a.m. for county wide elections and 10:00 a.m. for special elections.

Received from Drop Boxes:
1) Drop box behind courthouse: Two employees from the Auditor's Office will open and empty the outside drop box each morning, or as needed, using the seal log. Ballots are incorporated into the daily returns. At 8:00 p.m. election night, two staff will declare the election is closed and close the slot on the box so no other ballots can be deposited. Two employees will empty the box the next day and ballots incorporated into the daily returns.
2) Drop box at County Library: Two employees from the Auditor's Office will open and empty the drop box every Mon, Wed. & Fri., morning, or as needed, using the seal log. Ballots are incorporated into the daily returns. At 8:00 p.m. election night, two staff will declare the election is closed and close the slot on the box so no other ballots can be deposited. Two employees will empty the box the next day and ballots incorporated into the daily returns.

Daily Return of All Mail Ballots: All returned ballots are sorted by precinct, hand counted and logged on a Daily Return Log by:

(a) Total number received by mail and in person.
(b) Total number received identified as overseas, military, etc.

Total received by mail and in-person are given to staff assigned to data entry. Ballots returned in a manner not qualified to be entered as ready for processing are forwarded to the proper personnel for resolution.

After signature verification and data entry are complete, the number of ballots returned is verified with the number reported by precinct on a report generated by our Election Management System (EMS). This report is initialed by staff as balancing.

Ballots Returned Flagged as "Challenged":
These ballots are stored in the secured election cabinet. When these ballots are resolved by the voter, they are secured in a ballot box with all other ballots returned in person for that day. During daily processing of other ballots, as an UPDATE, the return

status code is changed from challenged to good and the ballot goes to the next stage for pre-inspecting.

Ballots Returned "Undeliverable":
The total number of undeliverable ballots returned daily are used for file maintenance and reported on the canvassing report.

Pre-Inspection of Returned Ballots:
Oath and Certification of Witnesses for Non-Disclosure signed by observers present goes in the election file. Non-Auditor staff who serves as Pre-Inspection Board Members would also sign this.

> **Note: Pre-Inspection on all returned voted ballots can begin upon their return.** During the time allowed for pre-inspection and up through Election Day, accessing secured ballots for the purpose of adding additional (pre-inspected) ballots is done by staff and political party representatives asked to serve as observers.

Ballots Ready for Final Processing:
Starting at 7:00 a.m. either the day before election, or Election Day, Auditor's staff will transfer ballots ready to scan from their secure location to the designated area next to the tabulator for scanning.

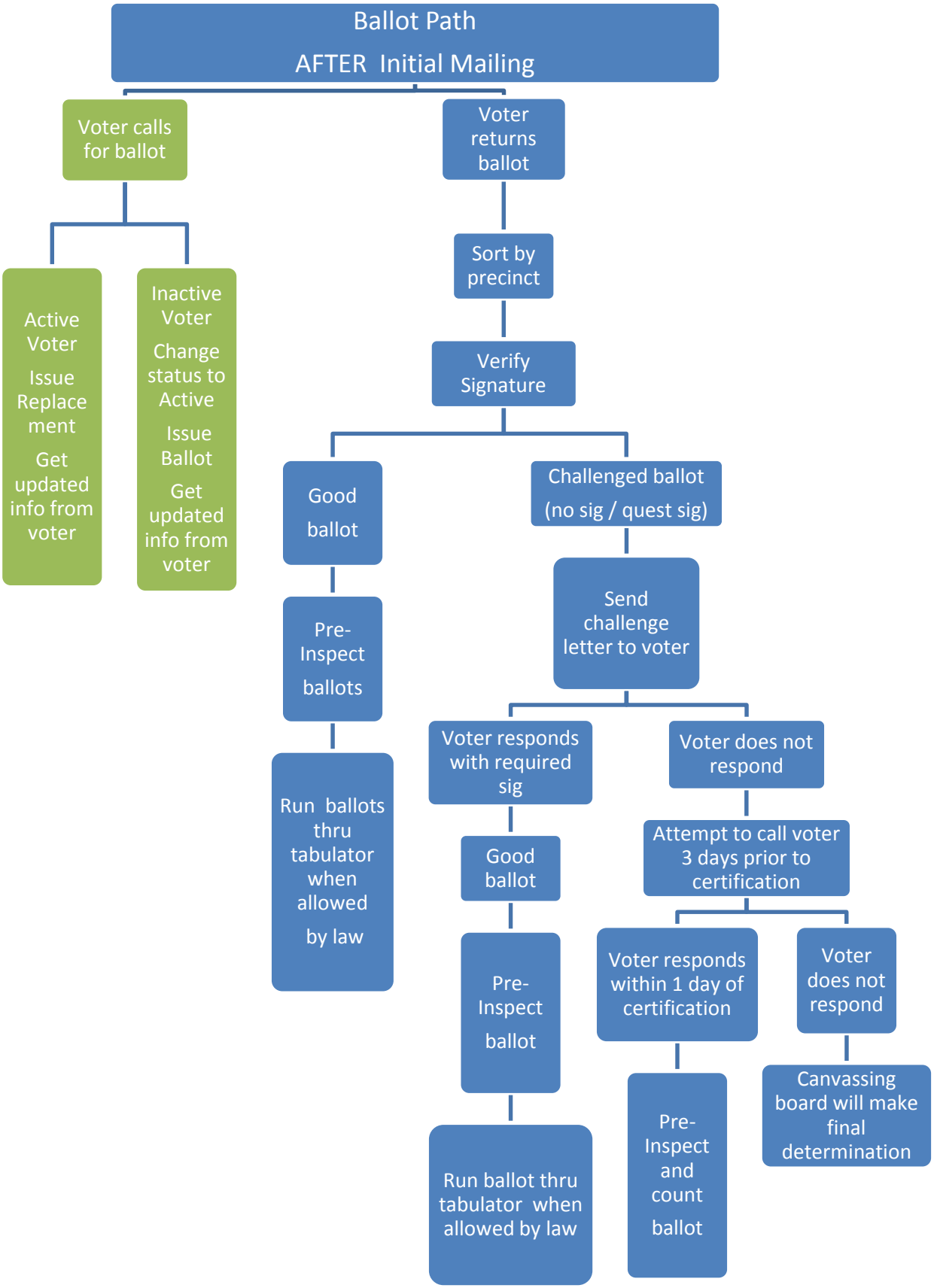
Final Processing: Ballots are scanned by precinct. Throughout the process, the accumulating totals on the 650 Scanner (ballot tabulator) are backed up to a zip disk. Once ballots are scanned, they are kept together by precinct and placed in a secure location.

Tabulation: This can be done no earlier than 8:00 p.m. election night. This is what will produce the results in a readable format (i.e., reports)

Storing Counted Ballots:
Tabulated ballots remain in a secure location from the time they are scanned up to five (5) days after certification. If it is necessary to access the tabulated ballots during canvassing and prior to certification, two auditor's staff will fill out the seal logs using red ink indicating the reason for accessing those ballots.

Ballot Reconciliation:
Ballot totals are reconciled after each ballot count and verified during canvassing. Staff must verify number of ballots returned equals the number of persons receiving credit. The Ballot Reconciliation Report becomes part of the Official Canvass for all Primary and General Elections to be submitted to the Office of the Secretary of State.

Ballot Retention:
All ballots will be referenced by the county record manager and destroyed no earlier than 60 days after certification for a non-federal election and 22 months after certification for a federal election.

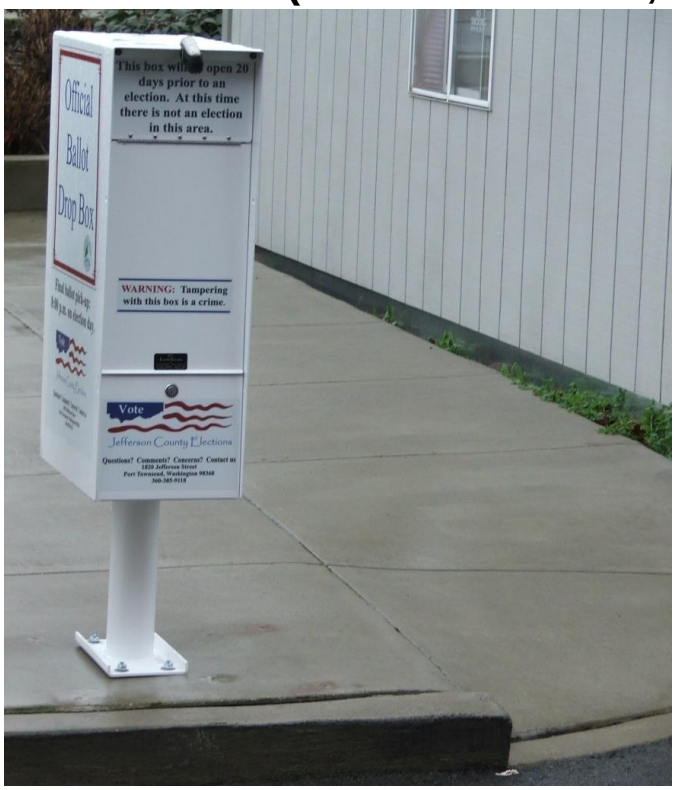

Ballot Path
AFTER Initial Mailing
Voter calls for ballot
Voter returns ballot
Active Voter
Issue Replace ment
Get updated info from voter
Inactive Voter
Change status to Active
Issue Ballot
Get updated info from voter
Sort by precinct
Verify Signature
Good ballot
Challenged ballot
(no sig / quest sig)
Pre-Inspect ballots
Send challenge letter to voter
Run ballots thru tabulator when allowed by law
Voter responds with required sig
Voter does not respond
Good ballot
Attempt to call voter 3 days prior to certification
Pre-Inspect ballot
Voter responds within 1 day of certification
Voter does not respond
Run ballot thru tabulator when allowed by law
Pre-Inspect and count ballot
Canvassing board will make final determination

Ballot Tabulator (650)

Accessible Voting Unit (AutoMARK)

Ballot Drop Box at County Library
(620 Cedar Ave, Port Hadlock)

Ballot Drop Box behind County Courthouse (1820 Jefferson St, PT)



Questions / Notes