
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 6363

State of Washington

56th Legislature

2000 Regular Session

By Senate Committee on State & Local Government (originally sponsored by Senators Gardner, Patterson, McCaslin, Winsley and Costa)

Read first time 02/04/2000.

1 AN ACT Relating to ballots cast by mail; amending RCW 29.36.010,
2 29.36.013, 29.36.170, 29.36.030, 29.36.035, 29.36.045, 29.36.060,
3 29.36.070, 29.36.075, 29.36.097, 29.36.100, 29.36.150, 29.36.160,
4 29.36.121, 29.36.124, 29.36.126, 29.36.130, 29.04.055, and 29.62.090;
5 reenacting and amending RCW 29.36.120; adding new sections to chapter
6 29.36 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 29.51 RCW; adding a new
7 chapter to Title 29 RCW; creating a new section; recodifying RCW
8 29.36.010, 29.36.013, 29.36.170, 29.36.030, 29.36.035, 29.36.045,
9 29.36.060, 29.36.070, 29.36.075, 29.36.097, 29.36.100, 29.36.150,
10 29.36.160, 29.36.120, 29.36.121, 29.36.124, 29.36.126, 29.36.130, and
11 29.36.050; repealing RCW 29.36.122 and 29.36.139; and prescribing
12 penalties.

13 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

14

PART I

15

ABSENTEE VOTING

16 **Sec. 1.** RCW 29.36.010 and 1991 c 81 s 29 are each amended to read
17 as follows:

1 ABSENTEE BALLOT VOTING. Any registered voter of the state or any
2 out-of-state voter, overseas voter, or service voter may vote by
3 absentee ballot in any general election, special election, or primary
4 in the manner provided in this chapter. Out-of-state voters, overseas
5 voters, and service voters are authorized to cast the same ballots,
6 including those for special elections, as a registered voter of the
7 state would receive under this chapter.

8 ~~((1) Except as provided in subsections (2) and (3) of this~~
9 ~~section, in RCW 29.36.013, and in RCW 29.36.170, a registered voter or~~
10 ~~elector desiring to cast an absentee ballot must request the absentee~~
11 ~~ballot from his or her county auditor no earlier than forty five days~~
12 ~~nor later than the day before any election or primary. Except as~~
13 ~~provided in subsection (3) of this section and in RCW 29.36.170, the~~
14 ~~request may be made orally in person, by telephone, or in writing. An~~
15 ~~application or request for an absentee ballot made under the authority~~
16 ~~of any federal statute or regulation shall be considered and given the~~
17 ~~same effect as a request for an absentee ballot under this chapter.~~

18 ~~(2) For any registered voter, a request for an absentee ballot for~~
19 ~~a primary shall be honored as a request for an absentee ballot for the~~
20 ~~following general election if the voter so indicates in his or her~~
21 ~~request. For any out of state voter, overseas voter, or service voter,~~
22 ~~a request for an absentee ballot for a primary election shall also be~~
23 ~~honored as a request for an absentee ballot for the following general~~
24 ~~election.~~

25 ~~(3) A voter admitted to a hospital no earlier than five days before~~
26 ~~a primary or election and confined to the hospital on election day may~~
27 ~~apply by messenger for an absentee ballot on the day of the primary or~~
28 ~~election if a signed statement from the hospital administrator, or~~
29 ~~designee, verifying the voter's date of admission and status as a~~
30 ~~patient in the hospital on the day of the primary or election is~~
31 ~~attached to the voter's written application for an absentee ballot.~~

32 ~~(4) In a voter's request for an absentee ballot, the voter shall~~
33 ~~state the address to which the absentee ballot should be sent. A~~
34 ~~request for an absentee ballot from an out of state voter, overseas~~
35 ~~voter, or service voter shall state the address of that elector's last~~
36 ~~residence for voting purposes in the state of Washington and either a~~
37 ~~written application or the oath on the return envelope shall include a~~
38 ~~declaration of the other qualifications of the applicant as an elector~~
39 ~~of this state. A request for an absentee ballot from any other voter~~

1 shall state the address at which that voter is currently registered to
2 vote in the state of Washington or the county auditor shall verify such
3 information from the voter registration records of the county.

4 (5) A request for an absentee ballot from a registered voter who is
5 within this state shall be made directly to the auditor of the county
6 in which the voter is registered. An absentee ballot request from a
7 registered voter who is temporarily outside this state or from an out-
8 of-state voter, overseas voter, or service voter may be made either to
9 the appropriate county auditor or to the secretary of state, who shall
10 promptly forward the request to the appropriate county auditor. No
11 person, organization, or association may distribute absentee ballot
12 applications within this state that contain any return address other
13 than that of the appropriate county auditor.

14 (6) A person may request an absentee ballot for use by the person
15 as a registered voter and may request an absentee ballot on behalf of
16 any member of that person's immediate family who is a registered voter
17 for use by the family member. As a means of ensuring that a person who
18 requests an absentee ballot is requesting the ballot for only that
19 person or a member of the person's immediate family, the secretary of
20 state shall adopt rules prescribing the circumstances under which an
21 auditor: May require a person who requests an absentee ballot to
22 identify the date of birth of the voter for whom the ballot is
23 requested; and may deny a request which is not accompanied by this
24 information.))

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 29.36 RCW
26 to read as follows:

27 REQUEST FOR SINGLE ABSENTEE BALLOT. (1) Except as otherwise
28 provided by law, a registered voter or out-of-state voter, overseas
29 voter, or service voter desiring to cast an absentee ballot at a single
30 election or primary must request the absentee ballot from his or her
31 county auditor no earlier than ninety days nor later than the day of
32 the election or primary at which the person seeks to vote. Except as
33 otherwise provided by law, the request may be made orally in person, by
34 telephone, electronically, or in writing. An application or request
35 for an absentee ballot made under the authority of a federal statute or
36 regulation will be considered and given the same effect as a request
37 for an absentee ballot under this chapter.

1 (2) A voter requesting an absentee ballot for a primary may also
2 request an absentee ballot for the following general election. A
3 request by an out-of-state voter, overseas voter, or service voter for
4 an absentee ballot for a primary election will be considered as a
5 request for an absentee ballot for the following general election.

6 (3) In requesting an absentee ballot, the voter shall state the
7 address to which the absentee ballot should be sent. A request for an
8 absentee ballot from an out-of-state voter, overseas voter, or service
9 voter must include the address of the last residence in the state of
10 Washington and either a written application or the oath on the return
11 envelope must include a declaration of the other qualifications of the
12 applicant as an elector of this state. A request for an absentee
13 ballot from any other voter must state the address at which that voter
14 is currently registered to vote in the state of Washington or the
15 county auditor shall verify that information from the voter
16 registration records of the county.

17 (4) A request for an absentee ballot from a registered voter who is
18 within this state must be made directly to the auditor of the county in
19 which the voter is registered. An absentee ballot request from a
20 registered voter who is temporarily outside this state or from an out-
21 of-state voter, overseas voter, or service voter may be made either to
22 the appropriate county auditor or to the secretary of state, who shall
23 promptly forward the request to the appropriate county auditor. No
24 person, organization, or association may distribute absentee ballot
25 applications within this state that contain a return address other than
26 that of the appropriate county auditor.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 29.36 RCW
28 to read as follows:

29 REQUESTING ABSENTEE BALLOT FOR FAMILY MEMBER. A registered voter
30 may request an absentee ballot on behalf of and for use by a member of
31 his or her immediate family who is also a registered voter. As a means
32 of ensuring that a person who requests an absentee ballot is requesting
33 the ballot for only that person or a member of the person's immediate
34 family, the secretary of state shall adopt rules prescribing the
35 circumstances under which an auditor may require a person who requests
36 an absentee ballot to identify the date of birth of the voter for whom
37 the ballot is requested and under what circumstances the auditor may
38 deny a request that is not accompanied by this information.

1 **Sec. 4.** RCW 29.36.013 and 1999 c 298 s 12 are each amended to read
2 as follows:

3 REQUEST FOR ONGOING ABSENTEE VOTER STATUS. Any registered voter
4 may apply, in writing, for status as an ongoing absentee voter. Each
5 qualified applicant shall automatically receive an absentee ballot for
6 each ensuing election or primary for which ~~((he or she))~~ the voter is
7 entitled to vote and need not submit a separate request for each
8 election. Ballots received from ongoing absentee voters shall be
9 validated, processed, and tabulated in the same manner as other
10 absentee ballots.

11 Status as an ongoing absentee voter shall be terminated upon any of
12 the following events:

- 13 (1) The written request of the voter;
- 14 (2) The death or disqualification of the voter;
- 15 (3) The cancellation of the voter's registration record;
- 16 (4) The return of an ongoing absentee ballot as undeliverable; or
- 17 (5) Upon placing a voter on inactive status under RCW 29.10.071.

18 **Sec. 5.** RCW 29.36.170 and 1991 c 81 s 35 are each amended to read
19 as follows:

20 SPECIAL ABSENTEE BALLOT. (1) As provided in this section, county
21 auditors shall provide special absentee ballots to be used for state
22 primary or state general elections. An auditor shall provide a special
23 absentee ballot ~~((shall))~~ only ~~((be provided))~~ to a registered voter
24 who completes an application stating that(~~+~~

25 ~~(a) The voter believes that she or he will be residing or stationed~~
26 ~~or working outside the continental United States; and~~

27 ~~(b) The voter believes that))~~ she or he will be unable to vote and
28 return a regular absentee ballot by normal mail delivery within the
29 period provided for regular absentee ballots.

30 The application for a special absentee ballot may not be filed
31 earlier than ninety days before the applicable state primary or general
32 election. The special absentee ballot ~~((shall))~~ will list the offices
33 and measures, if known, scheduled to appear on the state primary or
34 general election ballot. The voter may use the special absentee ballot
35 to write in the name of any eligible candidate for each office and vote
36 on any measure.

37 (2) With any special absentee ballot issued under this section, the
38 county auditor shall include a listing of any candidates who have filed

1 before the time of the application for offices that will appear on the
2 ballot at that primary or election and a list of any issues that have
3 been referred to the ballot before the time of the application.

4 (3) Write-in votes on special absentee ballots (~~((shall))~~) must be
5 counted in the same manner provided by law for the counting of other
6 write-in votes. The county auditor shall process and canvass the
7 special absentee ballots provided under this section in the same manner
8 as other absentee ballots under chapters 29.36 and 29.62 RCW.

9 (4) A voter who requests a special absentee ballot under this
10 section may also request an absentee ballot under (~~(RCW 29.36.010)~~)
11 section 2(4) of this act. If the regular absentee ballot is properly
12 voted and returned, the special absentee ballot (~~((shall be deemed))~~) is
13 void, and the county auditor shall reject it in whole when special
14 absentee ballots are canvassed.

15 **Sec. 6.** RCW 29.36.030 and 1991 c 81 s 31 are each amended to read
16 as follows:

17 ISSUANCE OF ABSENTEE BALLOT. (1) The county auditor shall issue an
18 absentee ballot for the primary or election for which it was requested,
19 or for the next occurring primary or election when ongoing absentee
20 status has been requested if the information contained in a request for
21 an absentee ballot or ongoing absentee status received by the county
22 auditor is complete and correct and the applicant is qualified to vote
23 under federal or state law(~~(, the county auditor shall issue an~~
24 ~~absentee ballot for the primary or election for which the absentee~~
25 ~~ballot was requested))~~). Otherwise, the county auditor shall notify the
26 applicant of the reason or reasons why the request cannot be accepted.
27 Whenever two or more candidates have filed for the position of precinct
28 committee officer for the same party in the same precinct at a general
29 election held in an even-numbered year, the contest for that position
30 must be presented to absentee voters from that precinct by either
31 including the contest on the regular absentee ballot or a separate
32 absentee ballot. The ballot must provide space designated for writing
33 in the name of additional candidates.

34 (~~(At each general election in an even-numbered year, each absentee~~
35 ~~voter shall also be given a separate ballot containing the names of the~~
36 ~~candidates that have filed for the office of precinct committee officer~~
37 ~~unless fewer than two candidates have filed for the same political~~

1 party in the absentee voter's precinct. The ballot shall provide space
2 for writing in the name of additional candidates.

3 When mailing an absentee ballot to a registered voter temporarily
4 outside the state or to an out-of-state voter, overseas voter, or
5 service voter, the county auditor shall send a)) (2) A registered voter
6 may obtain a replacement ballot if the ballot is destroyed, spoiled,
7 lost, or not received by the voter. The voter may obtain the ballot by
8 telephone request, by mail, electronically, or in person. The county
9 auditor shall keep a record of each replacement ballot provided under
10 this subsection.

11 (3) A copy of the state voters' and candidates' pamphlet must be
12 sent to registered voters temporarily outside the state, out-of-state
13 voters, overseas voters, and service voters along with the absentee
14 ballot if such a pamphlet has been prepared for the primary or
15 election. The county auditor shall mail all absentee ballots and
16 related material to voters outside the territorial limits of the United
17 States and the District of Columbia under 39 U.S.C. 3406.

18 **Sec. 7.** RCW 29.36.035 and 1984 c 27 s 2 are each amended to read
19 as follows:

20 DELIVERY OF ABSENTEE BALLOT. The delivery of an absentee ballot
21 for any primary or election shall be subject to the following
22 qualifications:

23 (1) Only the registered voter((, himself)) personally, or a member
24 of ((his)) the registered voter's immediate family may pick up an
25 absentee ballot for the voter at the office of the issuing officer
26 unless the voter is ((hospitalized)) a resident of a health care
27 facility, as defined by RCW 70.37.020(3), on election day and applies
28 by messenger ((in accordance with RCW 29.36.010)) for an absentee
29 ballot ((on the day of the primary or election)). In this latter case,
30 the messenger may pick up the ((hospitalized)) voter's absentee ballot.

31 (2) Except as noted in subsection (1) ((above)) of this section,
32 the issuing officer shall mail or deliver the absentee ballot directly
33 to each applicant.

34 ((3) No absentee ballot shall be issued on the day of the primary
35 or election concerned, except as provided by RCW 29.36.010, for a voter
36 confined to a hospital on the day of a primary or election.))

1 **Sec. 8.** RCW 29.36.045 and 1987 c 346 s 12 are each amended to read
2 as follows:

3 ENVELOPES AND INSTRUCTIONS. The county auditor shall send each
4 absentee voter a ballot, a security envelope in which to seal the
5 ballot after voting, a larger envelope in which to return the security
6 envelope, and instructions on how to mark the ballot and how to return
7 it to the county auditor. The larger return envelope (~~shall~~) must
8 contain a declaration by the absentee voter reciting his or her
9 qualifications and stating that he or she has not voted in any other
10 jurisdiction at this election, together with a summary of the penalties
11 for any violation of any of the provisions of this chapter. The return
12 envelope (~~shall~~) must provide space for the voter to indicate the
13 date on which the ballot was voted and for the voter to sign the oath.
14 A summary of the applicable penalty provisions of this chapter
15 (~~shall~~) must be printed on the return envelope immediately adjacent
16 to the space for the voter's signature. The signature of the voter on
17 the return envelope (~~shall~~) must affirm and attest to the statements
18 regarding the qualifications of that voter and to the validity of the
19 ballot. For out-of-state voters, overseas voters, and service voters,
20 the signed declaration on the return envelope constitutes the
21 equivalent of a voter registration for the election or primary for
22 which the ballot has been issued. The voter (~~shall~~) must be
23 instructed to either return the ballot to the county auditor by whom it
24 was issued or attach sufficient first class postage, if applicable, and
25 mail the ballot to the appropriate county auditor no later than the day
26 of the election or primary for which the ballot was issued.

27 If the county auditor chooses to forward absentee ballots, he or
28 she must include with the ballot a clear explanation of the
29 qualifications necessary to vote in that election and must also advise
30 a voter with questions about his or her eligibility to contact the
31 county auditor. This explanation may be provided on the ballot
32 envelope, on an enclosed insert, or printed directly on the ballot
33 itself. If the information is not included, the envelope must clearly
34 indicate that the ballot is not to be forwarded and that return postage
35 is guaranteed.

36 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 9.** A new section is added to chapter 29.36 RCW
37 to read as follows:

1 RULES--OBSERVERS. (1) Ballots must be processed in the manner
2 provided by administrative rule adopted by the secretary of state.

3 (2) County auditors must request that observers be appointed by the
4 major political parties and be present during the processing of
5 absentee ballots. The absence of the observers will not prevent the
6 processing of absentee ballots if the county auditor has requested
7 their presence.

8 **Sec. 10.** RCW 29.36.060 and 1991 c 81 s 32 are each amended to read
9 as follows:

10 PROCESSING ABSENTEE BALLOTS. (1) The opening and subsequent
11 processing of return envelopes for any primary or election may begin on
12 or after the tenth day (~~(prior to such)~~) before the primary or
13 election. The opening of the security envelopes and tabulation of
14 absentee ballots (~~(shall)~~) must not commence until after 8:00
15 (~~(o'clock)~~) p.m. on the day of the primary or election.

16 (2) After opening the return envelopes, the county canvassing board
17 shall place all of the ballot envelopes in containers that can be
18 secured with numbered seals. These sealed containers (~~(shall)~~) must be
19 stored in a secure location until after 8:00 (~~(o'clock)~~) p.m. of the
20 day of the primary or election. Absentee ballots that are to be
21 tabulated on an electronic vote tallying system may be taken from the
22 inner envelopes and all the normal procedural steps may be performed to
23 prepare these ballots for tabulation before sealing the containers.

24 (3) Before opening a returned absentee ballot, the canvassing
25 board, or its designated representatives, shall examine the postmark,
26 statement, and signature on ((each)) the return envelope ((containing))
27 that contains the security envelope and absentee ballot. They shall
28 verify that the voter's signature on the return envelope is the same as
29 the signature of that voter in the registration files ((for that
30 voter)) of the county. For ((absentee)) registered voters ((other than
31 out-of-state voters, overseas voters, and service voters, if the
32 postmark is illegible)) casting absentee ballots, the date on the
33 return envelope to which the voter ((attests shall)) has attested
34 determines the validity, as to the time of voting((, of)) for that
35 absentee ballot ((under this chapter)) if the postmark is missing or is
36 illegible. For out-of-state voters, overseas voters, and service
37 voters, the date on the return envelope to which the voter has attested
38 determines the validity as to the time of voting for that absentee

1 ballot. For any absentee (~~voter~~) ballot, a variation between the
2 signature of the voter on the return envelope and the signature of that
3 voter in the registration files due to the substitution of initials or
4 the use of common nicknames is permitted so long as the surname and
5 handwriting are clearly the same.

6 **Sec. 11.** RCW 29.36.070 and 1990 c 262 s 2 are each amended to read
7 as follows:

8 COUNTING ABSENTEE BALLOTS. The absentee ballots (~~shall be grouped~~
9 ~~and counted by~~) must be reported at a minimum on a congressional and
10 legislative district ((without regard to)) basis. Absentee ballots may
11 be counted by congressional or legislative basis or by individual
12 precinct, except as required under RCW 29.62.090(2).

13 These returns (~~shall~~) must be added to the total of the votes
14 cast at the polling places.

15 **Sec. 12.** RCW 29.36.075 and 1988 c 181 s 3 are each amended to read
16 as follows:

17 CREDIT FOR VOTING. (~~In counties that do not tabulate absentee~~
18 ~~ballots on electronic vote tallying systems, canvassing boards may not~~
19 ~~tabulate or record votes cast by absentee ballots on any uncontested~~
20 ~~office except write in votes for candidates for the office of precinct~~
21 ~~committeeperson who have filed valid declarations of candidacy under~~
22 ~~RCW 29.04.180. "Uncontested office" means an office where only one~~
23 ~~candidate has filed a valid declaration of candidacy either during the~~
24 ~~regular filing period or as a write in candidate under RCW 29.04.180.))~~

25 Each registered voter casting an absentee ballot (~~shall~~) will be
26 credited with voting on his or her voter registration record.
27 Absentee ballots (~~shall~~) must be retained for the same length of time
28 and in the same manner as ballots cast at the precinct polling places.

29 **Sec. 13.** RCW 29.36.097 and 1991 c 81 s 33 are each amended to read
30 as follows:

31 ABSENTEE BALLOT RECORDS. Each county auditor shall maintain in his
32 or her office, open for public inspection and copying, a record of the
33 requests he or she has received for absentee ballots (~~under this~~
34 ~~chapter~~) and a listing of all ongoing absentee voters.

35 The information from the requests (~~shall~~) must be recorded and
36 lists of this information (~~shall~~) must be available no later than

1 (~~twenty-four hours~~) the next business day after their receipt. Lists
2 of ongoing absentee voters must be available at all times.

3 This information about absentee voters (~~shall~~) requesting ballots
4 will be available according to the date of the requests and by
5 legislative district. It (~~shall~~) must include the name of each
6 applicant, the address and precinct in which the voter maintains a
7 voting residence, the date on which an absentee ballot was issued to
8 this voter, if applicable, the type of absentee ballot, and the address
9 to which the ballot was or is to be mailed, if applicable.

10 The auditor shall make copies of these records available to the
11 public in either paper or electronic format for the actual cost of
12 production or copying.

13 **Sec. 14.** RCW 29.36.100 and 1987 c 346 s 18 are each amended to
14 read as follows:

15 CHALLENGED ABSENTEE BALLOTS. The qualifications of any absentee
16 voter may be challenged at the time the signature on the return
17 envelope is verified and the ballot is processed by the canvassing
18 board. The board has the authority to determine the legality of any
19 absentee ballot challenged under this section. Challenged ballots must
20 be handled in accordance with chapter 29.10 RCW.

21 **Sec. 15.** RCW 29.36.150 and 1993 c 417 s 7 are each amended to read
22 as follows:

23 ~~OVERSEAS AND SERVICE VOTERS. ((The secretary of state shall adopt~~
24 ~~rules to:~~

25 ~~(1) Establish standards and procedures to prevent fraud and to~~
26 ~~facilitate the accurate processing and canvassing of absentee ballots~~
27 ~~and mail ballots;~~

28 ~~(2) Establish standards and procedures to guarantee the secrecy of~~
29 ~~absentee ballots and mail ballots;~~

30 ~~(3) Provide uniformity among the counties of the state in the~~
31 ~~conduct of absentee voting and mail ballot elections; and~~

32 ~~(4) Facilitate the operation of the provisions of this chapter~~
33 ~~regarding out-of-state voters, overseas voters, and service voters.))~~

34 The secretary of state shall produce and furnish envelopes and
35 instructions for out-of-state voters, overseas voters, and service
36 voters to the county auditors.

1 **Sec. 16.** RCW 29.36.160 and 1994 c 269 s 2 are each amended to read
2 as follows:

3 PENALTY. A person who willfully violates any provision of this
4 chapter regarding the assertion or declaration of qualifications to
5 receive or cast an absentee ballot(~~((7))~~) or unlawfully casts a vote by
6 absentee ballot(~~((7 or willfully violates any provision regarding the~~
7 ~~conduct of mail ballot primaries or elections under RCW 29.36.120~~
8 ~~through 29.36.139))~~) is guilty of a class C felony punishable under RCW
9 9A.20.021. Except as provided in chapter 29.85 RCW a person who
10 willfully violates any other provision of this chapter is guilty of a
11 misdemeanor.

12 **PART II**
13 **MAIL BALLOTS**

14 **Sec. 17.** RCW 29.36.120 and 1994 c 269 s 1 and 1994 c 57 s 48 are
15 each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

16 MAIL BALLOT PRECINCTS. (~~((1) At any primary or election, general~~
17 ~~or special,)) The county auditor may((7 in)) designate any precinct
18 having fewer than two hundred active registered voters at the time of
19 closing of voter registration as provided in RCW 29.07.160(~~((7 conduct~~
20 ~~the voting in that precinct by))~~) as a mail ballot precinct. (~~For any~~
21 ~~precinct having fewer than two hundred active registered voters where~~
22 ~~voting at a primary or a general election is conducted by mail ballot,~~
23 ~~the county auditor shall, not less than fifteen days prior to the date~~
24 ~~of that primary or general election, mail or deliver to each active and~~
25 ~~inactive registered voter within that precinct a notice that the voting~~
26 ~~in that precinct will be by mail ballot, an application form for a mail~~
27 ~~ballot, and a postage prepaid envelope, preaddressed to the issuing~~
28 ~~officer. A mail ballot shall be issued to each voter who returns a~~
29 ~~properly executed application to the county auditor no later than the~~
30 ~~day of that primary or general election. For all subsequent mail~~
31 ~~ballot elections in that precinct the application is valid so long as~~
32 ~~the voter remains active and qualified to vote.)) The county auditor
33 shall notify each registered voter by mail that for all future
34 primaries and elections the voting in his or her precinct will be by
35 mail ballot only. In determining the number of registered voters in a
36 precinct for the purposes of this section, persons who are ongoing
37 absentee voters under RCW 29.36.013 (as recodified by this act) shall~~~~

1 not be counted. Nothing in this section may be construed as altering
2 the vote tallying requirements of RCW 29.62.090.

3 ~~((At any nonpartisan special election not being held in conjunction
4 with a state primary or general election, the county, city, town, or
5 district requesting the election pursuant to RCW 29.13.010 or 29.13.020
6 may also request that the election be conducted by mail ballot. The
7 county auditor may honor the request or may determine that the election
8 is not to be conducted by mail ballot. The decision of the county
9 auditor in this regard is final.~~

10 ~~In no instance shall any special election be conducted by mail
11 ballot in any precinct with two hundred or more active registered
12 voters if candidates for partisan office are to be voted upon.~~

13 ~~For all special elections not being held in conjunction with a
14 state primary or state general election where voting is conducted by
15 mail ballot, the county auditor shall, not less than fifteen days prior
16 to the date of such election, mail or deliver to each active registered
17 voter a mail ballot and an envelope, preaddressed to the issuing
18 officer.))~~ As soon as ballots are available, the county auditor shall
19 mail or deliver a ballot and an envelope, preaddressed to the issuing
20 officer, to each active registered voter. The auditor shall send each
21 inactive voter either a ballot or an application to receive a ballot.
22 The auditor shall determine which of the two is to be sent. If the
23 inactive voter returns a voted ballot, the ballot shall be counted and
24 the voter's status restored to active. If the inactive voter completes
25 and returns an application, a ballot shall be sent and the voter's
26 status restored to active.

27 ~~((2) For a two year period beginning on June 9, 1994, and ending
28 two years after June 9, 1994, the county auditor may conduct the voting
29 in any precinct by mail for any primary or election, partisan or
30 nonpartisan, using the procedures set forth in RCW 29.36.120 through
31 29.36.139.))~~

32 If the precinct exceeds two hundred registered voters, or the
33 auditor determines to return to a polling place election environment,
34 the auditor shall notify each registered voter, by mail, of this and
35 shall provide the address of the polling place to be used.

36 **Sec. 18.** RCW 29.36.121 and 1994 c 57 s 49 are each amended to read
37 as follows:

1 MAIL BALLOT SPECIAL ELECTIONS. (~~(1)~~) At any nonpartisan special
2 election not being held in conjunction with a state primary or general
3 election, the county, city, town, or district requesting the election
4 pursuant to RCW 29.13.010 or 29.13.020 may also request that the
5 special election be conducted by mail ballot. The county auditor may
6 honor the request or may determine that the election is not to be
7 conducted by mail ballot. The decision of the county auditor in this
8 regard is final.

9 (~~(2)~~ In an odd numbered year, the county auditor may conduct by
10 mail ballot a primary or a special election concurrently with the
11 primary:

12 (a) For any office or ballot measure of a special purpose district
13 which is entirely within the county;

14 (b) For any office or ballot measure of a special purpose district
15 which lies in the county and one or more other counties if the auditor
16 first secures the concurrence of the county auditors of those other
17 counties to conduct the primary in this manner district wide; and

18 (c) For any ballot measure or nonpartisan office of a county, city,
19 or town if the auditor first secures the concurrence of the legislative
20 authority of the county, city, or town involved.

21 A primary in an odd numbered year may not be conducted by mail
22 ballot in any precinct with two hundred or more active registered
23 voters if a partisan office or state office or state ballot measure is
24 to be voted upon at that primary in the precinct.

25 (3)) For all special elections not being held in conjunction with
26 a state primary or state general election where voting is conducted by
27 mail ballot, the county auditor shall, not less than fifteen days
28 before the date of such election, mail or deliver to each registered
29 voter a mail ballot (~~and an envelope, preaddressed to the issuing~~
30 ~~officer. The county auditor shall notify an election jurisdiction for~~
31 ~~which a primary is to be held that the primary will be conducted by~~
32 ~~mail ballot)). The auditor shall handle inactive voters in the same
33 manner as inactive voters in mail ballot precincts.~~

34 (~~(4)~~ To the extent they are not inconsistent with subsections (1)
35 through (3) of this section, the laws governing the conduct of mail
36 ballot special elections apply to nonpartisan primaries conducted by
37 mail ballot.)

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 19.** ODD-YEAR PRIMARIES BY MAIL. In an odd-
2 numbered year, the county auditor may conduct a primary or a special
3 election by mail ballot concurrently with the primary:

4 (1) For an office or ballot measure of a special purpose district
5 that is entirely within the county;

6 (2) For an office or ballot measure of a special purpose district
7 that lies in the county and one or more other counties if the auditor
8 first secures the concurrence of the county auditors of those other
9 counties to conduct the primary in this manner district-wide; and

10 (3) For a ballot measure or nonpartisan office of a county, city,
11 or town if the auditor first secures the concurrence of the legislative
12 authority of the county, city, or town involved.

13 The county auditor shall notify an election jurisdiction for which
14 a primary is to be held that the primary will be conducted by mail
15 ballot.

16 A primary in an odd-numbered year may not be conducted by mail
17 ballot in a precinct with two hundred or more active registered voters
18 if a partisan office or state office or state ballot measure is to be
19 voted upon at that primary in the precinct.

20 To the extent they are not inconsistent with other provisions of
21 law, the laws governing the conduct of mail ballot special elections
22 apply to nonpartisan primaries conducted by mail ballot.

23 **Sec. 20.** RCW 29.36.124 and 1983 1st ex.s. c 71 s 3 are each
24 amended to read as follows:

25 DEPOSITING BALLOTS FOR MAIL BALLOT ELECTIONS. (1) If a county
26 auditor conducts an election by mail, the county auditor shall
27 designate (~~the county auditor's office or a central location in the~~
28 ~~district in which the election is conducted as the single place to~~
29 ~~obtain a replacement ballot. The county auditor also shall designate~~)
30 one or more places for the deposit of ballots not returned by mail.
31 The places designated under this section shall be open on the date of
32 the election for a period of thirteen hours, beginning at 7:00 a.m. and
33 ending at 8:00 p.m.

34 (2) A registered voter may obtain a replacement ballot as provided
35 in this subsection if the ballot is destroyed, (~~spoiled~~) damaged,
36 lost, or not received by the voter. (~~A registered voter seeking a~~
37 ~~replacement ballot shall sign a sworn statement that the ballot was~~
38 ~~destroyed, spoiled, lost, or not received and shall present the~~

1 ~~statement to the county auditor no later than the day of the election.~~
2 ~~Each spoiled ballot must be returned to the county auditor before a new~~
3 ~~one is issued.))~~ A voter may request a replacement mail ballot in
4 person, by mail, by telephone, or by other electronic transmission for
5 himself or herself and for any member of his or her immediate family.
6 The request must be received by the auditor before 8:00 p.m. on
7 election day. The county auditor shall keep a record of each
8 replacement ballot ((provided under this subsection)) issued, including
9 the date of the request. Replacement mail ballots may be counted in
10 the final tabulation of ballots only if the original ballot is not
11 received by the county auditor and the replacement ballot meets all
12 requirements for tabulation necessary for the tabulation of regular
13 mail ballots.

14 **Sec. 21.** RCW 29.36.126 and 1993 c 417 s 4 are each amended to read
15 as follows:

16 RETURN OF VOTED BALLOT BY VOTER. ((Upon receipt of the mail
17 ballot, the voter shall mark it, sign the return identification
18 envelope supplied with the ballot, and comply with the instructions
19 provided with the ballot. The voter may return the marked ballot to
20 the county auditor. The ballot must be returned)) The voter shall
21 return the ballot to the county auditor in the return identification
22 envelope. If mailed, a ballot must be postmarked not later than the
23 date of the primary or election. Otherwise, the ballot must be
24 deposited at the office of the county auditor or the designated place
25 of deposit not later than 8:00 p.m. on the date of the primary or
26 election.

27 **Sec. 22.** RCW 29.36.130 and 1993 c 417 s 5 are each amended to read
28 as follows:

29 BALLOT CONTENTS--COUNTING. All mail ballots authorized by RCW
30 29.36.120 or 29.36.121 ((shall)) (as recodified by this act) or section
31 19 of this act must contain the same offices, names of nominees or
32 candidates, and propositions to be voted upon, including precinct
33 offices, as if the ballot had been voted in person at the polling
34 place. Except as otherwise provided ((in this chapter)) by law, mail
35 ballots ((shall)) must be ((issued and canvassed)) treated in the same
36 manner as absentee ballots issued ((pursuant to)) at the request of the
37 voter. ((The county canvassing board, at the request of the county

1 auditor, may direct that mail ballots be counted on the day of the
2 election. If such count is made, it must be done in secrecy in the
3 presence of the canvassing board or their authorized representatives
4 and the results not revealed to any unauthorized person until 8:00 p.m.
5 or later if the auditor so directs.)) If electronic vote tallying
6 devices are used, political party observers ((shall be afforded)) must
7 be given the opportunity to be present, and a test of the equipment
8 must be performed as required by RCW 29.33.350 ((prior to the count
9 of)) before tabulating ballots. Political party observers may select
10 at random ballots to be counted manually as provided by RCW 29.54.025.
11 Any violation of the secrecy of ((such)) the count ((shall be)) is
12 subject to the same penalties as provided for in RCW 29.85.225.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 23.** PENALTY. A person who willfully violates
14 any provision of this chapter regarding the conduct of mail ballot
15 primaries or elections is guilty of a class C felony punishable under
16 RCW 9A.20.021.

17 **PART III**
18 **MISCELLANEOUS**

19 **Sec. 24.** RCW 29.04.055 and 1986 c 167 s 3 are each amended to read
20 as follows:

21 COMBINING OR DIVIDING PRECINCTS, ELECTION BOARDS. At any special
22 election, ((general or special,)) or at any primary, the county auditor
23 may combine, unite, or divide precincts and may combine or unite
24 election boards for the purpose of holding ((such)) the election or
25 primary. At any general election, the county auditor may combine or
26 unite election boards for the purpose of holding the election, but
27 shall not combine, unite, or divide precincts.

28 **Sec. 25.** RCW 29.62.090 and 1999 c 298 s 21 are each amended to
29 read as follows:

30 ABSTRACT BY ELECTION OFFICER--TRANSMITTAL TO SECRETARY OF STATE.
31 (1) Immediately after the official results of a state primary or
32 general election in a county are ascertained, the county auditor or
33 other election officer shall make an abstract of the number of
34 registered voters in each precinct and of all the votes cast in the
35 county at such state primary or general election for and against state

1 measures and for each candidate for federal, state, and legislative
2 office or for any other office which the secretary of state is required
3 by law to canvass. The abstract shall be entered on blanks furnished
4 by the secretary of state or on compatible computer printouts approved
5 by the secretary of state, and transmitted to the secretary of state no
6 later than the next business day following the certification by the
7 county canvassing board.

8 (2) After each general election, the county auditor or other
9 election officer shall provide to the secretary of state a report of
10 the number of absentee ballots cast in each precinct for and against
11 state measures and for each candidate for federal, state, and
12 legislative office or for any other office which the secretary of state
13 is required by law to canvass. The report may be included in the
14 abstract required by this section or may be transmitted to the
15 secretary of state separately(~~(, but in no event later than March 31 of~~
16 ~~the year following the election)~~). Absentee ballot results may be
17 incorporated into votes cast at the polls for each precinct or may be
18 reported separately on a precinct-by-precinct basis.

19 (3) If absentee ballot results are not incorporated into votes cast
20 at the polls, the county auditor or other election official may
21 aggregate results from more than one precinct if the auditor, pursuant
22 to rules adopted by the secretary of state, finds that reporting a
23 single precinct's absentee ballot results would jeopardize the secrecy
24 of a person's ballot. To the extent practicable, precincts for which
25 absentee results are aggregated shall be contiguous.

26 **PART IV**
27 **TECHNICAL**

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 26.** The following acts or parts of acts are
29 each repealed:

30 (1) RCW 29.36.122 (Special election by mail--Sending ballots to
31 voters) and 1994 c 57 s 50, 1993 c 417 s 3, & 1983 1st ex.s. c 71 s 2;
32 and

33 (2) RCW 29.36.139 (Mail ballots--Counting requirements--Challenge)
34 and 1993 c 417 s 6 & 1983 1st ex.s. c 71 s 6.

35 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 27.** (1) RCW 29.36.010, 29.36.013, 29.36.170,
36 29.36.030, 29.36.035, 29.36.045, 29.36.060, 29.36.070, 29.36.075,

1 29.36.097, 29.36.100, 29.36.150, and 29.36.160 are each recodified
2 within chapter 29.36 RCW, in the order shown in this act, along with
3 sections 2, 3, and 9 of this act.

4 (2) RCW 29.36.120, 29.36.121, 29.36.124, 29.36.126, and 29.36.130
5 are each recodified, and, along with sections 19 and 23 of this act,
6 constitute a new chapter in Title 29 RCW.

7 (3) RCW 29.36.050 is recodified as a new section in chapter 29.51
8 RCW.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 28.** Section captions and part headings used in
10 this act are not part of the law.

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