

RCW 29A.40.110 Processing incoming ballots. (Effective until January 1, 2029.) (1) The opening and subsequent processing of return envelopes for any primary or election may begin upon receipt. The tabulation of absentee ballots must not commence until after 8:00 p.m. on the day of the primary or election.

(2) All received return envelopes must be placed in secure locations from the time of delivery to the county auditor until their subsequent opening. After opening the return envelopes, the county canvassing board shall place all of the ballots in secure storage until processing. Ballots may be taken from the inner envelopes and all the normal procedural steps may be performed to prepare these ballots for tabulation.

(3) The canvassing board, or its designated representatives, shall examine the postmark on the return envelope and signature on the declaration before processing the ballot. The ballot must either be received no later than 8:00 p.m. on the day of the primary or election, or must be postmarked no later than the day of the primary or election. All personnel assigned to verify signatures must receive training on statewide standards for signature verification. The county auditor shall publish on its website the names of all canvassing board members who received training on statewide standards for signature verification and the dates on which the training was completed. Personnel shall verify that the voter's signature on the ballot declaration is the same as the signature of that voter in the registration files of the county. Verification may be conducted by an automated verification system approved by the secretary of state. A variation between the signature of the voter on the ballot declaration and the signature of that voter in the registration files due to the substitution of initials or the use of common nicknames is permitted so long as the surname and handwriting are clearly the same. A county that is participating in the alternative verification options pilot project under RCW 29A.40.111 may also verify a voter's ballot using an alternative verification method approved by the office of the secretary of state.

(4) If the postmark is missing or illegible, the date on the ballot declaration to which the voter has attested determines the validity, as to the time of voting, for that ballot. For overseas voters and service voters, the date on the declaration to which the voter has attested determines the validity, as to the time of voting, for that ballot. Any overseas voter or service voter may return the signed declaration and voted ballot by fax or email by 8:00 p.m. on the day of the primary or election, and the county auditor must use established procedures to maintain the secrecy of the ballot. [2024 c 269 s 8; 2024 c 138 s 2. Prior: 2011 c 349 s 18; 2011 c 348 s 4; 2011 c 10 s 41; 2009 c 369 s 40; prior: 2006 c 207 s 4; 2006 c 206 s 6; 2005 c 243 s 5; 2003 c 111 s 1011; prior: 2001 c 241 s 10; 1991 c 81 s 32; 1987 c 346 s 14; 1977 ex.s. c 361 s 78; 1973 c 140 s 1; 1965 c 9 s 29.36.060; prior: 1963 ex.s. c 23 s 5; 1955 c 167 s 7; 1955 c 50 s 2; prior: 1933 ex.s. c 41 s 5, part; 1921 c 143 s 6, part; 1917 c 159 s 4, part; 1915 c 189 s 4, part; RRS s 5285, part. Formerly RCW 29.36.310, 29.36.060.]

Reviser's note: This section was amended by 2024 c 138 s 2 and by 2024 c 269 s 8, each without reference to the other. Both amendments are incorporated in the publication of this section under RCW 1.12.025(2). For rule of construction, see RCW 1.12.025(1).

Expiration date—2024 c 138: See note following RCW 29A.40.111.

Effective date—2011 c 349: See note following RCW 29A.04.255.

Notice to registered poll voters—Elections by mail—2011 c 10:
See note following RCW 29A.04.008.

Effective date—1991 c 81: See note following RCW 29A.84.540.

Legislative intent—Effective date—1987 c 346: See notes
following RCW 29A.40.010.

Effective date—Severability—1977 ex.s. c 361: See notes
following RCW 29A.16.040.

County canvassing board, meeting to process ballots, canvass returns:
RCW 29A.60.160.

Unsigned ballot declarations: RCW 29A.60.165.

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