

**Chapter 54.08 RCW**  
**FORMATION—DISSOLUTION—ELECTIONS**

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**RCW 54.08.001 Actions subject to review by boundary review board.** Actions taken under chapter 54.08 RCW may be subject to potential review by a boundary review board under chapter 36.93 RCW. [1989 c 84 s 47.]

**RCW 54.08.010 Districts including entire county or less—Procedure.** At any general election held in an even-numbered year, the county legislative authority of any county in this state may, or, on petition of ten percent of the qualified electors of the county based on the total vote cast in the last general county election held in an even-numbered year, shall, by resolution, submit to the voters of the county the proposition of creating a public utility district which shall be coextensive with the limits of the county as now or hereafter established. A form of petition for the creation of a public utility district shall be submitted to the county auditor within ten months prior to the election at which the proposition is to be submitted to the voters. Petitions shall be filed with the county auditor not less than four months before the election and the county auditor shall within thirty days examine the signatures thereof and certify to the sufficiency or insufficiency thereof. If the petition be found to be insufficient, it shall be returned to the persons filing the same, who may amend or add names thereto for ten days, when the same shall be returned to the county auditor, who shall have an additional fifteen days to examine the same and attach his or her certificate thereto. No person having signed the petition shall be allowed to withdraw his or her name therefrom after the filing of the same with the county auditor: PROVIDED, That each signature shall be dated and that no signature dated prior to the date on which the form of petition was submitted to the county auditor shall be valid. Whenever the petition shall be certified to as sufficient, the county auditor shall forthwith transmit the same, together with his or her certificate of sufficiency attached thereto, to the county legislative authority which shall submit the proposition to the voters of the county at the next general election in an even-numbered year according to RCW 29A.04.330. The notice of the election shall state the boundaries of the proposed public utility district and the object of such election, and shall in other respects conform to the requirements of the general laws of the state of Washington, governing the time and manner of holding elections. In submitting the question to the voters for their

approval or rejection, the proposition shall be expressed on the ballot substantially in the following terms:

Public Utility District No. . . . . YES   
Public Utility District No. . . . . NO

Any petition for the formation of a public utility district may describe a less area than the entire county in which the petition is filed, the boundaries of which shall follow the then existing precinct boundaries and not divide any voting precinct; and in the event that such a petition is filed the county legislative authority shall fix a date for a hearing on such petition, and shall publish the petition, without the signatures thereto appended, for two weeks prior to the date of the hearing, together with a notice stating the time of the meeting when the petition will be heard. The publication, and all other publications required by chapter 1, Laws of 1931, shall be in a newspaper of general circulation in the county in which the district is situated. The hearing on the petition may be adjourned from time to time, not exceeding four weeks in all. If upon the final hearing the county legislative authority shall find that any lands have been unjustly or improperly included within the proposed public utility district and will not be benefited by inclusion therein, it shall change and fix the boundary lines in such manner as it shall deem reasonable and just and conducive to the public welfare and convenience, and make and enter an order establishing and defining the boundary lines of the proposed public utility district: PROVIDED, That no lands shall be included within the boundaries so fixed lying outside the boundaries described in the petition, except upon the written request of the owners of those lands. Thereafter the same procedure shall be followed as prescribed in this chapter for the formation of a public utility district including an entire county, except that the petition and election shall be confined solely to the lesser public utility district.

No public utility district created after September 1, 1979, shall include any other public utility district within its boundaries: PROVIDED, That this paragraph shall not alter, amend, or modify provisions of chapter 54.32 RCW. [2010 c 8 s 17004; 2006 c 344 s 36; 1985 c 469 s 55; 1979 ex.s. c 240 s 1; 1977 c 53 s 1; 1931 c 1 s 3; RRS s 11607. Formerly RCW 54.08.010 and 54.08.020.]

**Effective date—2006 c 344 ss 1-16 and 18-40:** See note following RCW 29A.04.311.

*Elections: Title 29A RCW.*

**RCW 54.08.041 Formation election expenses.** All expenses of elections for the formation of such public utility districts shall be paid by the county holding such election, and such expenditure is hereby declared to be for a county purpose, and the money paid out for such purpose shall be repaid to such county by the public utility district, if formed. [1969 c 106 s 2.]

**Construction—1969 c 106:** "The rule of strict construction shall have no application to this act. The act shall be liberally construed, in order to carry out the purposes and objectives for which this act is intended." [1969 c 106 s 8.]

**Severability—1969 c 106:** "If any provision of this act, or its application to any person or circumstance, is held invalid, the remainder of this act, or the application to other persons or circumstances, is not affected." [1969 c 106 s 9.]

**RCW 54.08.050 Validity of district, questioning of.** The existence of any public utility district now or hereafter formed under chapter 1, Laws of 1931, cannot hereafter be legally questioned by any person except the state of Washington in an appropriate court action brought within six months from the date that the county election board shall have canvassed the returns of the election held on the proposition of creating such district. If the existence of a district is not challenged within the period above specified, by the filing and service of petition or complaint in the action aforesaid, the state of Washington thereafter shall be barred forever from questioning the legal existence and validity of such district by reason of any defect in the organization thereof, and the same shall be deemed duly and regularly organized under the laws of this state. [1941 c 245 s 10; Rem. Supp. 1941 s 11616-7.]

**RCW 54.08.060 Special election for formation of district and first commissioners—Terms.** Whenever a proposition for the formation of a public utility district is to be submitted to voters in any county, the county legislative authority may by resolution call a special election, and at the request of petitioners for the formation of such district contained in the petition shall do so and shall provide for holding the same at the earliest practicable time. If the boundaries of the proposed district embrace an area less than the entire county, such election shall be confined to the area so included. The notice of such election shall state the boundaries of the proposed district and the object of such election; in other respects, such election shall be held and called in the same manner as provided by law for the holding and calling of general elections: PROVIDED, That notice thereof shall be given for not less than ten days nor more than thirty days prior to such special election. In submitting the proposition to the voters for their approval or rejection, such proposition shall be expressed on the ballots in substantially the following terms:

Public Utility District No. . . . .	YES
Public Utility District No. . . . .	NO

At the same special election on the proposition to form a public utility district, there shall also be an election for three public utility district commissioners. However, the election of such commissioners shall be null and void if the proposition to form the public utility district does not receive approval by a majority of the voters voting on the proposition. No primary shall be held. A special filing period shall be opened as provided in RCW 29A.24.171 and 29A.24.181. The person receiving the greatest number of votes for the commissioner of each commissioner district shall be elected as the commissioner of that district. Commissioner districts shall be established as provided in RCW 54.12.010. The terms of the initial commissioners shall be staggered as follows: (1) The person who is elected receiving the greatest number of votes shall be elected to a

six-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year or a five-year term if the election is held in an odd-numbered year; (2) the person who is elected receiving the next greatest number of votes shall be elected to a four-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year or a three-year term of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year; and (3) the other person who is elected shall be elected to a two-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year or a one-year term of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year. The commissioners first to be elected at such special election shall assume office immediately when they are elected and qualified, but the length of their terms of office shall be calculated from the first day in January in the year following their elections.

The term "general election" as used herein means biennial general elections at which state and county officers in a noncharter county are elected. [2015 c 53 s 85; 1994 c 223 s 55; 1979 ex.s. c 126 s 36; 1951 c 207 s 5.]

**Purpose—1979 ex.s. c 126:** See RCW 29A.60.280(1).

*Elections: Title 29A RCW.*

**RCW 54.08.070 Construction or acquisition of electric facilities for generation, transmission, or distribution of power—When voter approval required—Election.** Any district which does not own or operate electric facilities for the generation, transmission, or distribution of electric power on March 25, 1969, or any district which hereafter does not construct or acquire such electric facilities within ten years of its creation, shall not construct or acquire any such electric facilities without the approval of such proposal by the voters of such district: PROVIDED, That a district shall have the power to construct or acquire electric facilities within ten years following its creation by action of its commission without voter approval of such action.

At any general election held in an even-numbered year, the proposal to construct or acquire electric facilities may be submitted to the voters of the district by resolution of the public utility district commission or shall be submitted to the voters of the district by the county legislative authority on petition of ten percent of the qualified electors of such district, based on the total vote cast in the last general county election held in an even-numbered year. A form of petition for the construction or acquisition of electric facilities by the public utility district shall be submitted to the county auditor within ten months prior to the election at which such proposition is to be submitted to the voters. Petitions shall be filed with the county auditor not less than four months before such election and the county auditor shall within thirty days examine the signatures thereof and certify to the sufficiency or insufficiency thereof. If such petition is found to be insufficient, it shall be returned to the persons filing the same, who may amend and add names thereto for ten days, when the same shall be returned to the county auditor, who shall have an additional fifteen days to examine the same and attach his or her certificate thereto. No person having signed such petition shall be allowed to withdraw his or her name therefrom after the filing of the same with the county auditor: PROVIDED, That

each signature shall be dated and that no signature dated prior to the date on which the form of petition was submitted to the county auditor shall be valid. Whenever such petition shall be certified to as sufficient, the county auditor shall forthwith transmit the same, together with his or her certificate of sufficiency attached thereto, to the county legislative authority which shall submit such proposition to the voters of said district at the next general election in an even-numbered year according to RCW 29A.04.330. The notice of the election shall state the object of such election, and shall in other respects conform to the requirements of the general laws of Washington, governing the time and manner of holding elections.

The proposal submitted to the voters for their approval or rejection, shall be expressed on the ballot substantially in the following terms:

Shall Public Utility District No. . . . . of . . . . . County construct or acquire electric facilities for the generation, transmission or distribution of electric power?

Yes   
No

Within ten days after such election, the election board of the county shall canvass the returns, and if at such election a majority of the voters voting on such proposition shall vote in favor of such construction or acquisition of electric facilities, the district shall be authorized to construct or acquire electric facilities. [2010 c 8 s 17005; 2006 c 344 s 37; 1979 ex.s. c 240 s 2; 1969 c 106 s 3.]

**Effective date—2006 c 344 ss 1-16 and 18-40:** See note following RCW 29A.04.311.

**Construction—Severability—1969 c 106:** See notes following RCW 54.08.041.

**RCW 54.08.080 Dissolution.** Any district now or hereafter created under the laws of this state may be dissolved, as hereinafter provided, by a majority vote of the qualified electors of such district at any general election upon a resolution of the district commission, or upon petition being filed and such proposition for dissolution submitted to said electors in the same manner provided by chapter 54.08 RCW for the creation of public utility districts. The returns of the election on such proposition for dissolution shall be canvassed and the results declared in the same manner as is provided by RCW 54.08.010: PROVIDED, HOWEVER, That any such proposition to dissolve a district shall not be submitted to the electors if within five years prior to the filing of such petition or resolution such district has undertaken any material studies or material action relating to the construction or acquisition of any utility properties or if such district at the time of the submission of such proposition is actually engaged in the operation of any utility properties.

If a majority of the votes cast at the election favor dissolution, the commission of the district shall petition, without any filing fee, the superior court of the county in which such district is located for an order authorizing the payment of all indebtedness of the district and directing the transfer of any surplus

funds or property to the general fund of the county in which such district is organized. [1969 c 106 s 4.]

**Construction—Severability—1969 c 106:** See notes following RCW 54.08.041.

*Dissolution of special purpose districts: Chapters 36.96 and 53.48 RCW.*