

LEWIS COUNTY ELECTIONS Community Outreach Plan: Signature Verification

Lewis County Elections' ongoing practices related to signature verification.

2025
OUTREACH
PLAN

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SECTION 1:

INTRODUCTION

In June 2024, RCW requirements were updated to require that election offices produce a document detailing how they inform the public about signature verification requirements. Lewis County Elections will update this document annually.

The following document outlines our office's current and ongoing practices, as well as several pilot projects occurring this year related to outreach about signature verification.

OVERVIEW OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS PROCESS

A voter's signature is a unique identifier used in vote-by-mail elections to verify identity.

Citizens may register to vote in Washington State via a paper registration form, the DOL, or online. For a registration to be valid, a signature is required. That signature is added to the voter's record in the statewide registration database, VoteWA. Each voter is given a unique voter identification number when they are registered.

VoteWA generates a ballot for all eligible voters for each election. The issues/races on a ballot itself are based on the voter's precinct, which is determined by their residential address. Along with the ballot, a postage-paid return envelope which the voter must sign is included. The envelope has a unique ballot ID number printed on it. If a voter requests a replacement ballot or moves during the voting window, a new ballot will be generated with its own unique ballot ID number.

After the voter receives their ballot packet, they vote the ballot and place it inside the secrecy sleeve, which goes inside the return envelope. They then sign the return envelope and return it to Lewis County Elections either through the mail or by depositing it in a ballot drop box.

SIGNATURE VERIFICATION PROCESS

On the ballot return envelope, there is a signature line that a voter must complete. The signature on the ballot envelope must match the signature on file in VoteWA for the envelope to be accepted and opened for ballot processing.

Upon initial receipt, ballot envelopes are manually scanned and matched to the voter record. The signature on the ballot is compared to the signature(s) in the voter's record. Employees who are trained in signature verification standards with annual training from the Office of the Secretary of State review each signature. Comparisons follow WAC 434-261-051, 052, and 053 guidelines.

Every signature is reviewed with the presumption that the signature on the ballot declaration is the voter's signature. A team of two employees must reach a consensus on whether a signature is approved or challenged. If they disagree, another team member assists in deciding. This includes a review of all previous signatures on file in VoteWA and a review of the voters in the household.

If the signature on the return envelope does not match the signature on file for the voter, the ballot is placed into a secure ballot cage and remains unopened. The envelope will only be opened when/if a cure form is returned that matches the signature on the ballot envelope.

SIGNATURE CURING PROCESS

In Lewis County, ensuring every eligible vote is counted is of utmost importance. When a signature discrepancy is identified, staff take immediate steps to inform the voter and provide them with an opportunity to correct the issue. To facilitate this, voters are asked to provide a phone number and email address on their ballot envelope.

Step 1: Notification of Discrepancy: As soon as a signature discrepancy is detected, Lewis County Elections staff attempt to contact the voter. Multiple communication channels are utilized to ensure that the voter is aware of the issue as quickly as possible. This includes:

Mail: A physical letter along with a cure form is mailed within 24 hours of a challenge, explaining the discrepancy and the necessary steps to resolve it.

Step 2: Mailing Cure Forms: Every voter with a challenged signature receives a cure form (Appendix 2). This form is essential for the voter to update or confirm their signature. The cure form includes:

- A line for the voter to sign on.
- Clear instructions on how to fill out the form.
- A postage-paid return envelope.

Step 3: Receipt and Verification of Cure Forms: Once the voter returns the completed cure form, the signature on the form is compared to the signature on the ballot envelope. If the signatures match:

- The form is scanned and uploaded into VoteWA, adding the signature for all future elections.
- The ballot envelope is opened, and the secrecy sleeve containing the ballot is removed and shuffled with other ballots to maintain voter anonymity before tabulation.

Step 4: Processing and Deadlines: Cure forms must be received by 4:30 P.M. on the day before the certification of an election.

SECTION TWO:

CURRENT OUTREACH PRACTICES

CURE FORMS AND SIGNATURE UPDATE REQUEST FORMS

Lewis County Elections maintains two essential forms for voter interaction during election cycles: the cure form and the signature update request form (refer to Appendices 2 and 3).

These forms are available in physical form at our office and digitally on our website. Lewis County Elections encourages proactive engagement from voters, allowing them the option to update their signature voluntarily at any point.

The Lewis County Elections team reviews voter signatures on an ongoing basis as voter maintenance best practice. As part of our routine database maintenance, staff identify voters with older signatures. As these signatures are identified a signature update notice is sent, requesting the voter provide an updated signature. The inclusion of more signatures, particularly recent ones, enhances the accuracy and integrity of the voter database.

VOTER PAMPHLET ADS

Lewis County Elections has been producing a Local Voters' Pamphlet (LVP) for every election since 2021. During Primary and General Elections, Lewis County Elections produces a book-style LVP that is mailed to every household in Lewis County. One of the advertisements frequently included emphasizes the importance of signatures.



1% of ballots are returned either without a signature or with a signature that doesn't match.

**DON'T LET THAT BE YOU!
HERE ARE A FEW TIPS:**

- 1 If you register to vote online, your signature from the Department of Licensing becomes your voter registration signature. Take a moment and look at the signature on your driver's license or state ID. When signing your ballot envelope, keep that signature in mind.
- 2 The signature on your ballot doesn't need to be perfect. It just needs to be very similar to the signature we have on file. If you have a "chicken scratch" signature, that's okay! Just make sure you're consistent.
- 3 If you have no idea what signature you might have used, or you think your signature has changed, we recommend that you send us an updated signature. It's easy! Simply return a paper voter registration form. You can print out a registration form at bit.ly/WAVoteRF. Or, send us an email or call us. We're happy to mail the form.
- 4 After you've voted, if you're worried that your signature won't pass, you can track your ballot's progress online at VoteWa.gov. If there's an issue with your signature, you'll be alerted by mail or telephone (if we have your number).

Student Outreach

The Elections Division sends an email to the high school superintendents to remind seniors that registering and voting is important and provide a voter registration form in their senior packets.

Marriage Applications

Lewis County Auditor's Office also adds a voter registration to all marriage applications. This is important to keep names up to date and capture the new signature.

APPENDIX 1. WAC 434-261-053

[WAC 434-261-053](#)

Ballot declaration signature cure process.

(1) If a ballot declaration signature is not accepted following secondary review, the voter used a mark or signature stamp but did not include witnesses, or if the ballot declaration was not signed, the ballot cannot be counted until the voter cures their signature. The voter identified on the ballot return envelope must be notified as soon as practicable, but no later than three business days following receipt, of the procedure for curing their signature by:

(a) A notice letter package sent by first class mail with a signature update form or a missing signature form. The forms must include the ballot declaration required by WAC [434-230-015](#). The notice letter package must also include a prepaid envelope in which to return a completed signature update or missing signature form. The notice letter must:

(i) Be in substantially the same form as the sample notice letter created by the secretary of state; and

(ii) Be available in all languages required by the Department of Justice.

(b) Phone (if the voter has provided a phone number);

(c) Text message (if the voter has opted into text message notifications); and

(d) Email (if the voter has provided an email address).

(2) The voter may cure their ballot signature no later than the close of business the day before the election is certified.

(3) A voter may cure a missing signature by:

(a) Returning a signed missing signature form. The signature on the form must be compared to the voter's signature in the voter registration record using the process described in WAC [434-261-052](#); or

(b) Appearing in person and signing the ballot declaration. The signature on the ballot declaration must be compared to the voter's signature in the voter registration record using the process described in WAC [434-261-052](#).

(4) A voter using a mark may cure a failure to have two witnesses attest to the ballot declaration signature by returning a missing signature form. The form must contain the voter's mark and the signatures of two witnesses.

(5) A voter may cure a nonmatching signature by either:

(a) Returning a signature update form or appearing in person and signing a new registration form.

(i) The signature on the form must be compared to the signature on the ballot declaration using the process described in WAC [434-261-052](#);

(ii) The signature on the form is saved as a new signature in the voter registration record for the current and future elections; or

(b) Providing valid secondary identity verification. The county auditor must verify the secondary identification is for the voter who signed the ballot declaration. Secondary identification may be:

(i) The last four digits of the voter's Social Security number or the voter's full driver's license number or state identity card number;

(ii) Photo identification, valid enrollment card of a federally recognized Indian tribe in Washington state, copy of a current utility bill or current bank statement, copy of a current government check, copy of a current paycheck, or a government document, other than a voter registration card, that shows both the name and address of the voter; or

(iii) A multifactor authentication code, from a system approved by the secretary of state, the county auditor sent to the voter's phone number or email address that has previously been provided by the voter.

If a voter successfully provides secondary identity verification and confirms, orally or in writing, that the voter in fact returned the ballot, the ballot must be accepted unless two persons who have received signature verification training under WAC [434-261-051](#)(7) conclude beyond a reasonable doubt that a person other than the voter signed the ballot declaration. This conclusion may be based on evidence including, but not limited to, other ballots in the same election bearing the same signature.

(6) If the registered voter asserts that the signature on the ballot declaration is not the voter's signature prior to 8:00 p.m. on election day, the voter may vote a provisional ballot.

(7) If the voter does not successfully cure their signature by close of business the day before certification of the election, the ballot must be sent to the canvassing board.

(8) A record must be kept of the process used to cure ballot envelopes with missing and mismatched signatures. The record must contain the date on which each voter was contacted, the notice was mailed, and the date on which each voter subsequently submitted a signature to cure the missing or mismatched signature.

[Statutory Authority: RCW [29A.04.611](#). WSR 24-07-018, § 434-261-053, filed 3/8/24, effective 5/4/24.]

Signature Update

i Please provide a current signature to put on file.

voter information *please print clearly*

last name first middle

Phone number

Registration declaration

I declare that the facts on this voter registration form are true. I am a citizen of the United States, I am a Washington state resident, and I am at least sixteen years old. I am not disqualified from voting due to a court order, and I am not currently serving a sentence of total confinement under the jurisdiction of the department of corrections for a Washington felony conviction, and I am not currently incarcerated for a federal or out-of-state felony conviction.

sign & date

The signatures on this form will be compared with the signature on your ballot return envelope; at least one must match for your ballot to be counted. All signatures below will be added to your voter registration record to be compared against in future elections. Providing different versions of your signature can help avoid a similar issue in the future.

X _____

X _____

X _____

Signature of voter (Power of Attorney is not acceptable.)

optional: if you cannot sign

Make a mark above in the presence of 2 witnesses.
The witnesses should then sign below.

signature of witness 1 date

signature of witness 2 date