Observer Training 2022
Why are you participating?

• Observers play an important role in an election:
  • Provide an independent observation
    and
  • Maintain confidence in the accuracy and integrity of the election process.

• It is important for observers to understand the election process.
Stages of Ballot Processing
Ballot Assembly

• Ballot packets include a precinct-specific ballot, security envelope, return envelope, and any election-specific inserts.

• Ballot packets are assembled approximately four to six weeks prior to election day.
Types of Voters

• Military and Overseas Voters (UOCAVA)
  • Ballots are mailed 30 - 45 days before an election.
  • Military and overseas civilians may request an emailed ballot and are also mailed a physical ballot.
  • Ballot may be returned by mail, ballot drop box, email or fax.

• Vote by Mail Voters
  • Ballots are mailed 18 days before the Election.
  • Ballots may be returned by mail or ballot drop box.
Types of Voters

• Future Voters
  • Registrants who are 17 at the time of ballot creation but will be 18 by the Election.
  • Ballots are mailed 18 days before the Election.
  • Ballots may be returned by mail or ballot drop box.

• Primary Only Voters
  • Registrants who are 17 at the time of a primary but will turn 18 on or before general election day.
  • Can only vote on contests that will not be decided in the Primary Election.
  • Ballots are mailed 18 days before the Election.
  • Ballots may be returned by mail or ballot drop box.
Ballots Packets are Mailed

• Ballot packets are sent to military and overseas voters (UOCAVA) 45 days prior to a primary or general election and 30 days prior to a special election to allow for the longer transit time.

• Ballot packets are mailed to voters at least 18 days before election day.

• Local Voters Pamphlets will be mailed to each residence in Spokane County. A state Voters Pamphlet will also be mailed to each residence for a General Election.
Vote: It’s up to the Voter

• Once the ballot packet is in the voter’s hands, they have until election day to vote their ballot, seal it in the return envelope, read, sign and date the declaration on the return envelope.
• Mail postage is prepaid or they may drop off their ballot at a ballot drop box.
• Voted ballots must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service by the date of the election or be received at a designated drop-off location by 8 p.m. on election night.
Ballot Return

• Ballot envelopes that are mailed are delivered directly to the Elections Office each morning.
• Ballot envelopes that are dropped off at ballot drop box locations are picked up each weekday by teams of Election Office employees.
  • There are currently 24 ballot drop box locations available in Spokane County
Processing 1st Pass – Sorting Equipment

• Once at the Elections Office, envelopes are run through sorting equipment that scans the voter data and signature on the return envelope which is used for signature verification.

• The sorter will check the voter data to ensure that the ballot envelope is eligible to be returned. This is the first stage of ballot accountability where we report that we have received a voter’s ballot.

• Voters are able to start tracking their ballot after this process, at the Spokane County Elections website by clicking on the “Track Your Ballot” button.
Sorting Machine
Signature Verification

• Before any ballot is counted, law requires that we verify the signature on every returned ballot envelope with the voter’s signature on file. Election staff that have completed Office of the Secretary of State sponsored training perform this review.
  • If the signatures match, the ballot packet is approved to move forward to 2nd pass.
  • If the signatures do not match or a signature is missing, the ballot packet is flagged and sent for further review.

• About two percent of ballots returned in each election have a problem with the signature, called a “challenge.” This requires the voter to resolve the issue before their ballot may be processed. The majority of challenges are simply because the voter did not sign the envelope. We contact voters by letter and phone with instructions on how to resolve the issue and voters can also check the status of their ballot online. Voters have until the day before election certification to respond.

• Alternate format ballots (those returned by email or fax, or non-standard ballots returned by U.S. Mail) require special handling and then must go through the same verification process as standard ballots.
Processing 2nd Pass – Sorting Equipment

• Ballot envelopes are sent through the sorting equipment again. The sorter will check the voter data to ensure that the ballot envelope has been accepted through signature verification.

• Envelopes with accepted signatures are sorted and grouped into batches of about 200 where they are tracked through tabulation. These are sent to Stage 1 of opening.

• Ballots that were not accepted will be sorted by challenge reason and researched for letters to be sent.
Ballot Opening Sheet

- This sheet is filled out starting when batches are created during 2\textsuperscript{nd} pass.

- This sheet stays with the batch and is filled out at every stage of ballot processing from 2\textsuperscript{nd} pass until final processing.

- The batch counts are confirmed 6 times during processing.
Stage 1 - Opening the Return Envelopes

• First, return envelopes are hand counted to confirm the envelopes received match the quantity that is on the opening sheet.

• Next, the security envelope containing the voted ballot is removed from the return envelope and separated. If a security envelope is not included in the ballot envelope, staff will insert the ballot into a security envelope.

• Any ballot envelopes that have issues will be out stacked and are tracked on the opening sheet.

• Security envelopes containing the voted ballots are hand counted again to confirm the number of envelopes matches the opening sheet before moving onto Stage 2.
Stage 2 – Opening the Security Envelopes

• Teams of two complete the Stage 2 Opening Process
• Security Envelopes are again hand counted to confirm the quantity matches the opening sheet.
• Security envelopes are opened and ballots are screened for tabulation.
• Ballots that may have corrections or have minor damage can still be scanned. These are placed on the top of the stack for final processing.
• Ballots that are too damaged to be scanned or ballots that are more than one double sided page are out stacked and placed in an envelope for the duplication process.
• Ballots are hand counted to confirm the quantity matches the opening sheet.
Final Processing of Ballots - Scanning

• Final processing of ballots begins approximately two weeks before the Election (depending on the quantity of ballots returned).

• Ballots are brought into the Tabulation Room by authorized election officials from the Voted Ballot Room by rack with trays of ballots or by individual trays.

• Ballots are scanned by batch. The number of ballots scanned is compared to the ballot opening sheet to confirm the quantity matches.
Scanning
Final Processing of Ballots - Adjudication

• Adjudication of ballots takes place after ballots are scanned.

• Teams of two employees will adjudicate the ballot to capture the voter’s intent while following the 80+ page Statewide Voter Intent manual.

• All of the batches are reviewed by another trained staff member to ensure the adjudications are correct.
Adjudication
Voter Intent Examples

Rule A, Exception 2, Examples 2a–b

The vote for Teddy Roosevelt is the valid vote.

In the following examples from different ballots, the marks in the target area of Abigail S. Adams are hesitation marks and do not count as valid votes. Marks made in the same race for Teddy Roosevelt are the clear choice. These races are not overvoted.

2a

State Representative
District 14, Position #1

Teddy Roosevelt
Abigail S. Adams
William Henry Harrison
Write-in

2b

State Representative
District 14, Position #1

Teddy Roosevelt
Abigail S. Adams
William Henry Harrison
Write-in
Pattern of Similar Marks
Rule B

This is a multiple page ballot.
Rule D, Examples 1a–d

The following examples from different ballots are valid votes for William Henry Harrison.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1a</th>
<th>1b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Representative District 14, Position #1</td>
<td>State Representative District 14, Position #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teddy Roosevelt</td>
<td>Teddy Roosevelt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abigail S. Adams</td>
<td>Abigail S. Adams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Henry Harrison</td>
<td>William Henry Harrison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write-in</td>
<td>Write-in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1c</th>
<th>1d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Representative District 14, Position #1</td>
<td>State Representative District 14, Position #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teddy Roosevelt</td>
<td>Teddy Roosevelt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abigail S. Adams</td>
<td>Abigail S. Adams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Henry Harrison</td>
<td>William Henry Harrison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write-in</td>
<td>Write-in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adjudication - Making a Change
Write-In

• If a name is written on a write-in line, it shall be counted as a valid write-in vote regardless of whether the corresponding target area is marked.

• If the name of a candidate who is already printed on the ballot is written in, that vote shall not be tallied as an overvote, but shall be counted as a valid vote for the printed candidate. This applies even if both target areas are marked or no target areas are marked.

• If a write-in vote is cast for a declared write-in candidate using a commonly recognizable nickname or spelling variation, it shall be counted as a valid vote for that candidate.

• If the write-in target area is marked, but no name is written on the line, it shall not be counted as a valid vote, even though it may be tallied as a write-in vote by the tabulation system.

• If a candidate’s target area is marked, the write-in target area is also marked, and something other than that candidate’s name is written in the write-in response area, it shall be counted as an overvote and not a valid vote for any candidate. If a candidate’s target area is marked and the write-in target area is not marked, it shall be counted as a valid vote for the marked candidate.
Rule N, Examples 1a–d

The following marks are tallied as overvotes, and not valid votes for any candidate.

In each example, the voter marked two target areas and wrote something other than the printed candidate's name in the space provided. These examples are tallied as overvotes.

1a  State Representative District 14, Position #1
☐ Teddy Roosevelt
☐ Abigail S. Adams
☐ William Henry Harrison
☐ Write-in Clara Barton

1b  State Representative District 14, Position #1
☐ Teddy Roosevelt
☐ Abigail S. Adams
☐ William Henry Harrison
☐ Write-in Wonder Woman

1c  State Representative District 14, Position #1
☐ Teddy Roosevelt
☐ Abigail S. Adams
☐ William Henry Harrison
☐ Write-in Nobody

1d  State Representative District 14, Position #1
☐ Teddy Roosevelt
☐ Abigail S. Adams
☐ William Henry Harrison
☐ Write-in Teddy Roosevelt

Rule N, Examples 2a–d

The following marks are valid votes for the printed candidate, Abigail S. Adams.

In each example, the voter marked a target area for a printed candidate, but did not mark a second target area. The following examples are not tallied as overvotes.

2a  State Representative District 14, Position #1
☐ Teddy Roosevelt
☐ Abigail S. Adams
☐ William Henry Harrison
☐ Write-in Clara Barton

2b  State Representative District 14, Position #1
☐ Teddy Roosevelt
☐ Abigail S. Adams
☐ William Henry Harrison
☐ Write-in Wonder Woman

2c  State Representative District 14, Position #1
☐ Teddy Roosevelt
☐ Abigail S. Adams
☐ William Henry Harrison
☐ Write-in Nobody

2d  State Representative District 14, Position #1
☐ Teddy Roosevelt
☐ Abigail S. Adams
☐ William Henry Harrison
☐ Write-in Teddy Roosevelt
Duplication

- Duplication is the process of transferring the voter’s intent from the original ballot to an unmarked ballot.

- If the ballot is on multiple pages or is too damaged to go through a scanner, the ballot is sent for duplication.

- This process is always completed in teams of two staff members. A unique sequence number is assigned to both ballots and the original ballot is rendered “unreadable” for the tabulator.
Duplication Review

• Staff will review completed duplications.

• Completed duplications are compared to the original ballots to ensure they were marked correctly.
Election Results

• Unofficial results can be found on election night at spokanecounty.org/elections
  • Results will be posted after drop boxes and voting centers close at 8 p.m.
  • Expect the first results to publish online at around 8:15 p.m.

• Staff will continue to process ballots until certification. Under RCW 29A.60.160, interim ballot tabulations are normally scheduled after a Primary or General Election excluding weekends and holidays. Exact tabulation dates are determined by voter turnout and will be posted on the Spokane County Elections website.
Election Certification

• All elections must be certified by the Spokane County Canvassing Board. The process of certification includes a review of the final election tabulation report and the signing by each board member of the election certification oath.

• Results are certified by counties
  • 10 days after a Special Election
  • 14 days after a Primary
  • 21 days after a General Election
New This Year

- Risk Limiting Audits (RLAs) have been approved for use.
- Primary Only Voters
- No electioneering within 100 feet of a Voter Service Center entrance or within 25 feet of a ballot drop box
- Restoration of Voting Rights After Felony Conviction
- Redistricting – State and County
- No weapon, whether concealed or openly carried, may be possessed in any ballot counting center or areas of facilities while being used as a ballot counting center.
  - This restriction does not prohibit concealed carry of a pistol, by a person licensed to carry a concealed pistol pursuant to RCW 9.41.070, in any voting center, student engagement hub, county elections and voter registration office, or areas of facilities while being used as a voting center, student engagement hub, or county elections and voter registration office.
General Observer Guidelines

• Observers are required to be appointed by the Party Chair or candidate.
• All observers must attend training.
• All observers must read and sign the Acknowledgement Rules for Public Observers.
• The maximum numbers of observers:
  • 3 representatives per Party at any time.
  • 2 representatives in total from campaigns or candidates at any one time.
  • Only 1 observer from each Party is allowed in the tabulation room at any time.
General Observer Guidelines - continued

• If more than one observer is identified from a major party, then the Party Chair shall designate one person as the supervisor.

• Schedules of times to observe should be coordinated with the party election supervisor.

• The Elections Office requests by Monday morning the observer schedule for the week and areas to be observed. This should come from the party election supervisor.

• If not assigned to an area, the Elections Office will work with the observer to assign an area.
Rules for Observers

• In accordance with state law, observers may not touch ballots, ballot containers, or voting machines.
  • To comply with this law, observers must remain in designated observation areas. Observers must be escorted in the ballot processing area (no wandering).

• It is important to avoid even the appearance of an attempt to remove, add or tamper with ballots in the system.
  • Therefore, any handbags, briefcases, or other containers that could conceivably carry ballots must be left outside the ballot processing area. Only red or green pens are allowed in the ballot processing area.

• Due to time constraints and the critical nature of our job, it is important that Spokane County Elections employees maintain a work environment free of distractions.
  • Therefore, we request that any questions regarding the election are directed to the senior staff.
Rules for Observers - continued

• Masks are optionable for all individuals in the ballot processing area.
• If you are sick or have a temperature, we ask that you do not observe.
• Everyone in the ballot processing area must wear a badge and it must be visible. Lanyards will be provided for all observers.
• Open food and beverage containers are prohibited in the observation areas.
• Do not use cell phones; no photos, no videos or audio recording are allowed.
• Do not participate in campaign or political conversations or distribute materials while in the Elections Office.
• All observers must sign in and sign out at the front counter.
Senior Staff - Where to direct questions

- Randy Bischoff – Chief Deputy Auditor
- Mike McLaughlin – Elections Manager
- Ryan Dosch – Election Services Supervisor Lead
- Observer Question and Concern Form

- For a list of processing forms and this presentation, visit www.spokanecounty.org/elections
  -> Candidates & Campaigns
  -> Election Processing Forms

- 509.477.6390  email: elections@spokanecounty.org