

CITIZENS' ELECTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE



QUARTERLY
NEWSLETTER 1.0



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KICK OFF OF QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the first of our quarterly newsletters to keep us all better informed on topics of interest regarding elections in Whatcom County. I know for some, meeting in person is preferable, but with all the time commitments everyone has, this may be a better option to gain information. I hope you'll feel free to suggest topics for future editions and if you have questions or comments about any content, you'll share that with us so we can continue the dialogue. This does not replace all meetings; we will meet in person as topics determine.

ROLLOUT OF "EVERYONE COUNTS"

This past General Election saw the rollout of the ability to generate replacement ballots to be voted online, printed and transmitted to us by overseas and military voters. We were then able to produce these onto printed, readable ballot stock eliminating the need to hand duplicate the ballot. Through a

grant from the Department of Defense, a number of counties throughout the state are participating in this project with vendor, *Everyone Counts*, to provide better accessibility. We participated in this test which will carry on to future elections. It gave us an opportunity to see its functionality and will provide improved access to submitting a ballot. In the future, we hope to promote its usage to other groups of voters. It has been a great success in other counties by providing an alternative for the disability community as well as other voters who are unable to get to the courthouse.

RECORD SETTING BALLOT PROCESSING

Thanks to voters for returning ballots earlier in the process this year. We were able to count a record 73% of ballots on Election Night. In addition, improved processing meant less time spent at each of the stages of processing in comparing past general elections back to 2010.

See the table below for the drop box statistics for this past election. Lynden again takes the prize for highest usage at our outlying sites! We are aware of the Election morning situation of an overflowing box and will be addressing the frequency of our pickups at that site. Thank you to the citizens who stayed to oversee the box until our pickup team arrived.

Dropbox Usage	
Blaine	2,794
Courthouse	21,103
Deming	1,321
Everson	2,183
Ferndale	4,812
Lynden	7,376
Meridian	872
WWU	1,407
TOTAL	41,868 55%

Selections are being made for additional sites for next year to be in place for the primary & general elections.

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DATABASE MAINTENANCE

Voter registration database management was suggested as a topic for this month; in particular how the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), the multi-state update system, is working and if voter registrations have been cancelled in error.

ERIC was chosen by the state as our update system over the Crosscheck program for its expanded capabilities and more robust information. All 39 counties in Washington receive ERIC reports approximately 4 times a year that identify possible duplicate registrations within the county, the state and between states. ERIC involves 11 states and Washington, D.C.

Possible duplicates are researched to identify if they are the same person by comparing the name and birthdate, and a Social Security Number or driver license number. For duplicate registrations, a confirmation card is mailed to all known addresses in order to verify the voter's residence. The voter will remain inactive until he or she contacts us. The voter will then be reactivated at the correct Whatcom County address, or cancelled per voter request. No voter is automatically cancelled as part of the ERIC process.

When not conducting elections, database maintenance is our staff's primary focus. Follow-up is done on official mail that has been forwarded or returned undeliverable. We receive daily reports from the state for voters moving around within the state, a transfer report and a deceased voter check. In addition, we periodically receive reports from other states listing voters who have been identified as having been registered in our county and are now registered in that state.

A number of tools are used to help us identify that we have the correct voter when dealing with potential duplicates or deceased voters including LexisNexis, driver license records, and published obituary notices. No action is taken on a voter registration until we are confident we have the correct person. Most importantly, no voter is cancelled unless: the voter requests it; the voter hasn't voted in two federal elections; the voter has died; or we are notified by another state that the voter has registered there.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

January 12, 2015 will initiate this year's legislative session. It is referred to as a "long session" since it will last 90 days, in its initial phase anyway. There is always room to extend the session if the work doesn't get completed.

It's a little early to know the extent of what is being proposed for this year, but the Auditors' Association (Washington State Association of County Auditors) has a few bills of interest they are looking to submit for consideration:

- A bill addressing write-ins since there were so many offices around the state this past election where write-in offices proceeded from the primary to the general without having to file for office. Five positions had individuals who were undeclared and *not* interested in running, five positions that had undeclared candidates move on, and eight positions that had declared write-ins. An additional problem involves having to count the write-ins for dogs, fictional characters, celebrities, etc., people who are not registered in the jurisdiction or people who are unknown or not registered anywhere. The proposed bill would require anyone wishing to be a write-in candidate to file a declaration of candidacy, exempting them from having to pay the filing fee. It would not consider as valid votes write-ins for anyone not having filed a declaration.
- A bill that would allow civilians returning ballots electronically to have their ballots processed the same as overseas voters' ballots, namely, as long as their signature matches with the one we have on file they do not have to await a "hard copy" signature but can be processed immediately, as long as no other ballot has been received from that voter.
- A bill increasing number of days for the filing of a resolution before a special election to have a similar time period as before the primary or the general (currently, it is not the same). This results in a time crunch for processing local voter pamphlet information for those counties that prepare pamphlets for special elections.

Legislation under discussion and expected to come forward again from legislators include same day registration, registering 16 and 17 year-olds, and Voting Rights Act amendments which were proposed in previous sessions. We will be watching what form those will now take. As more of the bills get rolling I will submit copies of our tracking sheets to members of this committee for those who wish to follow along during the session. It is a brief summary prepared for the Auditors but it does provide the links to the bills themselves for review and an indication of the stance of the Auditors' Association.