

# Chapter 434-261 WAC

## COUNTING CENTER PROCEDURES

(Formerly chapter 434-61 WAC)

### WAC

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Repealed by WSR 05-17-145, filed 8/19/05, effective 9/19/05. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611.  
 434-261-105 Tabulation of ballots to be continuous—Exception. [Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611. WSR 05-17-145, § 434-261-105, filed 8/19/05, effective 9/19/05.] Repealed by WSR 11-24-064, filed 12/6/11, effective 1/6/12. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.04.620, and 29A.04.630.  
 434-261-107 Daily canvassing. [Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.-611. WSR 05-17-145, § 434-261-107, filed 8/19/05, effective 9/19/05.] Repealed by WSR 09-03-110, filed 1/21/09, effective 2/21/09. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611.

### DISPOSITION OF SECTIONS FORMERLY CODIFIED IN THIS CHAPTER

434-261-030 Receipt of ballots at intermediate collection station. [Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.04.530. WSR 06-02-028, § 434-261-030, filed 12/28/05, effective 1/28/06. Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.080, 29.04.210, 29.36.150 and 29.79.200. WSR 97-21-045, recodified as § 434-261-030, filed 10/13/97, effective 11/13/97. Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.080 and 29.04.210. WSR 92-10-038, § 434-61-030, filed 5/4/92, effective 6/4/92.] Repealed by WSR 11-24-064, filed 12/6/11, effective 1/6/12. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.04.620, and 29A.04.630.  
 434-261-040 Receipt of ballots at the counting center. [Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.080, 29.04.210, 29.36.150 and 29.79.200. WSR 97-21-045, recodified as § 434-261-040, filed 10/13/97, effective 11/13/97. Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.080 and 29.04.210. WSR 92-10-038, § 434-61-040, filed 5/4/92, effective 6/4/92.] Repealed by WSR 11-24-064, filed 12/6/11, effective 1/6/12. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.04.620, and 29A.04.630.  
 434-261-060 Vote tallying system—A manual count of random precincts. [Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.080, 29.04.-210, 29.36.150 and 29.79.200. WSR 97-21-045, recodified as § 434-261-060, filed 10/13/97, effective 11/13/97. Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.080 and 29.04.210. WSR 92-10-038, § 434-61-060, filed 5/4/92, effective 6/4/92.] Repealed by WSR 07-20-074, filed 10/1/07, effective 11/1/07. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611.  
 434-261-080 Ballot enhancement—Optical scan systems. [Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.080 and 29.04.210. WSR 99-08-089, § 434-261-080, filed 4/6/99, effective 5/7/99. Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.080, 29.04.210, 29.36.150 and 29.79.200. WSR 97-21-045, § 434-261-080, filed 10/13/97, effective 11/13/97.] Repealed by WSR 05-17-145, filed 8/19/05, effective 9/19/05. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611.  
 434-261-085 Ballot enhancement—Punch card systems. [Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.210, 29.36.150. WSR 02-07-029, § 434-261-085, filed 3/12/02, effective 4/12/02.] Repealed by WSR 05-17-145, filed 8/19/05, effective 9/19/05. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611.  
 434-261-090 Ballot duplication. [Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.-080, 29.04.210, 29.36.150 and 29.79.200. WSR 97-21-045, § 434-261-090, filed 10/13/97, effective 11/13/97.]

**WAC 434-261-005 Definitions.** (1) "Manual inspection" is the process of inspecting each voter response position on each voted ballot. Inspection is performed as part of the initial processing;

(2) "Duplicating ballots" is the process of making a true copy of valid votes from ballots that may not be properly counted by the vote tallying system. Ballots may be duplicated on blank ballots or by making changes on an electronic image of the ballot. The original ballot may not be altered in any way;

(3) "Readable ballot" is any ballot that the certified vote tallying system can accept and read as the voter intended without alteration, and that meets the standards of the county canvassing board subject to the provisions contained in this title;

(4) "Unreadable ballot" is any ballot that cannot be read by the vote tallying system as the voter intended without alteration. Unreadable ballots may include, but not be limited to, ballots with damage, write-in votes, incorrect or incomplete marks, and questions of voter intent. Unreadable ballots may subsequently be counted as provided by these administrative rules;

(5) "Valid signature" on a ballot declaration for a registered voter eligible to vote in the election is:

(a) A signature verified against the signature in the voter registration file; or

(b) A mark witnessed by two people.

(6) "Overvote" is votes cast for more than the permissible number of selections allowed in a race or measure. An overvoted race or measure does not count in the final tally of that race or measure. Example of an overvote would be voting for two candidates in a single race with the instruction, "vote for one."

(7) "Undervote" is no selections made for a race or measure.

(8) "Election observers" means those persons designated by the county political party central committee chairperson to observe the counting of ballots and related elections procedures.

(9) "Seal log" is a log documenting each time a numbered seal is attached or removed from a ballot container. The

log must include the seal number, date, and identifying information of persons attaching or removing the seal. Following certification of the election, the seal log must include documentation as to why the seal was removed from a ballot container.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.04.620, and 29A.04.630. WSR 11-24-064, § 434-261-005, filed 12/6/11, effective 1/6/12. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.08.420, 29A.24.131, 29A.40.110, 29A.46.020, and 29A.80.041. WSR 10-14-091, § 434-261-005, filed 7/6/10, effective 8/6/10. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611. WSR 09-18-098, § 434-261-005, filed 9/1/09, effective 10/2/09; WSR 09-12-078, § 434-261-005, filed 5/29/09, effective 6/29/09; WSR 09-03-110, § 434-261-005, filed 1/21/09, effective 2/21/09; WSR 07-24-044, § 434-261-005, filed 11/30/07, effective 12/31/07; WSR 07-09-036, § 434-261-005, filed 4/11/07, effective 5/12/07; WSR 06-23-094, § 434-261-005, filed 11/15/06, effective 12/16/06; WSR 06-11-042, § 434-261-005, filed 5/10/06, effective 6/10/06; WSR 05-17-145, § 434-261-005, filed 8/19/05, effective 9/19/05. Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.210, 29.36.150. WSR 02-07-029, § 434-261-005, filed 3/12/02, effective 4/12/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.080 and 29.04.210. WSR 99-08-089, § 434-261-005, filed 4/6/99, effective 5/7/99. Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.080, 29.04.210, 29.36.150 and 29.79.200. WSR 97-21-045, § 434-261-005, filed 10/13/97, effective 11/13/97.]

**WAC 434-261-007 Broken or missing seals.** If a seal is missing or broken without authority, all subsequent steps taken must be documented and included in a report to the canvassing board.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611. WSR 06-14-050, § 434-261-007, filed 6/28/06, effective 7/29/06.]

**WAC 434-261-010 Counting center location—Direction of proceedings.** The county auditor shall designate a location to serve as the counting center. If that location is other than the county auditor's office or county election office, the auditor shall include the location of the counting center in the published notice of elections. The county auditor shall be responsible for all counting center functions. Within the counting center, no person except those authorized by the county auditor may touch any ballot or ballot container, or operate a vote tallying system. The auditor shall identify either by roster or identification tag, or both, those persons so authorized. The vote tallying process shall be open to the public to the extent that public observation does not interfere with the proceedings or jeopardize the security of the ballots. The auditor shall establish local administrative rules pertaining to public observers including the media and how they may be accommodated and the necessary limitations thereto.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.04.620, and 29A.04.630. WSR 11-24-064, § 434-261-010, filed 12/6/11, effective 1/6/12. Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.080, 29.04.210, 29.36.150 and 29.79.200. WSR 97-21-045, recodified as § 434-261-010, filed 10/13/97, effective 11/13/97. Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.080 and 29.04.210. WSR 92-10-038, § 434-61-010, filed 5/4/92, effective 6/4/92.]

**WAC 434-261-020 Observers.** Counting center operations shall be observed by at least one representative from each political party, if representatives have been appointed by the respective political parties and those representatives are present while the counting center is in operation.

Prior to processing ballots for a primary or election, the county auditor shall notify the major political parties in writing of the maximum number of official observers allowed to observe ballot processing and the date ballot processing begins. Where more than one observer is appointed, the polit-

ical party shall designate one of the observers as supervisor. The county auditor may require observers to receive training with respect to ballot processing procedures and the vote tallying system.

Before final assignment as observers, major political party representatives so appointed shall be reviewed by the county auditor, who may refuse to approve any person so appointed. In the event the auditor rejects a person designated, he or she shall promptly notify the political party concerned and request that a substitute observer be appointed, and shall ensure that the substitute observer is trained.

Representatives of the major political parties appointed as observers shall be identified by roster, including assigned observer stations if more than one in the counting center, and by identification tags which will indicate the observer's name and the party represented.

The counting center is under the direction of the county auditor. All observers are authorized to observe the processing of ballots for the current election as defined by WAC 434-250-110. Observers may not touch or record images of voted ballots, challenge signature check decisions, object to decisions to count or not count votes or ballots, or disrupt ballot processing. The county auditor shall provide written rules for observers. The county auditor may require an observer who does not follow the established rules to leave the counting center.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611. WSR 17-12-090, § 434-261-020, filed 6/6/17, effective 7/7/17. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611 and 29A.04.620. WSR 16-13-063, § 434-261-020, filed 6/13/16, effective 7/14/16. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.04.620, and 29A.04.-630. WSR 11-24-064, § 434-261-020, filed 12/6/11, effective 1/6/12. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.610. WSR 04-15-089, § 434-261-020, filed 7/16/04, effective 8/16/04. Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.080, 29.04.210, 29.36.150 and 29.79.200. WSR 97-21-045, recodified as § 434-261-020, filed 10/13/97, effective 11/13/97. Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.080 and 29.04.210. WSR 92-10-038, § 434-61-020, filed 5/4/92, effective 6/4/92.]

**WAC 434-261-045 Secure storage.** Received ballots and ballot images must be maintained in secure storage except during processing, duplication, inspection by the canvassing board, or tabulation. Secure storage must employ the use of numbered seals and logs, or other security measures that will detect any inappropriate access to the secured materials. Ballots and ballot images may only be accessed in accordance with RCW 29A.60.110 and 29A.60.125.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611. WSR 09-03-110, § 434-261-045, filed 1/21/09, effective 2/21/09; WSR 06-11-042, § 434-261-045, filed 5/10/06, effective 6/10/06. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.04.-530. WSR 06-02-028, § 434-261-045, filed 12/28/05, effective 1/28/06.]

**WAC 434-261-050 Unsigned ballot declaration or mismatched signatures.** (1) If a voter neglects to sign a ballot declaration, signs with a mark and fails to have two witnesses attest to the signature, or signs but the signature on the ballot declaration does not match the signature on the voter registration record, the county auditor shall notify the voter by first class mail of the correct procedures for curing the signature. If the ballot is received during the last three business days before the final meeting of the canvassing board, or the voter has been notified by first class mail and has not responded by the last three business days before the final meeting of the canvassing board, the county auditor must

attempt to notify the voter by telephone using information in the voter registration record.

(2) If the voter neglects to sign, or signs with a mark and fails to have two witnesses attest to the signature, the voter must either:

(a) Appear in person and sign the declaration no later than the day before certification of the primary or election; or

(b) Sign a copy of the declaration, or mark the declaration in front of two witnesses, and return it to the county auditor no later than the day before certification of the primary or election.

(3) If the signature on the declaration does not match the signature on the voter registration record, the voter must either:

(a) Appear in person and sign a new registration form no later than the day before certification of the primary or election. The updated signature provided on the registration form becomes the signature in the voter registration record for the current election and future elections; or

(b) Sign a signature update form that includes both the ballot declaration required by WAC 434-230-015 and the voter registration oath required by RCW 29A.08.230, and return it to the county auditor no later than the day before certification of the primary or election. The signature on the signature update form must match the signature on the returned ballot declaration. The signature provided on the signature update form becomes the signature in the voter registration record for the current election and future elections.

(4)(a) If the signature on the declaration does not match the signature on the registration record because the last name is different, the ballot may be counted as long as the first name and handwriting are clearly the same. If it appears that the voter has changed his or her name, and the information required under RCW 29A.08.440 to complete a name change is not provided or is illegible, the county auditor shall send the voter a change-of-name form under RCW 29A.08.440 and direct the voter to complete the form.

(b) If the signature on the ballot declaration does not match the signature on the registration record because the voter signed with a middle name, nickname, or initials, the ballot may be counted as long as the last name and handwriting are clearly the same.

(5) If the name on the signature does not match the printed name, and the signature on the ballot declaration does not match the signature on the voter registration record, because the ballot was signed by another registered voter, the ballot may be counted for the registered voter who actually signed the ballot declaration if:

(a) The voter who signed the declaration can be identified;

(b) The signature on the declaration matches the signature on the voter registration record; and

(c) The voter who signed the declaration has not returned another ballot.

The county auditor may only count the races and measures for which the voter who signed the declaration is eligible to vote.

(6) If it is determined that the signature on a ballot declaration does not match the signature on the registration record and, prior to 8:00 p.m. on election day, the registered voter asserts that the signature on the ballot declaration is not his or

her signature, the voter may be provided the opportunity to vote a replacement ballot.

(7) A voter may not cure a missing or mismatched signature for purposes of counting the ballot in a recount.

(8) A record must be kept of all ballots with missing and mismatched signatures. The record must contain the date on which the voter was contacted or the notice was mailed, as well as the date on which the voter subsequently submitted a signature to cure the missing or mismatched signature. That record is a public record under chapter 42.56 RCW and may be disclosed to interested parties on written request.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, WSR 12-14-074, § 434-261-050, filed 7/2/12, effective 8/2/12. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.04.620, and 29A.04.630. WSR 11-24-064, § 434-261-050, filed 12/6/11, effective 1/6/12. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.08.-420, 29A.24.131, 29A.40.110, 29A.46.020, and 29A.80.041. WSR 10-14-091, § 434-261-050, filed 7/6/10, effective 8/6/10. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611. WSR 06-23-094, § 434-261-050, filed 11/15/06, effective 12/16/06; WSR 06-14-050, § 434-261-050, filed 6/28/06, effective 7/29/06; WSR 05-17-145, § 434-261-050, filed 8/19/05, effective 9/19/05.]

**WAC 434-261-055 Returned ballot lacking verification of identity.** If a voter who is provisionally registered and must still verify his or her identity as part of the registration process casts a ballot without providing adequate identification, the ballot cannot be counted unless the voter provides adequate identification no later than the day before certification of the election.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.04.620, and 29A.04.630. WSR 11-24-064, § 434-261-055, filed 12/6/11, effective 1/6/12. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611. WSR 07-24-044, § 434-261-055, filed 11/30/07, effective 12/31/07; WSR 07-02-100, § 434-261-055, filed 1/3/07, effective 2/3/07.]

**WAC 434-261-070 Manual inspection of ballots.** (1) All voting positions on voted ballots shall be manually inspected on both sides of the ballot to determine whether the ballot is readable by the vote tabulating system. The county auditor must ensure that write-in votes are tabulated correctly, consistent with the voter's intent. Ballots must be inspected for overvotes, undervotes, and write-in votes prior to tabulation. This manual inspection is a required part of processing ballots.

(2) The state of Washington is a voter intent state. When a voter's choice or intention can be determined, that vote shall be counted. If the manual inspection process detects any physically damaged ballots, unreadable ballots which might not be correctly counted by the tabulating equipment, or marks that differ from those specified in the voting instructions, such ballots may be duplicated or resolved, if necessary, and counted according to the statewide standards on what is a vote, as provided in WAC 434-261-086. The county canvassing board may authorize the county auditor to duplicate ballots that may be unreadable or uncountable by the tabulating system. Write-in votes without a readable mark in the target area must be duplicated or resolved. The county canvassing board shall make the final determination of voter intent for ballots not addressed in the statewide standards on what is a vote.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611. WSR 17-12-090, § 434-261-070, filed 6/6/17, effective 7/7/17. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.04.620, and 29A.04.630. WSR 11-24-064, § 434-261-070, filed 12/6/11, effective 1/6/12. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611. WSR 07-

12-032, § 434-261-070, filed 5/30/07, effective 6/30/07; WSR 06-11-042, § 434-261-070, filed 5/10/06, effective 6/10/06; WSR 05-17-145, § 434-261-070, filed 8/19/05, effective 9/19/05. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.610. WSR 04-15-089, § 434-261-070, filed 7/16/04, effective 8/16/04. Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.210, 29.36.150. WSR 02-07-029, § 434-261-070, filed 3/12/02, effective 4/12/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.080, 29.04.210, 29.36.150 and 29.79.200. WSR 97-21-045, § 434-261-070, filed 10/13/97, effective 11/13/97.]

**WAC 434-261-075 Votes on something other than a ballot.** If the voter returns voting responses by mail on any form other than a ballot, the votes thereon shall be acceptable and tallied provided that:

- (1) Only votes for offices or measures for which the voter is eligible are counted.
- (2) The candidate or measure response position for which the voter is voting can be clearly identified.
- (3) The ballot issued is not returned, or if returned, contains no marks indicating an attempt to vote it.
- (4) A valid signature on a ballot declaration is received with the voting responses.

The votes accepted must then be duplicated to a ballot that can be read by the electronic voting equipment.

Votes on a ballot from a previous primary or election cannot be counted for another primary or election. These ballots must be rejected per WAC 434-262-031.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611 and 29A.04.620. WSR 16-13-063, § 434-261-075, filed 6/13/16, effective 7/14/16. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.04.620, and 29A.04.630. WSR 11-24-064, § 434-261-075, filed 12/6/11, effective 1/6/12. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611. WSR 07-12-032, § 434-261-075, filed 5/30/07, effective 6/30/07; WSR 06-14-047, § 434-261-075, filed 6/28/06, effective 7/29/06; WSR 05-17-145, § 434-261-075, filed 8/19/05, effective 9/19/05. Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.210, 29.36.150. WSR 02-07-029, § 434-261-075, filed 3/12/02, effective 4/12/02.]

**WAC 434-261-086 Statewide standards on what is a vote.** (1) Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 15481(a)(6) and *Bush v. Gore*, 531 U.S. 98 (2000), the following standards determine whether irregular marks on a ballot constitute a valid vote that may be counted.

(a) Target area. Any marks made in the target area shall be counted as valid votes, with the exceptions below. Any marks made outside of the target area shall be valid only if they form a pattern of similar marks as outlined in (b) of this subsection, or qualify as written instructions in (e) of this subsection. Marks that trace or outline the target area are not valid votes unless they form a pattern of similar marks as outlined in (b) of this subsection. The following marks in the target area are exceptions that are not valid votes:

- (i) Obvious stray marks;
- (ii) Hesitation marks;
- (iii) Parts of written notes; and
- (iv) Corrected votes, as described in (c) and (e) of this subsection.

(b) Pattern of similar marks. Marks made outside of the target area shall be counted as valid votes as long as those marks form a pattern of similar marks. All races and issues for which the voter has indicated a choice outside the target area must have a similar mark.

(i) Marks made outside of the target area may be counted as valid votes even if one pattern of similar marks is used on one page of the ballot and another pattern of similar marks is used on another page of the ballot.

(ii) Marks made outside of the target area shall be counted as valid votes if one pattern of similar marks is used for measures and another pattern of similar marks is used for candidate races.

(iii) If some marks are in the target area and some are not, but the same *type* of mark is used, all such marks shall be counted as valid votes.

(iv) If the marks strike through candidate names or ballot measure responses in a pattern of similar marks throughout the ballot, all such marks shall be counted as valid votes.

(v) A mark outside the target area on a ballot that contains only one race or measure is not required to form a pattern.

(c) Corrected votes.

(i) If the voter has followed the instructions for correcting a vote, the stricken vote shall not be counted.

(ii) If a second choice is marked, it shall be counted as a valid vote. If a second choice is not marked, the race shall be considered undervoted.

(iii) If the voter has marked two target areas and placed an 'X' or slash over one of the marked areas, the choice without the 'X' or slash shall be counted as a valid vote.

(d) Not a correction. If the voter has both marked a choice correctly and placed an 'X' in the same target area, but has not marked a second target, it shall be counted as a valid vote. Changes made by the voter to wording printed on the ballot will not invalidate votes cast for that race or measure.

(e) Written instructions. If the voter has attempted to vote or correct a vote by providing written instruction regarding his or her intent, it shall be counted as the voter instructed. Written instructions can include words, circles, lines, or arrows.

(f) Identifying marks. Marks identifying the voter, such as initials, signatures, or addresses do not disqualify a ballot.

(g) Overvotes. Races or issues that have more target areas marked than are allowed are overvotes. No votes for that race or issue shall be counted. An exception is write-in votes for a candidate already printed on the ballot, as provided in (i) of this subsection.

(h) Write-in: Blank target area. 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.

(i) Write-in: Already on the ballot. 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.

(j) Write-in: Name variations. 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.

(k) Write-in: Blank line. 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.

(l) Write-in: Blank line and candidate. If a candidate's target area is marked, *and* the write-in target area is marked but no name is written on the line, it shall not be tallied as an overvote, but shall be counted as a valid vote for the printed candidate.

(m) Write-in: Name combinations. If a write-in vote is cast for a candidate with a combination of names already on the ballot, it shall NOT be counted as a vote for either printed candidate, but rather shall be counted as a valid vote for the name as written.

(n) Write-in: Overvotes. If a candidate's target area is 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. This applies whether or not the target area for the write-in is marked.

(o) Write-in: Not eligible. A write-in vote for a race not appearing on the voter's ballot shall not be counted.

Exception: If a provisional ballot has been cast and the voter has written in an office or measure that is not on the ballot, that vote shall be counted if it is determined, based on the voter's registration, that he or she is eligible to vote for that office or measure.

(p) Write-in: Vote in the wrong place. A write-in vote for a race appearing elsewhere on the ballot shall be counted as a valid vote, as long as all other requirements are fulfilled and the office, position number and political party, if applicable, are clearly indicated.

(q) Messy marks. When otherwise valid votes marked in a target area partially extend into the response area, it shall be counted as a vote if most of the mark is in the target area and intent can easily be discerned.

(r) Pattern of partisan voting. Voter intent in any single contest shall not be determined based on a pattern of partisan voting on the ballot.

Exception: On a federal write-in absentee ballot (FWAB) in which the voter has not written in a candidate's name but has written in the name of a political party, the written instructions may be counted as a vote if the canvassing board can discern that a candidate's party preference is consistent with the voter's instructions. The canvassing board shall not count the instructions as a vote if no candidate's party preference is consistent with the voter's instructions, or if multiple candidates' party preferences are consistent with the voters' instructions.

(s) Anything else. Voter intent on questionable marks not covered by the rules in this manual must be determined by county canvassing boards according to all applicable laws of the state of Washington and the canvassing board manual. Where more than one rule may apply, the county canvassing board has authority to determine which rule is most appropriate.

(2) The secretary of state shall publish an illustrated version of these standards in each optical scan and digital scan voting system used in the state. The secretary of state shall distribute the illustrated version to each county canvassing board and post it on the web site.

(3) The secretary of state shall periodically review and update the manual as necessary, and seek input from county canvassing boards and other interested parties to ensure that the standards remain current and comprehensive.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, WSR 14-06-040, § 434-261-086, filed 2/26/14, effective 3/29/14; WSR 09-18-098, § 434-261-086, filed 9/1/09, effective 10/2/09; WSR 08-15-052, § 434-261-086, filed 7/11/08, effective 8/11/08; WSR 07-12-032, § 434-261-086, filed 5/30/07, effective 6/30/07.]

(6/6/17)

#### **WAC 434-261-100 Ballot duplication procedures. (1)**

Written procedures shall be established detailing the situations in which ballots may be duplicated. These procedures shall be included as a part of the county canvassing board manual.

(2) If a county uses an automated duplication program, only votes appearing in a human-readable form on the original ballot may be duplicated onto a machine-readable ballot. The human-readable votes on the original ballot must be compared to the votes printed on the duplicated ballot to ensure that the votes are duplicated accurately. If a human-readable version of any races or ballot pages of the original ballot are not returned or available, votes in those races may not be duplicated or counted.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, WSR 14-06-040, § 434-261-100, filed 2/26/14, effective 3/29/14; WSR 05-17-145, § 434-261-100, filed 8/19/05, effective 9/19/05. Statutory Authority: RCW 29.04.080, 29.04.210, 29.36.150 and 29.79.200. WSR 97-21-045, § 434-261-100, filed 10/13/97, effective 11/13/97.]

**WAC 434-261-102 Resolving ballots on digital scan vote tallying systems.** In counties tabulating ballots on a digital scan vote tallying system, two staff designated by the auditor's office must resolve ballots identified as requiring resolution. A log of the resolutions must be printed linking staff conducting the resolutions to the ballots resolved. The log must be signed by the two staff.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.04.620, and 29A.04.630. WSR 11-24-064, § 434-261-102, filed 12/6/11, effective 1/6/12. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, WSR 06-23-094, § 434-261-102, filed 11/15/06, effective 12/16/06; WSR 06-11-042, § 434-261-102, filed 5/10/06, effective 6/10/06.]

**WAC 434-261-106 Manual counting of ballots.** Procedures for manual counting of ballots shall be substantially the same as a manual recount according to chapter 434-264 WAC.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.04.620, and 29A.04.630. WSR 11-24-064, § 434-261-106, filed 12/6/11, effective 1/6/12.]

**WAC 434-261-108 Random check of ballot counting equipment.** If a random check of up to six batches of ballots is conducted pursuant to RCW 29A.60.170 in a county that uses optical scan voting equipment, each batch must be tabulated on a different scanner if more than one scanner is used in the election. If there are more scanners used in the election than batches to be checked, then the scanners must be selected at random.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, WSR 14-06-040, § 434-261-108, filed 2/26/14, effective 3/29/14.]

**WAC 434-261-110 Election results anomalies.** Precinct results, showing overvotes and undervotes, shall be inspected by the county canvassing board, or their designees, for anomalies that may indicate problems with the hardware or programming used to tabulate the votes. Anomalies may include, but are not limited to, an abnormal number of overvotes, undervotes, vote distribution, and voter turnout in any precinct, race, or jurisdiction. This inspection shall be completed within two days of the election.

Additionally, these results shall be used in the reconciliation process required in RCW 29A.60.235.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.04.620, and 29A.04.630. WSR 11-24-064, § 434-261-110, filed 12/6/11, effective 1/6/12. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611. WSR 05-17-145, § 434-261-110, filed 8/19/05, effective 9/19/05. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.610. WSR 05-06-035 and 05-08-065, § 434-261-110, filed 2/25/05 and 3/31/05, effective 3/28/05 and 5/1/05.]

**WAC 434-261-112 Direct recording electronic voting devices (DREs).** Votes recorded on DREs must be uploaded into the ballot tabulation program or duplicated onto paper ballots. The upload or duplication may take place after election day. DRE data storage must remain in secure storage before and after tabulation.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611. WSR 17-12-090, § 434-261-112, filed 6/6/17, effective 7/7/17.]

**WAC 434-261-120 Referral of questionable ballots to canvassing board.** Whenever counting center personnel has a question about the validity of a ballot or the votes contained on the ballot that they are unable to resolve, the ballot shall be forwarded to the canvassing board for review. The facts giving rise to the question of validity must be noted.

Ballots being held for determination of validity or voter's intent shall be provided the same security as regular voted ballots and shall be kept in a secure area when not being processed.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.04.620, and 29A.04.630. WSR 11-24-064, § 434-261-120, filed 12/6/11, effective 1/6/12. Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611. WSR 06-23-094, § 434-261-120, filed 11/15/06, effective 12/16/06; WSR 05-17-145, § 434-261-120, filed 8/19/05, effective 9/19/05.]

**WAC 434-261-125 Free access system for provisional ballots.** (1) Each county shall establish a free access system, as required by the Help America Vote Act, 42 U.S.C. sec. 15482 (a)(5), and RCW 29A.60.195 for provisional ballot voters.

(2) The free access system must employ measures to ensure that access is free of cost to the voter and restricted to the individual who cast the ballot, and that the voter's personal information is secure and confidential.

(3) For provisional ballots sent to other counties in the state, the free access system must provide the voter with information as to where the ballot was sent and how to find out if the ballot was counted in that county.

(4) For ballots received from another county, the free access system must provide the voter with information as to whether the ballot was counted and, if not, why. The county may send instructions to the voter on how to access the information.

(5) Provisional ballot disposition information must be available on a county's free access system no later than one week following certification of the election.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611, 29A.04.620, and 29A.04.630. WSR 11-24-064, § 434-261-125, filed 12/6/11, effective 1/6/12.]

**WAC 434-261-130 Opening ballot container.** Whenever it is determined there is a need to open all containers to conduct a mandatory or requested recount, or when such action is directed by court order, the containers shall be opened and the security of the ballots verified only by those

persons designated to do so, in writing, by the canvassing board.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611. WSR 05-17-145, § 434-261-130, filed 8/19/05, effective 9/19/05.]

**WAC 434-261-140 Precertification procedures.** Prior to certifying the election, the county auditor shall exercise due diligence to confirm that all returned ballots have been received, processed, and reconciled, and that no ballots have been untabulated erroneously. Due diligence may include:

- (1) Rechecking all ballot deposit sites; and
- (2) Rechecking ballot storage containers in the ballot processing area, ballot tabulation area, canvassing board area, and vault.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 29A.04.611. WSR 12-14-074, § 434-261-140, filed 7/2/12, effective 8/2/12.]