
HOUSE BILL 1003

State of Washington

67th Legislature

2021 Regular Session

By Representatives Klippert, Young, Graham, and Sutherland

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1 AN ACT Relating to requiring watermarks on mail-in ballots;
2 amending RCW 29A.40.180; reenacting and amending RCW 29A.40.110; and
3 adding a new section to chapter 29A.36 RCW.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 29A.36
6 RCW to read as follows:

7 (1) The secretary of state shall design a watermark for inclusion
8 on official ballots in any election subject to this title. The
9 watermark must be sufficient to prove that the ballot is an official
10 ballot and not a reproduction.

11 (2) Each ballot printed by a county auditor must include the
12 watermark designed under this section.

13 (3) This section does not preclude a county auditor from printing
14 a replacement ballot when requested by a voter under this title.
15 Replacement ballots must be identical in form to all original
16 official ballots, including a watermark.

17 **Sec. 2.** RCW 29A.40.110 and 2011 c 349 s 18, 2011 c 348 s 4, and
18 2011 c 10 s 41 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

19 (1) The opening and subsequent processing of return envelopes for
20 any primary or election may begin upon receipt. The tabulation of

1 absentee ballots must not commence until after 8:00 p.m. on the day
2 of the primary or election.

3 (2) All received return envelopes must be placed in secure
4 locations from the time of delivery to the county auditor until their
5 subsequent opening. After opening the return envelopes, the county
6 canvassing board shall place all of the ballots in secure storage
7 until processing. Ballots may be taken from the inner envelopes and
8 all the normal procedural steps may be performed to prepare these
9 ballots for tabulation.

10 (3) The canvassing board, or its designated representatives,
11 shall examine the postmark on the return envelope and signature on
12 the declaration before processing the ballot. The ballot must either
13 be received no later than 8:00 p.m. on the day of the primary or
14 election, or must be postmarked no later than the day of the primary
15 or election. All personnel assigned to verify signatures must receive
16 training on statewide standards for signature verification. Personnel
17 shall verify that the voter's signature on the ballot declaration is
18 the same as the signature of that voter in the registration files of
19 the county. Verification may be conducted by an automated
20 verification system approved by the secretary of state. A variation
21 between the signature of the voter on the ballot declaration and the
22 signature of that voter in the registration files due to the
23 substitution of initials or the use of common nicknames is permitted
24 so long as the surname and handwriting are clearly the same.

25 (4) If the postmark is missing or illegible, the date on the
26 ballot declaration to which the voter has attested determines the
27 validity, as to the time of voting, for that ballot. For overseas
28 voters and service voters, the date on the declaration to which the
29 voter has attested determines the validity, as to the time of voting,
30 for that ballot. Any overseas voter or service voter may return the
31 signed declaration and voted ballot by fax or email by 8:00 p.m. on
32 the day of the primary or election, and the county auditor must use
33 established procedures to maintain the secrecy of the ballot.

34 (5) After the ballot is separated from the return envelope, the
35 canvassing board, or its designated representatives, shall examine
36 the ballot to ensure that it has the watermark required under section
37 1 of this act. Ballots that do not have the watermark may not be
38 processed and may not be counted.

1 **Sec. 3.** RCW 29A.40.180 and 2020 c 208 s 10 are each amended to
2 read as follows:

3 (1) Each state university, regional university, and The Evergreen
4 State College as defined in RCW 28B.10.016 and each higher education
5 campus as defined in RCW 28B.45.012 shall open a nonpartisan student
6 engagement hub on its campus. The student engagement hub may be open
7 during business hours beginning eight days before, and ending at 8:00
8 p.m. on the day of, the general election. (~~All student engagement
9 hubs must allow students to download their exact ballot from an
10 online portal.~~) Upon request of the student government organization
11 to the administration and the county auditor, the student engagement
12 hub at a state university, regional university, or The Evergreen
13 State College as defined in RCW 28B.10.016 must allow voters to
14 register in person pursuant to RCW 29A.08.140(1)(b) and provide voter
15 registration materials and ballots.

16 (2) Each institution shall contract with the county auditor for
17 the operation of a student engagement hub under this section.

18 (3) Student engagement hubs are not voting centers as outlined in
19 RCW 29A.40.160 and must be operated in a manner that avoids partisan
20 influence or electioneering.

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