

**WAC 16-501-525 Unsigned ballot envelopes: Advisory votes, referenda, and board member elections.** The director of the department of agriculture is responsible for administering marketing order referenda under chapters 15.65 and 15.66 RCW and for administering elections for advisory votes and board member selection as authorized in RCW 15.24.035, 15.26.060, 15.28.023, 15.44.021, 15.65.240, 15.66.113, 15.88.050, 15.89.050, 15.115.060, and 16.67.060.

(1) The department will mail ballots to those eligible to vote in each election according to the terms of the applicable statute and marketing order. Each voter will be provided an official ballot, instructions for voting, a security envelope and return ballot-mailing envelope with a "Certificate of Eligibility" (certification) printed on the reverse side of the envelope.

(2) After casting a vote in the election, an eligible voter must place the ballot in the security envelope, which is then placed in the ballot-mailing return envelope with the certification on the reverse side. To validate his or her ballot, the voter is required to complete, sign and date the certification.

(3) In the event a ballot is submitted to the department and the certification is not signed and dated in accordance with the instructions contained on the outside of the ballot-mailing return envelope or the ballot is returned in a different envelope without a certification, the ballot-mailing envelope will not be opened nor will the ballot it contains be counted. The unopened ballot-mailing envelope will be set aside and retained in accordance with the appropriate records retention schedule.

(4) Only validated ballots will be included in a ballot count.

(5) This rule applies to referenda, advisory votes, elections, and runoffs required by statute.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 15.24.035, 15.26.060, 15.28.023, 15.44.021, 15.65.240, 15.66.113, 15.88.050, 15.89.050, 15.115.060, 16.67.060 and chapter 34.05 RCW. WSR 18-21-181, § 16-501-525, filed 10/24/18, effective 11/24/18. Statutory Authority: RCW 15.65.047 and 15.66.055. WSR 05-08-078, § 16-501-525, filed 4/1/05, effective 5/2/05.]