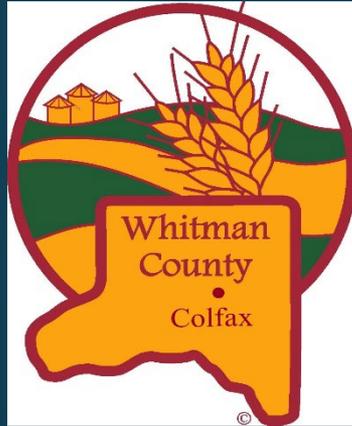


Sandy Jamison  
Whitman County Auditor  
Mish Stanley, Elections Supervisor

# Election Observer Training



Whitman County Auditor

Elections Office

304 N. Main Street

Colfax, WA 99111

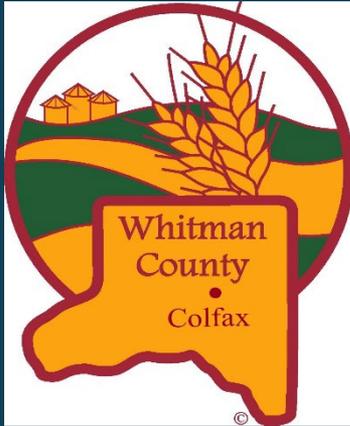
509-397-5284

Website: <http://www.whitmancounty.net/169/Election-Information>

Contact us by email: [elections@whitmancounty.gov](mailto:elections@whitmancounty.gov)

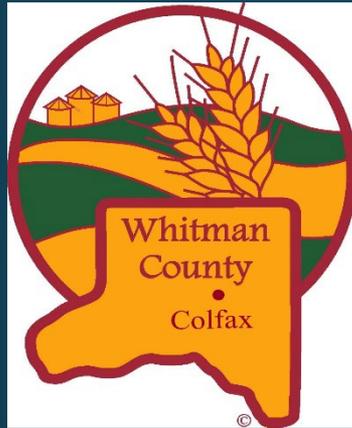
RCW-Revised Code of Washington

WAC-Washington Administrative Code



Official Election Observers protect the integrity of the election by impartially observing ballot processing activities.

WAC 434.261.020



# Official Election Observers

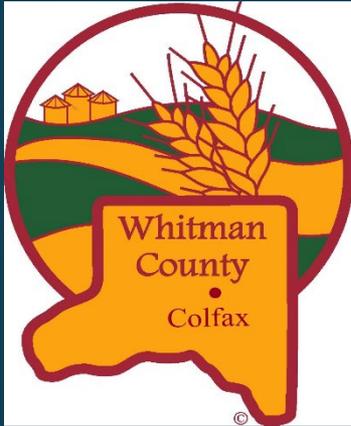
Represent a major political party

- --Must be identified by identification tags
- --Must sign a roster

Serve by appointment of a major political party

- --Current major parties are the Democratic and Republican Parties.

WAC 434.261.020



## Election Observer Duties

Understand the following ballot processes:

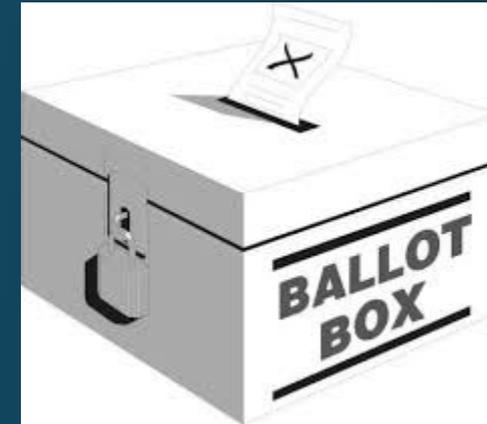
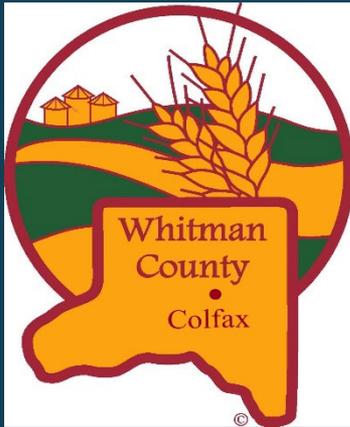
- Logic and accuracy test
- Processing mail ballots
- Inspection of ballots prior to tabulation
- Duplication
- Tabulation
- Security
- Certification
- Recounts (if applicable)

29A.40.100

RCW

110

WAC 434-250-



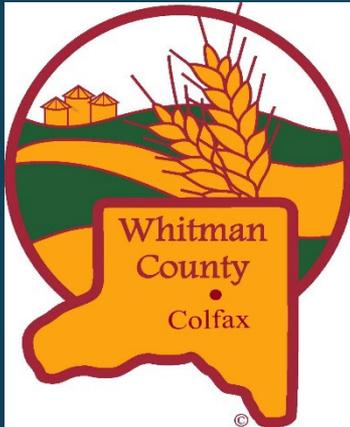
## Ballot Inspection

- We are a vote by mail county. All ballots are mailed at least 18 days prior to Election Day.

RCW 29A.40.070

- Every vote response position is inspected to determine if the votes on the ballot will be tabulated correctly by the tabulation system.

WAC 434-261-070

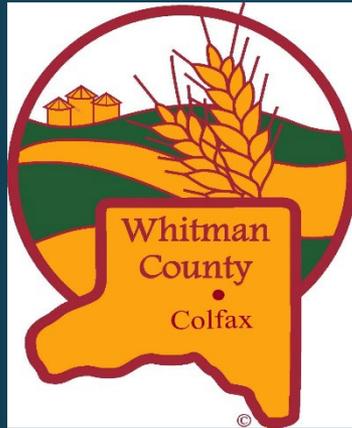


## Ballot Inspection Upon Receipt Into the Elections Office

Ballots are inspected for:

- Physical damage
- Marked areas that cannot be read by the tabulation system
  - Vote corrections
- Write-in votes without a mark in the response area
  - Marks different from the ballot instructions

WAC 434-261-070



## Ballot Inspection

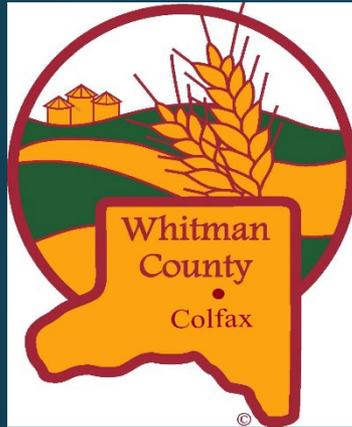
If a ballot does not pass inspection and cannot be cured then it is referred to the Canvassing Board.

Many ballot issues are resolved by utilizing the Secretary of State's manual, "Voter Intent, Statewide Standards on What is a Vote."

WAC 434-261-070

WAC 434-261-086

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## Ballot Duplication

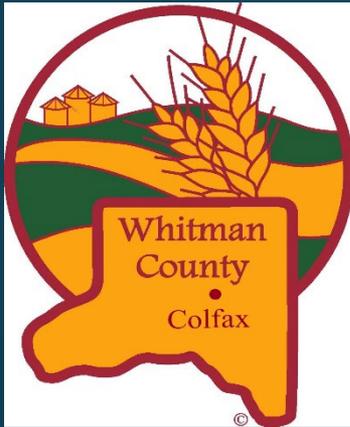
“Ballot duplication” is a true copy of valid votes from ballots received from registered voters - that permits the correct tabulation of intended votes

Ballots are duplicated by teams of two people

- The original ballot is not altered
- A log is kept of each duplicated ballot
- The original and duplicate are marked with the same identifying number
- The duplicate ballot is counted and the original ballot is securely stored.

RCW 29A.60.125

WAC 434-261-100



## Certification of Results

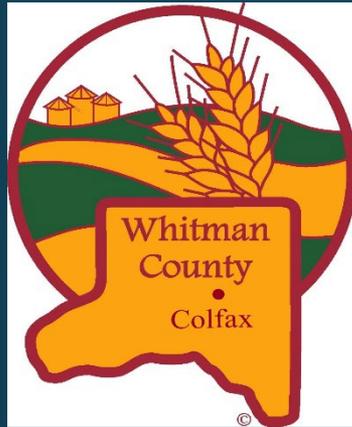
The County Canvassing Board, in an open public meeting, certifies the election results:

- 10 days after Special Elections
- 14 days after Primary Elections
- 21 days after the General Election

RCW 29A.60.140&190

WAC 434-262-025



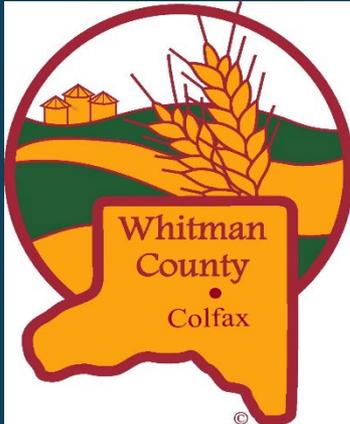


## Ballot Security

- Voted ballots must be in secure storage whenever the ballots are not being processed. Our secure storage space is located in a separate room from the processing room and is locked.
- Logs are kept as a record of *who & when* ballots were accessed.
- Numbered seals are used to secure containers containing ballots.
- Seal logs record the seal numbers and the staff placing and breaking the seals.

WAC 434-261-045

WAC 434-250-110



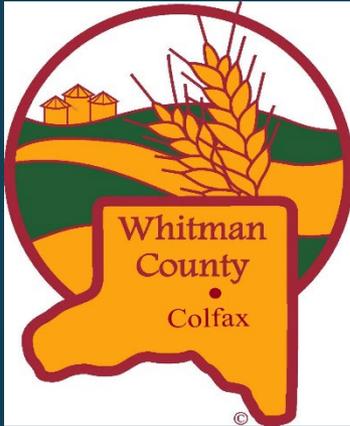
## Ballot Security

- After the ballots are run through the ballot scanner and tabulator, they are secured in a container with a numbered seal
- The sealed containers may only be opened by the Canvassing Board, to conduct recounts, or by court order

RCW 29A.60.110, 29A.60.120

WAC 434-261-130

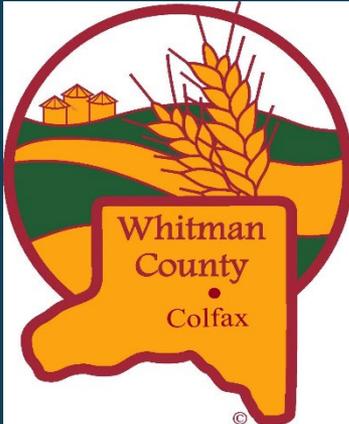




## Logic and Accuracy Tests

- The official test of the tabulating system
- L & A tests are conducted for any primary, special, or general election
- The test verifies the ballot counting system will correctly count votes cast for:
  - All candidates
  - All measures

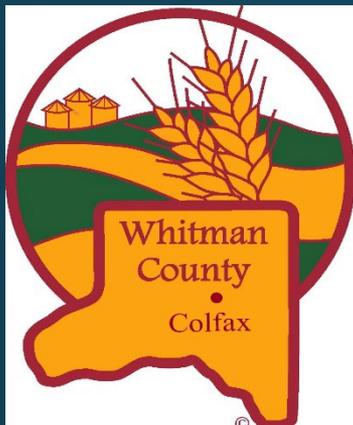
RCW 29A.12.130



## Logic and Accuracy Test

- An official election observer from each major political party should attend
- Test will be conducted even if requested observers do not attend
- Observers may not obstruct testing

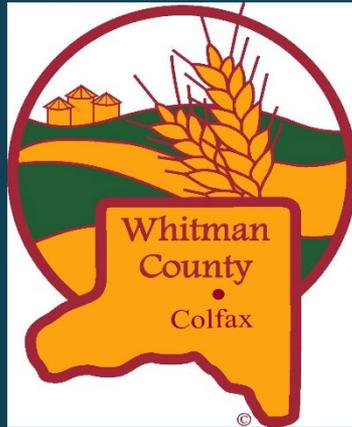
WAC 434-335-290



## Logic and Accuracy Tests

- The County is solely responsible for L & A testing for special elections
- The Secretary of State is usually present at tests for the primary and general elections
- Emergency L & A testing may be conducted, if necessary

WAC 434-335.320



## Logic and Accuracy Tests

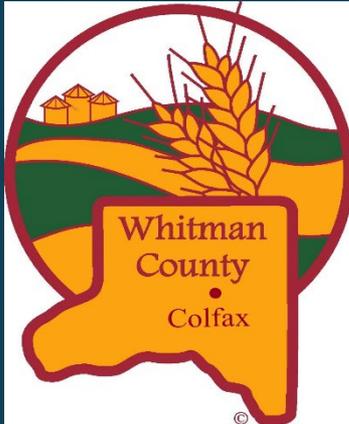
If present, official election observers are asked to sign the logic and accuracy certificate.

Signing the certificate as an observer means that:

- The observer attests to observing the process of the completed test

Signing the certificate does NOT mean that:

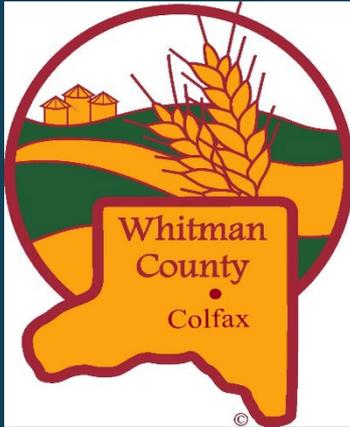
- The observer is responsible for the ballot counting
- The observer is verifying the correct programming of the equipment



## What is tested?

- Every ballot style
- All Responses for all candidates/issues
- Over votes and under votes
- Responses for write-ins
- Verification that all candidates/issues appear on the appropriated ballot style

RCW 29A.12.130

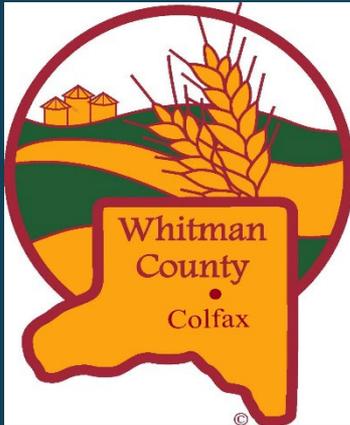


## Logic & Accuracy Test

### Secretary of State's Role

- Certify the test complies with law
- Assist in resolving discrepancies
- Retain copies of L & A certification

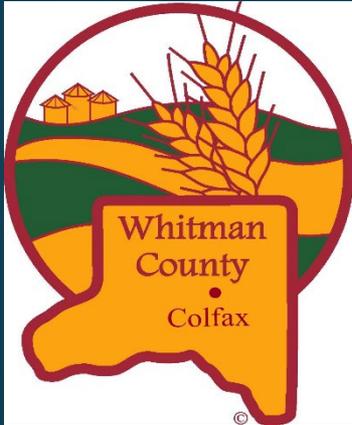
WAC 434.335.330



## Processing Mail Ballot Packets

- Ballot packets are processed by our trained staff using well defined, strictly enforced policies and procedures.
- When a ballot packet is in the processing room, there should always be at least two staff people in the room as well - accountability and control system.
- We maintain strong custody control of all ballots, software and equipment.

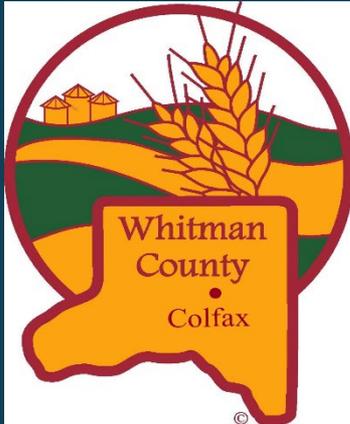




## The Return Process

- Incoming ballot packets are received and all signatures are verified to the original voter registration record.
- Staff must complete signature verification training by the WSP (Washington State Patrol) before they may verify signatures.
- A reconciliation process is performed throughout all stages of the election.





## Request for Observers

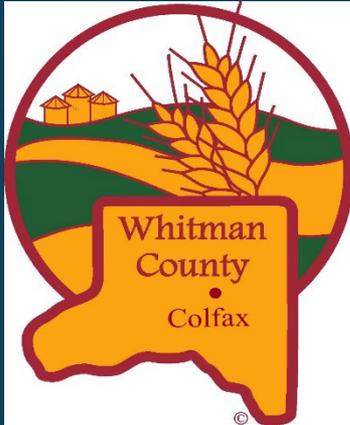
The County Auditor shall:

- Notify major political party chairs of the date when ballot processing will begin
- Request observers for the processing and tabulation of mail ballots

(Absence of observers will not prevent the county from processing ballots)

RCW 29A.40.100

WAC 434.250.110



## Mailing Out Mail Ballots

- Ballots must be available in the Auditor's Office 18 days prior to an election.
- Military and overseas ballots must be mailed 30 days prior to a Special Election
- - 45 days prior to a Primary or General election.
- All other ballots must be mailed 18 days prior to an election.

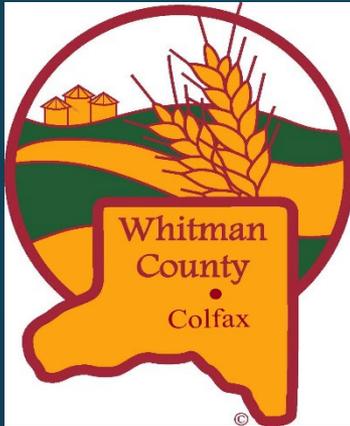
RCW 29A.40.070

## Processing Mail Ballots

Processing begins as soon as ballots are received by the Election's Office.

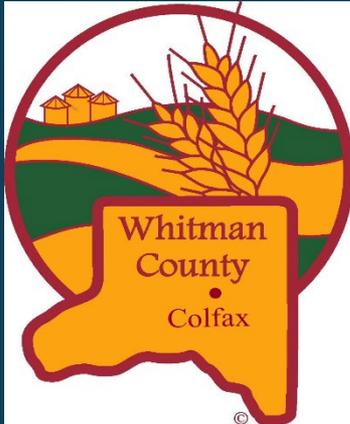
1. The postmark date is checked. Only ballots postmarked by Election Day are valid.
2. The ballot envelopes are placed into batches by drop box location or by mail.
3. The signature on the envelope is scanned into the system.
4. The signature on the outer envelope is compared to the signature on file.
5. If the signature passes the ballot envelope is placed in the holding area to be opened.
6. The outer envelopes are opened.
7. The security sleeves are separated from the envelopes, then counted against the paperwork that follows the batches of envelopes.
8. The outer envelopes are removed from the table.
9. The ballots are removed from the security sleeves.
10. The security sleeves are removed from the table.
11. The ballots are inspected.
12. Any ballots that need to be duplicated are sorted and stored, to be duplicated at a later time.
13. The County Canvassing Board usually delegates these sorting and duplicating tasks to the Auditor's staff.
14. Any ballots that do not need to be duplicated are placed in a sealed box until the scanning of ballots occur.





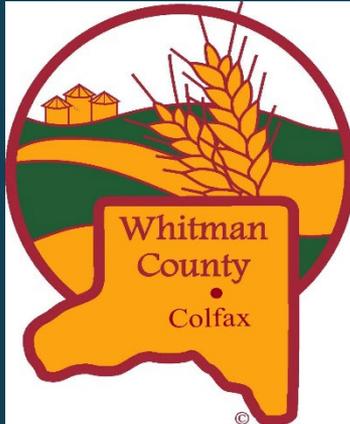
## Counting the Ballots

- Batches (normally 50-75 ballots per batch) are fed through the tabulator
- After each batch, the total # of ballots recorded by the tabulator is tied with the count being manually taken via our own adding machine
- No ballot results are known until after 8 pm on election night, when the “button” is pushed on the tabulator



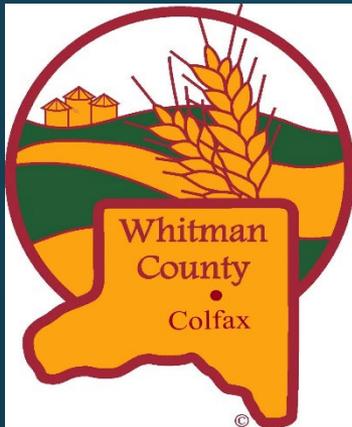
## Processing Room Activities You Should Observe

- Ballot Inspection
- Ballot Duplication
- Duplication Audit
- Tabulation
- Ballot Counting
- Random Batch Audit
- Locking and Emptying the ballot box on election day
- Security



## Ballot Boxes

- Designated elections staff empty the ballot boxes throughout the county. During transfer, these ballots are in locked and sealed containers.
- Upon receipt into the Elections Office, the ballot transport carrier seal number is compared to the number on the transfer log to confirm that these two numbers match.
- There are always two people at each drop box when it is being emptied.

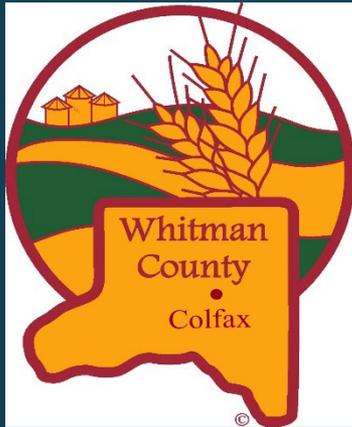


## Recount – Mandatory Machine

If there are less than 2,000 votes AND less than .5% spread in votes, then a recount must happen.

- Only count the votes for the affected candidates in determining if the threshold is met
- In the Primary Election, recounts occur between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place candidates
- In the General Election, recounts occur between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place candidates

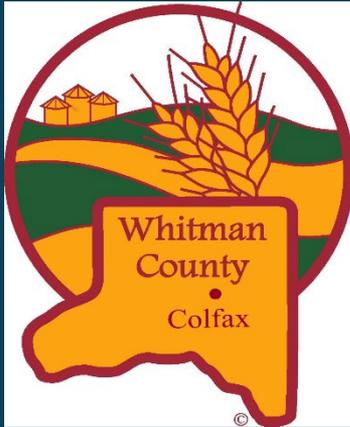
RCW 29A.64.021



## Recount – Mandatory Manual

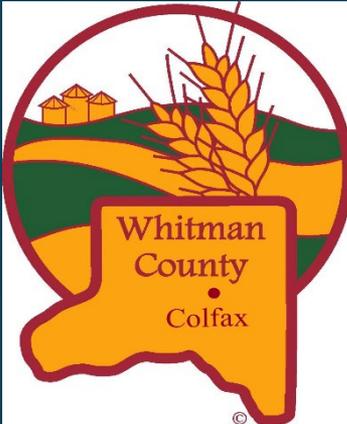
- Ballots are recounted by hand when
  - Statewide positions: The difference is less than 1,000 votes AND less than .25%
  - For regional races: The difference is less than 150 votes AND less than .25%
- The recount may be conducted by an alternative method if both candidates agree.

RCW 29A.64.021



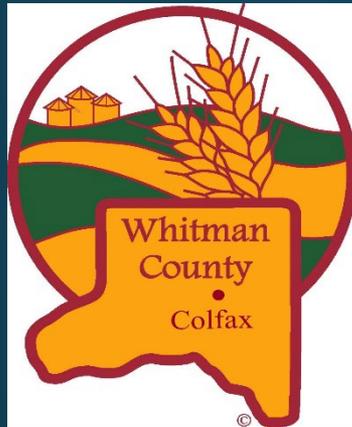
## The Top 2 Primary in August

- Voters no longer have to declare a party at the time of voting
- Voters may vote for candidates that prefer a party and/or state no party preference.
- The two candidates receiving the most votes advance to the General Election.
- Presidential Primary –only time voters are asked to declare a party.



## Election Observers

- Attend county training
- Understand election law
- Learn county procedures
- Observe election procedures
- Report any concerns to the appropriate county official
- Be respectful and follow observer rules



## Election Observers

Election Observers cannot:

- Touch ballots or ballot containers
- Obstruct the process
- Distract the workers

Remember your job title is “observer.”