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## Running for Local Elected Office

This page provides an overview of the process for seeking local elected office in Washington State, including required qualifications, the filing process, primary and general elections, financial disclosures, political advertisements, and more.

**IMPORTANT: Filing week has changed!** Beginning in 2024, the candidate filing period has been moved up about one week and now starts the first Monday in May (see [RCW 29A.24.050](#)). The candidate filing week for 2025 will be May 5-9.

**What this page covers:** This page focuses on running for local governing body or executive positions such as city councilmember, mayor, county commissioner, county auditor, sheriff, fire district commissioner, school board director, etc.

**What this page does *not* cover:** This page does not address unique requirements to run for judicial offices or temporary elected positions such as political party precinct officers or charter review board members.

It also does not address elections in conservation districts, districts that require property ownership to vote (such as irrigation districts, diking/drainage districts, or weed control districts), or proposed new districts/new cities.

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## Overview

There are thousands of local government elected positions in Washington State encompassing a wide range of functions and job duties in cities, towns, counties, and many types of special purpose districts. These elected positions are crucial to providing leadership and oversight for local governments, and any qualified individual can run for these offices.

Below is a summary of the various types of elected positions.

### Cities and Towns

Washington has 281 cities and towns, all of which have a specific [classification](#) (first class, second class, code city, town, or unclassified) and [form of government](#) (mayor-council or council-manager) under state law.

All cities and towns are governed by an elected city council. In mayor-council cities and towns, voters also elect a mayor who serves as the city's chief administrative officer. Council-manager cities, on the other hand, designate one councilmember to serve as a ceremonial mayor – usually selected by the other councilmembers – and hire a professional city manager.

To see the classification and form of government of any city or town, refer to MRSC's [Washington City and Town Profiles](#).

City and town officials are generally elected in odd-numbered years ([RCW 29A.04.330](#)). All city and town offices are nonpartisan ([RCW 29A.52.231](#)), meaning no party affiliations will be listed on the ballot. A "full" or "regular" term for most city officials is four years.

**Charter cities:** There are 10 [first class cities](#) – Aberdeen, Bellingham, Bremerton, Everett, Richland, Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma, Vancouver, and Yakima – and one home rule charter code city (Kelso) that may have slightly different election provisions.

In addition, one unclassified city (Waitsburg) continues to operate under its original territorial charter and conducts its own independent elections. In these cities, be sure to consult the election provisions in the city charter.

## Counties

There are 39 counties in Washington, most of which are governed by an elected board of county commissioners. Several home rule charter counties have county councils instead.

Each county also has a number of other independently elected county positions, typically including an assessor, auditor, county clerk (superior court), prosecuting attorney, sheriff, treasurer, and sometimes a coroner. For more information on these different offices and their general duties, see our page [County Elected and Appointed Officials](#).

Unlike cities, towns, and special purpose districts, most county offices are partisan, meaning that each candidate will self-identify a party affiliation that will be listed on the ballot ([RCW 29A.04.110](#)). However, the candidate does not have to be endorsed by the party or have any formal affiliation with a party, and candidates may also choose to express no party preference.

Most county officials are elected during even-numbered years (see [RCW 29A.04.321](#) and [RCW 36.16.010](#)), except for certain home rule counties or filling certain unexpired terms resulting from a [vacancy](#). A "full" or "regular" term for county officials is typically four years (see [RCW 36.16.020](#) and [RCW 36.32.030](#)).

**Home rule charter counties:** There are seven [home rule charter counties](#) – Clallam, Clark, King, Pierce, San Juan, Snohomish, and Whatcom – that may be governed by a county council instead of a board of commissioners and have adopted somewhat different election provisions by charter, such as designating additional elected positions, making certain offices nonpartisan, or holding regular elections in odd-numbered years. In these counties, be sure to consult the election provisions in the county charter.

**"Special Purpose Districts" – Fire Districts, Ports, Public Hospitals, Schools, Utility Districts, Etc.**

In addition to Washington's cities, towns, and counties, there are hundreds of special purpose districts that perform specialized functions.

"Special purpose district" is a generic term that broadly encompasses many different government types. While there are varying definitions, MRSC uses the term broadly to refer to any local government that is not a city, town, or county. This includes:

- Cemetery districts
- Fire protection districts and regional fire authorities
- Park and recreation districts
- Port districts
- Public hospital districts (PHDs)
- Public utility districts (PUDs)
- School districts
- Water-sewer districts
- And many others

Most of these special purpose districts are governed by elected commissioners or directors, although some districts (such as library districts or transit districts) are governed by appointed officials or trustees instead.

Most special purpose district officials are elected in odd-numbered years ([RCW 29A.04.330](#)), although there are exceptions for districts where property ownership is required to vote as well as PUDs and conservation districts.

All special purpose district offices are nonpartisan, meaning no party affiliations will be listed on the ballot ([RCW 29A.52.231](#)). The length of a "full" or "regular" term for special purpose district officials is typically four or six years, depending on the agency type.

**Unique provisions:** There are unique election provisions for conservation districts ([chapter 89.08 RCW](#)) and districts requiring property ownership to vote, such as irrigation districts ([chapter 87.03 RCW](#)), various diking, drainage, or flood control "special districts" ([Title 85 RCW](#)), or weed control districts ([chapter 17.04 RCW](#)). These unique provisions are not discussed on this page, so consult the relevant laws for those jurisdiction types.

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## Who Can Run for Office?

In order to hold *any* elective public office in Washington State, a person must meet the qualifications in [RCW 42.04.020](#) and [RCW 29A.24.075](#) and be an "elector" (as defined in the Washington State Constitution, [Article VI, Section 1](#)) of the city, county, or special purpose district in which they are running for office.

To summarize these various requirements: at the time a candidate *files their declaration of candidacy with the county elections office* – typically in early May – the candidate must:

- Be a United States citizen,
- Be 18 years of age or older,
- Be a registered voter within the jurisdiction/district they seek to represent (all candidates should make sure their voter registration information is up-to-date),
- Be a resident of the state, county, and precinct for at least 30 days before they file the declaration of candidacy, and
- Not be currently incarcerated for a felony (see below).

Some offices may have additional requirements in state law or local charter, so consult your local government and county elections office to confirm the requirements.

For instance, in optional municipal code cities, each candidate must be a city resident for at least one year to hold office. See [RCW 35A.12.030](#) (mayor-council code cities) and [RCW 35A.13.020](#) (council-manager code cities). MRSC takes the position that this means one year before the date of the general election. See, generally, *In re Contested Election of Schoessler*, 140 Wn.2d 368 (2000).

Meanwhile, any candidate for the position of county prosecuting attorney must also be admitted as an attorney in the State of Washington (see [RCW 36.27.010](#)).

### Felony Convictions

If a person has been *disqualified from voting* due to a felony conviction, they are not eligible to run for office. See the Washington State Constitution [Article VI, Section 1](#) and [Section 3](#).

Specifically, this applies to all persons convicted of an "infamous crime" as defined in [RCW 29A.04.079](#), which means "a crime punishable by death in the state penitentiary or imprisonment in a state or federal correctional facility," but not including adjudication in juvenile court or convictions for misdemeanors or gross misdemeanors.

However, a convicted felon's voting rights are automatically restored once the person is no longer incarcerated. See [RCW 29A.08.520](#).

To summarize, convicted felons may *not* run for office while they are incarcerated for a felony, but they *may* run for office once they are no longer incarcerated for the felony.

However, an elected official must forfeit their office if they are convicted of a felony *while in office*. See [RCW 42.12.010](#)(5).

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### Which Offices Are Up for Election?

At least two weeks before the candidate filing period each year, and often significantly earlier, each [county elections office](#) will post a list of all positions that are scheduled to be voted upon this year (see [WAC 434-215-005](#)).

For each position, these postings typically include the name of the incumbent, the term length and type, whether the position is partisan or nonpartisan, and any associated filing fee.

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## Term Length and Type

It is important to understand the different term lengths and types (see [RCW 29A.24.020](#)) for positions that will be on the ballot for each election:

- **"Regular" or "full" term:** This is a regularly scheduled election and the normal length of time an elected official serves in the office. For city and county positions, this is typically four years. However, there are a few positions with shorter terms – for instance, some elected positions in certain first class cities (according to city charter) and council position seven in second-class cities (see [RCW 35.23.051](#)). For special purpose districts, the regular term length is typically four or six years depending on the agency type and applicable state laws.
- **"Unexpired" term:** This means the office was *not* originally scheduled to be on the ballot this year, but the person who was elected to the position left before the end of their regular term, creating a [vacancy](#). While the position may have been temporarily filled by appointment, it must appear again on the general election ballot and the winner will serve the remainder of the original full term. As a result, this "unexpired" term will be shorter than the regular/full term.
- **"Short and full" term:** This means that the office *was* originally scheduled to be on the ballot this year, but the person who was elected to the position left before the end of their regular term, creating a [vacancy](#). While the position may have been temporarily filled by appointment, it will appear on the general election ballot as originally scheduled. The winner will technically serve two terms – a "short" term that starts immediately after the election certification and ends December 31, and then the subsequent "full" term starting on January 1. See [RCW 29A.04.169](#).

**Term limits:** There are no term limits in state law for local elected officials, and many local governments lack the legal authority to impose term limits. However, some charter cities, charter counties, or optional municipal code cities do have the authority to voluntarily adopt term limits (see [AGO 1991 No. 22](#)), so elected officials within such jurisdictions should consult their local rules.

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## Elected Official Salaries

Many elected officials are eligible to receive some sort of salary or compensation for their service, but the amounts vary depending on the type of agency, the applicable state laws, and local policies.

Some officials are paid a fixed salary regardless of the number of hours or days worked, while others are paid on a per diem or per-meeting basis, and some are not paid anything other than expense reimbursements. County officials are generally paid more than city or special purpose district officials. Elected officials also *might* be eligible to receive benefits in certain cases.

For more information on this topic, see our page on [Salaries, Compensation, and Benefits for Local Elected Officials](#).

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## Holding Multiple Government Offices

Washington does not have a "resign to run" law, so any current government employee or official can run for local elected office as long as they are otherwise eligible to hold office.

However, if a candidate who already holds another office wins the election, there are potential conflicts of interest that might require the individual to give up one of their positions.

State law prohibits holding certain positions simultaneously. For instance, a public hospital district commissioner cannot also be an employee of the same public hospital district ([RCW 70.44.040\(3\)](#)). In this example, the hospital employee could *run* for the position of hospital commissioner while still on staff, but if the employee *won* the election they would have to resign their staff position to assume the elected office.

There are similar prohibitions, with limited exceptions, for optional municipal code cities – see [RCW 35A.12.030](#) for mayor-council code cities and [RCW 35A.13.020](#) for council-manager code cities.

Other statutes or local charters/codes may provide additional restrictions on dual office-holding, so always consult the state laws and local rules applicable to your jurisdiction(s).

In addition, the common law (court-made) doctrine of incompatible offices says that the same person may not hold two or more "public offices" simultaneously if those offices would be considered "incompatible" with one another – for instance, if one position is subordinate to the other or if there



would be a conflict of interest between the two positions. For more information on this topic, see our page on [Incompatible Offices](#).

Even if the offices are compatible, there could be potential financial conflicts of interest – for instance, if the official is in a position to vote on a collective bargaining agreement that would cover their position as a paid employee. There could also be blurred lines of authority if, for instance, a city employee who reports to an elected mayor was elected to city council. The jurisdiction's attorney may need to provide legal advice depending on the facts of the situation.

**Appearing On the Same Ballot More than Once.** A candidate's name may not appear more than once on the same ballot ([RCW 29A.36.201](#)). If a candidate is interested in two offices that would both be on the same ballot, the candidate must choose just one of those positions to file for and run for that office. The only exceptions are for precinct committee officers or temporary elected positions such as charter review board members or freeholders.

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## Prohibited Use of Public Facilities

Current government officials or employees who are running for office or seeking reelection must be careful to keep their election activities separate from their work activities and may not use "public facilities" (such as a work computer, printer, vehicle, or company time) to support their election campaign.

For more information, see our page on [Use of Public Facilities in Election Campaigns](#).

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## Conflicts of Interest

State law prohibits local elected officials from having financial conflicts of interest, with limited exceptions.

For instance, an elected official on a governing body (city council, board of commissioners/directors, etc.) generally may not have a financial interest in a contract with their own agency, since the governing body has the authority to approve such contracts and the official has a personal financial stake in the decision. This applies to collective bargaining agreements as well as private contracts.

Violations can result in civil penalties, voiding of a contract, and possible forfeiture of office.

Even if the official does not vote on the contract or has recused themselves, a conflict of interest still exists. Unless there is a qualifying exception, the only ways to avoid the conflict of interest are either to resign from office and proceed with the contract on a private basis, or to remain in office but forgo the contract.

Some agencies have also adopted their own local codes of ethics that are stricter than state law.

Any candidate who has a financial interest in a contract with a local government, has a spouse or dependent with a financial interest in such a contract, or who might be interested in such a contract in the future, should review the relevant laws/policies and carefully consider the impact of the conflict before seeking office within that government.

For more information on these topics, see our pages on [Ethics and Conflicts of Interest](#) and [Local Codes of Ethics](#).

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## Filing the Declaration of Candidacy

To run for office, an individual must file a declaration of candidacy with the county filing officer during the filing period and submit the required filing fee or petition, if applicable.

The filing officer is typically the county auditor or, for some counties, the head of the elections office; for simplicity's sake, we will refer to the filing officers and their departments as the "county elections office."

**Important:** A summary of the filing process is below, but always refer to the candidate filing guide produced by [your county elections office](#) which will contain the specific requirements for your county.

Candidates might be required to file with the state Public Disclosure Commission (PDC), as described later, *before* filing the declaration of candidacy with the county elections office if they have already publicly stated that they are running for office or engaged in certain other campaign-related activities.

## Regular Filing Period and Declaration of Candidacy

The regular candidate filing period lasts for five days, beginning at 8:00 AM the first Monday in May and ending at 5:00 PM on Friday of the same week ([RCW 29A.24.050](#)).

Each candidate must complete the declaration of candidacy form ([RCW 29A.24.031](#)) provided by their county elections office. Candidate filings are typically submitted online, but they may also be submitted in-person (see [RCW 29A.24.040](#)) or by mail ([RCW 29A.24.081](#)).

Each candidate will also be asked, either during the filing process or shortly thereafter, to provide information for the local voters' pamphlets that will be mailed to voters shortly before the primary and general elections – such as a brief biography, candidate statement, and photo. See [RCW 29A.32.241-.250](#). The deadline for candidate submissions is typically right after the filing deadline. Candidates are strongly encouraged to submit this information as it provides a chance for voters to get to know them better and make an informed decision.

**Candidate names and nicknames.** For their first name, a candidate is allowed to use a nickname by which they are commonly known, but the last name must be the last name under which the candidate is registered to vote. Candidates may *not* include a nickname designed intentionally to mislead voters, and they may *not* include a nickname that indicates a present or past occupation/military rank, a position on a policy issue, or the candidate's political affiliation. See [RCW 29A.24.060](#).

If a person files a declaration of candidacy using a false name or a name similar to an existing candidate with the intent to confuse and mislead the voters, they may be charged with a felony under [RCW 29A.84.320](#). If two or more candidates genuinely have very similar names that might confuse voters, the filing officer may include additional information to distinguish between the candidates (see [WAC 434-215-060](#)).

## Filing Fees

The filing fee for each office depends on the [salary or compensation for that office](#); see [RCW 29A.24.091](#). Your county elections office will list the filing fee for each office, but here is a summary of how the fees are calculated. (Write-in filing fees are slightly different, as discussed later.)

Annual salary for the office	Filing fee
No annual salary, or compensation is on per-meeting or per diem basis	No fee
\$1,000 or less per year	\$10
More than \$1,000 per year	1% of annual salary

Any candidate who lacks sufficient assets or income to pay the filing fee may file a petition instead; see [RCW 29A.24.091\(4\)](#). The petition must follow the format and requirements prescribed by [RCW 29A.24.101](#) and contain the signatures of registered voters within the jurisdiction. The number of signatures must be at least as great as the number of dollars of the filing fee. For instance, if the filing fee is \$120, the candidate may submit a petition with at least 120 valid signatures instead.

## Withdrawing

Any candidate who filed for office during the regular candidate filing period may withdraw their declaration of candidacy no later than 5:00 PM on the Monday following the last day of the regular filing period ([RCW 29A.24.131](#)).

The candidate must submit a signed request that their name not be printed on the ballot; the filing fee is non-refundable.

**Withdrawing after the official withdrawal deadline:** Any candidate who unofficially "withdraws" after the withdrawal deadline will still appear on the respective primary or general election ballot, unless a court orders their removal.

If a candidate who unofficially withdrew after the withdrawal deadline is one of the top two vote-getters in the primary election, they will still advance to the general election. If the candidate receives the most votes at the general election, they will be considered elected to office.

If the candidate has changed their mind and again wishes to serve, they could assume office if otherwise qualified. If the candidate still does not wish to serve, they may either assume office and then resign, creating a [vacancy](#), or they could refuse to assume the office, in which case the

governing body could declare the seat vacant and then fill it by appointment.

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## If No One Files – Special Filing Period

If the withdrawal deadline has passed and no one has filed for a particular office, there is a "void in candidacy" for the office. See [RCW 29A.24.141](#). A void in candidacy also occurs if the only candidates who filed have either died or been disqualified.

When such a void occurs before the primary election, the filing officer must open a special filing period for three normal business days and provide notice to the public and the news media within the county (see [RCW 29A.24.181](#)). Any candidates who file during the special filing period will appear on the general election ballot, and no primary will be held. The candidate receiving the most votes in the general election will be declared the winner.

There is no withdrawal period for candidates who file during a special filing period.

If the special filing period has passed and *still* no one has filed for office, or if the void occurs after the primary election, a "lapsed election" occurs. See [RCW 29A.24.191-.220](#). The position is considered stricken from the ballot, no write-in votes will be counted, and the incumbent will "hold over" or remain in office for another term. If the incumbent does not wish to serve another term, they may resign and create a [vacancy](#) that will be filled by appointment.

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## Financial Disclosures and PDC Reporting

Within two weeks of "becoming a candidate," most candidates for local office must file a C-1 candidate registration form with the state [Public Disclosure Commission](#) (PDC), as well as an F-1 personal financial affairs statement, in accordance with [chapter 42.17A RCW](#) (which will be reorganized as [Title 29B](#) beginning January 1, 2026).

There are certain exemptions – for instance, candidates seeking election in small jurisdictions usually do not have to file financial disclosures. See [RCW 42.17A.135](#) and the PDC guidance on [Who Files the F-1 Report](#).

**Important:** You might be required to file PDC reports *before* you file a declaration of candidacy with the county elections office. For PDC purposes, you become a "candidate" (as defined in [RCW 42.17A.005](#)) and trigger reporting requirements the first time you:

- Receive contributions or make campaign-related expenditures,
- Reserve advertising space or facilities to promote your candidacy,
- Authorize someone else to do any of those activities,
- Publicly state that you are seeking office, or
- File the declaration of candidacy with the county elections office.

It is important to be aware of the exact date that your candidacy begins. To avoid triggering the reporting requirements inadvertently or earlier than intended, a person exploring whether to run should say that they are "thinking about running" for office.

In addition, candidates who are required to file with the PDC must report their campaign contributions and expenses using either "mini reporting" or "full reporting" depending on the amount of money they intend to raise or spend. Candidates who are required to file an F-1 statement will also be required to file annual F-1 statements during their time in office, if they are elected.

The PDC is the agency responsible for campaign finance rules and for investigating potential campaign violations. Candidates who violate the financial disclosure requirements can face penalties ranging from civil fines to, if a court finds that the violation probably affected the election outcome, the voiding of the election itself (see [RCW 42.17A.750](#)).

For more information, carefully review the [PDC resources for candidates](#), which includes training videos and live online classes.

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## Political Advertisements and Campaign Signs

Any political advertisements must identify the ad sponsor(s), although the requirements vary depending on the type of ad. For more information, see the PDC webpage on [Sponsor ID: What to Include](#).

Many political candidates use social media to help spread the word. Candidates for local office, including incumbents seeking reelection, should

use a personal social media account rather than an official account for all campaign-related activities. However, if the official is elected to office, they may then want to refrain from using personal social media accounts for work-related matters to reduce potential First Amendment or public records liability.

Temporary campaign signs must comply with local and state sign regulations. Campaign signs are generally permitted within the local right-of-way, especially if the area has served as a traditional public forum. (For example, in an area where "for sale" signs, advertisements, or notices of lost animals have been allowed.)

However, campaign signs are not allowed within the state highway right-of-way. In addition, placing campaign signs on private property or in the parking strip abutting private property requires the property owner's permission.

For more information about political advertising and campaign signs, see the [PDC's Political Advertising Guide](#), which recommends checking with the local public works department for guidance on where campaign signs can be placed, when they can be installed, and when they must be removed.

If a political sign has been legally placed, no one may remove or deface the sign without authorization, and defacement or improper removal is a misdemeanor ([RCW 29A.84.040](#)).

During the 18-day voting period, no campaign-related activities are allowed within 25 feet of ballot drop boxes. There is a similar prohibition on campaign-related activities inside of or within 100 feet of entrances to voting centers and student engagement hubs ([RCW 29A.84.510](#)).

Candidates are allowed by law to purchase voter data from their county elections office to be used for political purposes ([RCW 29A.08.720](#)).

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## The Primary Election

Depending on the office and how many people file, a primary election *might* be held on the first Tuesday in August ([RCW 29A.04.311](#)) to narrow the field to the top two candidates. As noted earlier, no primary will be held following a special filing period.

### Partisan Primaries

For partisan county offices, a primary election will be held for each "full" or "regular" term office, even if only one or two candidates have filed.



If more than two candidates file, the top two vote-getters in the primary will advance to the general election, regardless of political party.

If only one or two candidates file, the same candidate(s) will appear again on the general election ballot. However, no primary will be held for an *unexpired* partisan position (caused by a vacancy) if there is only one candidate who has filed for the position. That candidate would only appear on the general election ballot.

See [RCW 29A.52.112](#).

### Nonpartisan Primaries

If the candidate withdrawal deadline has passed and there are only one or two candidates who have filed for a particular nonpartisan office, there will be no primary election for that office and the candidate(s) will advance directly to the general election. See [RCW 29A.52.220](#).

In addition, no primary election is held for park and recreation districts or cemetery districts, regardless of how many candidates file for the office. Instead, all candidates will appear on the general election ballot. See [RCW 29A.52.220\(2\)](#).

### Primary Election Procedures

The order in which the candidates appear on the ballot (and in the voters' pamphlet) will be determined randomly by lot, which must be conducted publicly and may be witnessed by the media and by any candidate ([RCW 29A.26.131](#)).

Ballots are mailed to voters at least 18 days before the primary, with longer timelines for service members and overseas voters ([RCW 29A.40.070](#)). The first election results will be released shortly after the polls close at 8 PM on Election Day, with the results updated each day afterward as more ballots are received and tabulated.

Each county canvassing board must certify the election results 14 days after the primary ([RCW 29A.60.190](#)). The top two candidates will advance to the general election, and any defeated candidates must wrap up their campaigns and file any necessary reports with the PDC. See the PDC resources for [After the Election](#) and [Wrapping Up a Candidacy](#).

If the third-place candidate is especially close to the second-place candidate, the election may go to a mandatory recount, or one of the candidates may request a recount, as discussed on our page [Local Elections Administration](#).

## The General Election

The general election is held the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November ([RCW 29A.04.321](#)).

If a primary election was held for a given position, the top two candidates will be listed on the general election ballot, with the candidate who received the most votes in the primary listed first ([RCW 29A.36.170](#)).

If no primary election was held, all the candidates will be listed on the general election ballot, with the order of appearance determined randomly by lot (see [RCW 29A.36.170](#), [29A.52.220](#), and [29A.36.131](#)).

Ballots are mailed to voters at least 18 days before the general election, with longer timelines for service members and overseas voters ([RCW 29A.40.070](#)). The first election results will be released shortly after the polls close at 8 PM on Election Day, with the results updated each day afterward as more ballots are received and tabulated.

Each county canvassing board must certify the election results 21 days after the general election ([RCW 29A.60.190](#)). If the election is especially close, it may go to a mandatory recount, or one of the candidates may request a recount, as discussed on our page [Local Elections Administration](#).

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## Write-In Candidates

Instead of voting for the candidate(s) printed on the ballot in a primary or general election, any voter may write in the name of a different person, even if that person has not filed for office and is not an official candidate. Some candidates may even organize a write-in campaign if they missed the filing deadline.

However, for write-in votes to be counted, the person whose name is written in must declare their candidacy and pay the required write-in filing fees, if any, no later than 8 PM on Election Day.

The write-in filing fee for each office depends on the [salary or compensation for that office](#) as well as when the candidate files; see [RCW 29A.24.091](#). Your county elections office can tell you what the write-in filing fee is for any office, but below is a summary of how write-in fees are calculated.

Annual salary for the office	Write-in filing fee if filing more than 18 days before election	Write-in filing fee if filing 18 days or less before election
No annual salary, or compensation is on per-meeting or per diem basis	No fee	No fee
\$1,000 or less per year	No fee	\$25
More than \$1,000 per year	No fee	1% of annual salary

A person may only file as a write-in candidate for one position on the ballot, and they may not file a write-in campaign if their name already appears elsewhere on the ballot, unless the only office for which they are listed is precinct committee officer or a temporary elected position such as charter review board member or freeholder.

In addition, a candidate who filed for the primary election (either during the regular candidate filing or as a write-in candidate), but failed to advance to the general election, may not file as a write-in candidate for the same position at the general election.

See [RCW 29A.60.021](#) and [RCW 29A.24.311-.320](#).

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### After the General Election

After the election, all candidates must wrap up their campaigns and file any necessary reports with the PDC. See the PDC resources for [After the Election](#) and [Wrapping Up a Candidacy](#).

The winning candidate will begin transitioning from campaign mode to their new governance role. Many newly elected officials will have a few weeks to prepare before taking office on January 1, but some officials will take office almost immediately after the election results are certified in late November.

To assume office, the official must post the required bonds (if any) and take the oath of office, as described on our page [Official Bonds and Oaths of Office](#).

While not required, it is courteous for a losing candidate to concede to the winning candidate and congratulate them, which encourages civility and helps strengthen our country's longstanding democratic traditions. Similarly, the winning candidate should be gracious toward the losing candidate(s).

## Recommended Resources

Below are additional resources for local elective candidates or potential candidates to review:

- **[WA Secretary of State: County Elections Offices in Washington State](#)** – Provides contact information for elections offices in all 39 counties, which in turn provide detailed candidate filing guides
- **[Public Disclosure Commission: For Candidates](#)** – Information on financial disclosure registration and reporting
- **[Association of Washington Cities: So You Want to Be an Elected Official](#)** – Overview of the roles and responsibilities of city and town elected officials

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