

What is the statewide voter registration database?

Each voter has a single active record in the statewide voter registration database (VoteWA).

Who maintains the voter registration database?

All 29 County Election Offices and the Secretary of State's Office participate in maintaining the database. The counties and the state work in conjunction with each other to identify potential duplicate voters, deceased voters, voters who have moved from one county to another or out of state and voters currently under the confinement of the Department of Corrections.

How often is the voter registration database updated?

Constantly! Information used to maintain the database includes address forwarding information from the United States Postal Service, the Social Security Administration, Washington State Department of Health, local obituaries, Electronic Registration Information Center "ERIC" reports, The Washington State Department of Corrections and of course voters themselves. Many times, the reason you receive a replacement or reissued ballot is because an elections official found something in your registration that needed correcting or updating. If this discovery was made during a voting period, the system will automatically generate a new ballot – even if there are no actual changes to the ballot.

What happens when a ballot is received by an Elections Office?

When a ballot is received by an Elections Office, the signature is compared to the voter's registration and the voter's record is marked as having returned a ballot. If the voter attempts to return an additional ballot, the system rejects the ballot and warns the election official that a ballot has already been returned.

Why might someone get a second ballot?

There are two reasons why a voter would get a second ballot. Either you, the voter, requested one or something in your voter registration changed. The change may have been something as simple as changing Hwy 142 to Highway 142. Standardizing addresses in the system increases the likelihood that registrations that are questionable for one reason or another are discovered and validated or corrected.

Ballots are mailed no less than 18 days before the election. The ballot and mailing labels are created three to four weeks prior to that mailing to allow the vendor sufficient time to get ballots printed, assembled and mailed to every registered voter within that 18-day window. That is a large window of time (approximately 45 days) that voters have to make changes to their names or addresses. When a change is made in the system, whether by the voter themselves, the State or a County Auditor's Office, the voter registration system automatically generates an updated ballot – even if there are no actual changes to the ballot.

How close to an election can I change my voter registration information?

Voters can update their registration information online or by mail up to 8 days prior to an election. They can update their registration in person up until 8 p.m. on election day.

If I have already returned my ballot and its been “accepted” will a second ballot be issued if I update my voter registration information?

No. Your registration information will not be updated in the system until after the election has been certified.

What is a replacement ballot?

A replacement ballot is issued because either your name changed, you have a new mailing address or you requested a replacement. The replacement ballot is the same ballot style and precinct and contains the same races and measures. The replacement ballot contains an explanation as to why you are receiving the new ballot and includes our contact information for any questions you may have.

What is a reissued ballot?

Ballots are reissued when your residential address has changed after ballots were mailed. “Mailed” in this case means when the mailing labels were created. In many cases, this change in residential address has changed your precinct. The reissued ballot is the correct ballot for your address. The change in precinct, may or may not change the races and measures on the ballot. The reissued ballot contains an explanation as to why you are receiving the new ballot and includes our contact information for any questions you may have.

What happens when a second ballot is issued?

The first ballot is “suspended” in the system and the second ballot becomes the official ballot.

What happens if I only return the first ballot?

If only the original ballot is returned, the original ballot is reinstated and the replacement/reissued ballot is suspended and the applicable races and measures from the first ballot are then tabulated. In any event, the voter is credited for voting, and only one ballot is counted per registered voter.

What happens if I return both?

Only the corrected (replacement or reissued) ballot is counted.

Are there ever mistakes?

Yes, mistakes happen. But mistakes don’t mean fraud. This is where we rely on the voter to let us know if they’ve received a ballot in error. We value the integrity of the election process and will happily and willingly investigate any concerns.

What are some other security measures to make sure that votes are being properly counted?

The voter registration system, the ballot “build” system, and the ballot tabulation systems are separate, independent systems. Ballots are serialized and no one serial number can be counted twice. Additionally, the tabulation system knows the range of serial numbers printed and will not tabulate serial numbers outside that range.

You cannot have more ballots tabulated than registered voters and you can’t have more ballots tabulated than voters credited for having returned their ballot. County Auditors must account for every ballot received. This reconciliation must be presented to the County Canvassing Board when the election is certified and made available to the public. If there is a discrepancy, the County Auditor must provide an explanation.

County election procedures are reviewed by the Secretary of State and the Auditor or County Canvassing Board must take corrective action for any problems uncovered during the review. The Secretary of State must verify that corrective action was taken.

What should a voter do if they believe they received a ballot in error?

Contact our office. 509-773-4001 or voting@klickitatcounty.org.

Where can I get more information on the voting process in Washington State?

The voting process in Washington State is complex and there is a lot that goes into it. That is why we invite and encourage people to come in and observe the process at any stage. We are always willing to answer questions and explain the process.

The Secretary of State’s website also contains a wealth of information about voting in Washington. For more information check out <https://ericstates.org/>; <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections#voters>; <http://klickitatcounty.org/1136/ElectionsVoter-Registration>; call or stop by and visit. We could talk elections all day!