

COMMUNITY BALLOT COLLECTION



Guidance from Cowlitz County Elections, July 2024

Cowlitz County Elections knows that organizations such as schools, churches, local political parties, and community centers will sometimes try to boost election awareness and engagement by hosting information stations or events at their locations.

At these events, organizations will sometimes offer to collect voted ballots and deliver them to an official ballot drop box, vote center, or county auditor's office.

While Washington State law doesn't prohibit the collection and delivery of ballots, organizations should use caution with the collection and delivery of voted ballots.

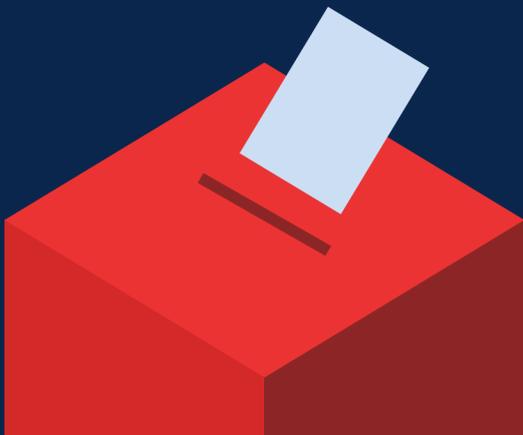
Please see the reverse side of this flyer for helpful best practices in organizing and operating an unofficial, temporary ballot drop box location.

For more information:

Phone: 360-577-3005

Email: elections@cowlitzwa.gov

Website: www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/elections



TEMPORARY BALLOT DROP BOX BEST PRACTICES



- Boxes must not have any Cowlitz County Elections branding or labels declaring them an “official ballot drop box.” (RCW 29A.84.610)
- Organizations are welcome to advertise this as a service they are independently providing.
- All liability resides with the organization.
- Never touch a ballot this isn’t sealed and signed by the voter. Never open a voted ballot.
- You must inform participants that you are not election officials and the site is not sanctioned by Cowlitz County Elections.
- Notify Cowlitz County Elections if you plan to host an unofficial drop box. We may receive calls from voters and this information is helpful to know in advance.
- Encourage voters to log in to VoteWA.gov to verify their ballot was received by Cowlitz County Elections.
- Ballots received from any organization after 8:00 p.m. on Election Day will be too late. To ensure timely receipt of ballots by Cowlitz County Elections, we recommend the following:
 - Remove ballots from drop boxes daily. We encourage organizations to deliver ballots directly to Cowlitz County Elections, rather than feed ballots into an official drop box. Members of the public may misinterpret what is taking place.
 - On Election Day, return ballots to Cowlitz County Elections before 8:00 p.m.
 - Any person who knowingly destroys, alters, defaces, conceals or discards another person’s voted ballot, or intentionally fails to return another person’s voted ballot, is guilty of a gross misdemeanor. (RCW 29A.84.050)
- To ensure ballots are secure, we recommend:
 - That you do not keep ballots overnight.
 - Use a team of two people to transfer ballots from the temporary drop box to Cowlitz County Elections.
 - Take precautions to avoid damage, loss, or theft of the box and contents.
 - Do not leave the box unattended.

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