

Cowlitz County Elections

2026

Jurisdiction Manual

including local voters' pamphlet rules

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About this guide

Use this guide in conjunction with state and local laws, not in place of them. The Revised Code of Washington (RCW), Washington Administrative Code (WAC) and other notations are offered as references for additional research. The material contained herein may change due to new legislation, judicial determinations, or rule changes.

2026 Elections Calendar

Important election dates and deadlines



Primary and general election dates

Primary and general elections are held on the following days each year:

- Primary: the 1st Tuesday in August
- General election: the 1st Tuesday after the 1st Monday in November

Special election dates

Upon receipt of a resolution from the governing body of a jurisdiction, Cowlitz County Elections may hold a special election. The jurisdiction can request the special election be held on any of the following dates:

- February special election: the 2nd Tuesday in February
- April special election: the 4th Tuesday in April
- Primary: the 1st Tuesday in August
- General election: the 1st Tuesday after the 1st Monday in November

Deadlines to submit a resolution requesting a special election are:

- February election: 60 days prior to the date of the election (December 12, 2025)
- April election: 60 days prior to the date of the election (February 27, 2026)
- Primary: no later than the Friday immediately before the first day of candidate filing week (May 1, 2026)
- General election: no later than the day of the primary (August 4, 2026)

2026 election dates

February 10, 2026 special election

April 28, 2026 special election

August 4, 2026 primary

November 3, 2026 general election

Jurisdiction Survey

Confirming jurisdiction information for candidate filing



Purpose of the Jurisdiction Survey

The Jurisdiction Survey is sent to all jurisdictions each year to confirm current office holder salary and term information. This information is used to properly conduct candidate filing for each office and jurisdiction in Cowlitz County.

Completing the Jurisdiction Survey

Prior to February 1st of each year, Cowlitz County Elections mails a Jurisdiction Survey to each jurisdiction asking for confirmation of information. Per WAC 434-215-005, Jurisdictions must respond and provide the following information:

- Current contact information for the jurisdiction administrator.
- Information about current elected officials such as office title, position number, office holder’s name, annual salary at the time of candidate filing, and term expiration.

Surveys must be completed prior to March 1st so that candidate filing information can be compiled and distributed to the public in advance of the candidate filing period.

Common questions

What if an office becomes vacant or there is a new appointment after I have submitted the Jurisdiction Survey?

You need to notify Cowlitz County Elections once an office becomes vacant.

Prior to appointing a new person, contact Elections to verify that they are a qualified, registered voter for that office.

Once someone is appointed to that office, notify Elections in writing.

What if an office holder receives per diem?

Per diem is not a fixed annual salary and should not be included.

What do I do with completed oaths?

Send completed oaths of office to Cowlitz County Elections. They will be recorded free of charge and retained by the County Auditor.

Office Holders

Information about current office holders, resignations, appointments, and oaths of office



Importance of keeping Cowlitz County Elections informed

It is extremely important that Cowlitz County Elections has accurate, up-to-date information regarding current office holders. The information is used to determine which offices are subject to election. Please notify Elections of all vacancies and appointments that occur throughout the year.

Resignations

Once an office becomes vacant, notify Cowlitz County Elections immediately. Notification must be in writing; email is sufficient. Please include the name of the office holder, the office and position number, and the effective date of the resignation. Additional information regarding vacancies can be found in RCW 42.12.

New appointments

Prior to appointing an individual to fill a vacancy, provide Elections with a list of applicant names, dates of birth and/or residential addresses, and our office can confirm if candidates are qualified registered voters of the jurisdiction.

Once an individual has been appointed, notify Elections of the appointment in writing; email is sufficient. Please include the name of the appointed person, contact information for that person, and the effective date of the appointment.

Oath of office rules

Who is required to take an oath of office?

Every person elected to an office in the State of Washington is required by our state and federal constitutions to take an oath prior to serving in office.

Who administers the oath of office?

The oath of office shall be administered and certified by any officer or notary public authorized to administer oaths, without charge. Six positions are specifically qualified by statute to administer oaths:

Judges and Notary Publics	RCW 5.28.010
County Commissioners	RCW 36.32.120
County Auditors or Deputies	RCW 36.22.030
Clerks of the Courts	RCW 2.32.050
Town Clerks	RCW 35.27.220
School Officials	RCW 28A.343.360

When should the oath of office be administered?

The oath may be taken either up to ten days prior to the scheduled date of assuming office; or at the last regular meeting of the governing body of the applicable county, city, town, or special district held before the winner is to assume office. Officials elected to short term and full terms must be administered an oath before assuming the duties of office and again when the full term begins.

RCW 29A.60.280

Oath of Office Administration and Repository



Offices	Regular Term Begins	Administration and Repository of Oath	Applicable Citations
Superior Court Judges	2nd Monday in January	Oath retained by Secretary of State.	RCW 2.08.080
County Officials -Executive Officers	January 1	Once the election results are certified. Oath obtained by County Auditor.	RCW 29A.60.280 RCW 36.16.040 RCW 36.16.060
District Court Judges	2nd Monday in January	Prior to entering the duties of office. Oath filed with County Auditor.	RCW 3.34.070 RCW 3.34.080
Municipal Court Judges	January 1	Prior to entering the duties of office. Oath filed with County Auditor.	RCW 3.50.050 RCW 3.50.097
City and Town Officials -Executive Officers	January 1	Once the election results are certified. Oath obtained by County Auditor.	RCW 29A.60.280 RCW 35.23.081 RCW 35.27.120 RCW 35A.12.040 RCW 35A.12.080 RCW 35A.13.160
Port District Commissioners	January 1	Once the election results are certified. Oath obtained by County Auditor.	RCW 29A.60.280 RCW 53.12.172
Public Utility District Commissioners	January 1	Once the election results are certified. Oath obtained by County Auditor.	RCW 29A.60.280 RCW 54.12.100
School Directors	Begins at first official meeting following certification of election.	Once the election results are certified. Oath obtained by County Auditor.	RCW 28A.343.360
Fire Protection District -Commissioners -District Secretary	January 1	Once the election results are certified. Oath obtained by County Auditor.	RCW 29A.60.280 RCW 52.14.070 RCW 52.14.080
Sewer, Water, Hospital Districts -Commissioners	January 1	Once the election results are certified. No statutory reference available regarding retention but historically oath has been retained by County Auditor.	RCW 29A.60.280 RCW 57.12.030 RCW 70.44.040
Cemetery Districts	January 1	Once the election results are certified. Oath obtained by County Auditor.	RCW 29A.60.280 RCW 68.52.260
Park and Recreation -Commissioners	January 1	Once the election results are certified. Oath obtained by County Auditor.	RCW 29A.60.280 RCW 35.61.050
Jurisdictions requiring land ownership (e.g. diking/flood control districts)	Upon certification of election	No statutory reference available.	RCW 85.24.070 RCW 85.38.070 RCW 86.09.301

Candidate Filing

General information about candidate filing for jurisdictions and office holders

Chapter 04

Jurisdiction administrators - your role during candidate filing

Jurisdiction administrators are not active participants in the candidate filing process. All candidates are responsible for submitting their own Declaration of Candidacy. Jurisdiction resources should not be used to assist an elected official or candidate to file for office.

Candidate filing

All persons wishing to have their name printed on the ballot must file a Declaration of Candidacy. Any person filing a Declaration of Candidacy must meet the qualifications specified by law for that office at the time of filing. The candidate must be a registered voter of the jurisdiction for which they are filing, which is verified by Cowlitz County Elections. It is the responsibility of candidates to ensure that they meet any and all other requirements for the office.

For offices with an annual salary greater than \$1,000, a filing fee equal to 1% of the annual salary must accompany the Declaration of Candidacy at the time of filing. A filing fee of \$10 shall accompany the Declaration of Candidacy for any office with a fixed annual salary of \$1,000 or less. A filing fee is not charged for any office that is compensated on a per diem or per meeting basis.

A candidate who lacks sufficient assets or income at the time of filing may submit a filing fee petition with their Declaration of Candidacy. An example is on page 27.

Filing fees are not refundable or transferable. If a candidate withdraws their Declaration of Candidacy, they forfeit the filing fee. If a candidate withdraws their Declaration of Candidacy and re-files for a different position, a second filing fee must be paid for the new position.

All Legislative, Superior Court, and Court of Appeals candidates file with the Office of the Secretary of State.

Candidate Filing Week takes place the first full week of May.

2026 candidate filing dates

April 20	Candidate filing by mail begins
May 4	Candidate filing online and in person begins
May 8	Candidate filing ends
May 11	Last day for candidates to withdraw
May 19	Last day for candidates to submit a statement and/or photo for publication in the local voters' pamphlet

Withdrawal of candidacy

Candidates may withdraw their Declaration of Candidacy prior to the deadline to withdraw.

There is no withdrawal period for Declarations of Candidacy filed during special candidate filing periods.

No filing fees will be refunded to any candidate who withdraws.

RCW 29A.24.075
RCW 29A.24.081
RCW 29A.24.091
RCW 29A.24.131



Write-in candidates

If an individual wishes to file for an office after the candidate filing period has passed, they must file a Declaration of Write-in Candidacy. If the Declaration of Write-in Candidacy is filed between the close of candidate filing and more than 18 days prior to a primary or election, there is no filing fee. If the Declaration of Write-In Candidacy is filed 18 days or less prior to a primary or election, a filing fee is required. The deadline for filing is no later than 8 p.m. on Election Day.

Residency requirements

All candidates must be a registered voter of the jurisdiction for which they have filed a Declaration of Candidacy. It is the candidate’s responsibility to ensure they meet any and all other requirements.

No double filings

A candidate cannot file for more than one office appearing on the ballot, with the exception of filing as a Precinct Committee Officer.

Shared districts

Below are districts that Cowlitz County shares with other counties. The primary county issues certificates of election and accepts Declarations of Candidacy for that jurisdiction.

Jurisdictions	Counties that share the district
Cities	
Woodland	Clark County, Cowlitz County*
School Districts	
Castle Rock School District	Cowlitz County*, Lewis County
Woodland School District	Clark County, Cowlitz County*
Fire Districts	
Fire Protection District 7	Cowlitz County*, Skamania County
Cowlitz-Lewis Fire Protection District 20	Cowlitz County, Lewis County*
Clark-Cowlitz Fire Rescue	Clark County*, Cowlitz County
Special Purpose Districts	
Ft. Vancouver Regional Library District	Clark*, Cowlitz, Klickitat, and Skamania Counties
Woodland Swimming Pool and Recreation District	Clark County, Cowlitz County*

* indicates “lead” or primary county



Candidate filing - voids and lapses

A void in candidacy occurs when no valid Declarations of Candidacy have been filed for a position, or all candidates that did file a valid Declaration of Candidacy have withdrawn, died, or been disqualified. If a void in candidacy occurs after the regular candidate filing period, but before the day of the primary, a special three-day candidate filing period will be held. The date of the special filing period will be determined by the filing officer. Notice of the void in candidacy will be given, and include the time and place for individuals to file a Declaration of Candidacy.

All candidates that file a valid Declaration of Candidacy during the special candidate filing period will appear on the general election ballot. A primary election will not be held for that office. The candidate receiving the most votes for that office in the general election is deemed elected.

If, after the regular and special candidate filing periods have passed, no candidate has filed a valid Declaration of Candidacy, the election for that office is deemed lapsed. The office will not appear on the ballot.

If a lapse of election occurs, the current office holder will remain in office and continue to serve until the next succeeding general election that the office is allowed by law to have.

Candidate filing - vacancies

When a vacancy in office occurs, certain factors determine when the office will appear on the general election ballot, such as the date the vacancy occurs and whether the office was scheduled for election that year.

If a vacancy occurs prior to the first day of the regular candidate filing period in an office that is not scheduled to appear on the general election ballot, valid Declarations of Candidacy for that office will be accepted during the regular candidate filing period. Cowlitz County Elections will give notice of the vacancy. The notice will include the date, time, and place for filing Declarations of Candidacy.

If a vacancy occurs on the first day of the regular candidate filing period or later in an office that is not scheduled to appear on the general election ballot, Declarations of Candidacy will not be accepted for that office during the regular candidate filing period. That office will instead be open for filing at the next succeeding general election that the office is allowed by law to have.

RCW 29A.24.141
RCW 29A.24.171
RCW 29A.24.181

Candidate Statements and Photos

Candidate statement and photo rules and deadlines

Chapter 05



Candidate participation in the local voters' pamphlet

The Cowlitz County Local Voters' Pamphlet provides an opportunity for every candidate to publish a candidate statement, photo, and contact information. All candidates, with the exception of Precinct Committee Officer (PCO), shall participate in the local voters' pamphlet. The office of PCO does not participate in online or printed pamphlets.

An online voters' guide is available for every special election, primary, and general election.

Candidates must submit statements and photos electronically online, by email, or in-person on a removable thumb drive to Cowlitz County Elections. Paper copies of statements or photos will not be accepted.

All submissions will be published to the public once reviewed and approved by Elections staff.

Candidates may not submit new information after the deadline. The information submitted will be used for the primary and general election online voters' guides and local voters' pamphlets.

Candidate statement length, content, format, and deadline

Length

Candidate statements must be 200 words or less, dependent on Microsoft word count.

Stay within the word limit. Submissions exceeding the word limit will be shortened, without notice and without consulting the candidate, by deleting the words in excess of the 200 word limit. If such a deletion creates an incomplete sentence, that incomplete sentence will also be omitted.

When a candidate does not submit a statement, "No statement submitted" will appear in the candidate statement section.

Format

Space is limited, so formatting is important. Format your statement as an essay. Text must be written in paragraphs. Statements are limited to four paragraphs. Statements exceeding four paragraphs will be consolidated by Elections staff.

Content

Use italics to emphasize words or phrases. Bolding, underlining, and all caps are not allowed. Tables, lists, and bullets are not allowed.

The Auditor may reject any submission that is obscene; is libelous; is vulgar; promotes or advocates hatred, violence, hostility, ridicule, or shame upon any person or group of persons; or is received after the submittal deadline.

Deadline

The final deadline to submit a candidate statement is May 19, 2026. Once a statement is submitted, only grammatical and factual information may be updated in the best interest of the voters. (Examples include correcting a date, a misspelled word, or a dollar amount.) All changes must be submitted by the May 19 deadline.

Rewriting or additional information submitted will not be accepted.

RCW 29A.32.210
RCW 29A.32.090
RCW 29A.32.230



Candidate photo rules and deadline

Candidates may submit one self-portrait showing head and shoulders. Or, if filing in-person at the Elections Office, a digital photo may be taken at that time.

Photos must be:

- Digital (JPEG, PNG, or TIFF format).
- 300 dpi or greater.
- Not smaller than 4 x 5 inches (1200 x 1500 pixels).
- Not more than five years old.
- Limited to the head and shoulders of the candidate.
- Light colored, plain background.

Photos may not:

- Include flags, robes, or law enforcement and military uniforms.
- Contain political party or patriotic symbols or logos.
- Show clothing or insignia suggesting that you hold a public office.

The Elections Office will reject photos that do not meet the above guidelines. If a photo is rejected, the Elections Office will contact the candidate electronically, by phone, or in writing. Once contacted, the candidate has until the final deadline to submit a new image. If the candidate is contacted by the Elections Office on the deadline, the candidate has two business days to submit a new image.

When a candidate does not submit a photo, “No photo submitted” will appear in the candidate photo section.

The final deadline to submit a candidate photo is May 19, 2026. If after your initial submission you wish to change your photo, you may submit a different photo by the May 19 deadline.

Candidate contact information

A candidate’s email address, phone number, and campaign website will be published with their statement. Contact information does not count towards the word limit of the statement. Social media links are not allowed.

If a candidate does not submit separate campaign contact information during the filing process, the contact information provided will be published in the online voters’ guide and the printed local voters’ pamphlet.

Unopposed candidates

Cowlitz County Elections reserves the right to make layout changes in the Local Voters’ Pamphlet for candidates who are running unopposed and do not submit a photo or statement, only if the layout change would reduce the number of pages published.

Candidate information will include their name, the office for which they are a candidate, and their contact information. They will be grouped together in a separate subsection of the Local Voters’ Pamphlet titled “*Unopposed Candidates with no photo or statement submitted.*”

RCW 29A.32.250

Candidate Statements and Photos at a Glance



Type	Word Limit	Formatting	
Photo		<p><i>Allowed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital (JPEG, PNG, or TIFF format) 300 dpi or greater Limited to head and shoulders Not more than 5 years old Not smaller than 4" x 5" <p><i>Not Allowed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political party, patriotic symbols, or logos. Flags, robes, or law enforcement/military uniforms. Clothing or insignia suggesting that you hold a public office. 	
Statement	200	<p><i>Allowed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italics <p><i>Not Allowed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bold, ALL CAPS, <u>underlining</u>, lists, bullets, or tables 	
Contact Information	Contact information is not included in the word count.	<p><i>Allowed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phone number Email address Campaign website address At least one method of contact must be provided. <p><i>Not Allowed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Titles (Dr., President, PhD.) <p>Email and website addresses may not be obscene, libelous, or a commercial advertisement. No social media links.</p>	

Any material submitted may be rejected if:

- It is obscene;
- It is libelous;
- It is vulgar;
- Contains a commercial advertisement;
- Promotes or advocates hatred, violence, hostility, ridicule, or shame upon any person or group of persons; or
- It is received after the submittal deadline.

Other than corrections to factual information, grammar, format or length, candidate statements shall be printed exactly as submitted and shall not be checked for accuracy by Elections staff.

Resolution Filing

Information about filing a resolution to place a measure on the ballot and ballot titles

Deadline for submitting a resolution

Upon receipt of a resolution from the governing body of a jurisdiction, Cowlitz County Elections may hold a special election.

All resolutions must be received by Cowlitz County Elections no later than 5 p.m. on the day of the deadline. Submitting a resolution in advance of the deadline is advantageous to the jurisdiction, as it allows time for the Elections Office to review the submission and inform the jurisdiction of any missing information.

<i>Election Date</i>	<i>Resolution Deadline</i>
February 10, 2026 Special	December 12, 2025
April 28, 2026 Special	February 27, 2026
August 4, 2026 Primary	May 1, 2026
November 3, 2026 General	August 4, 2026

Rules for submitting a resolution

Resolutions can be submitted to Elections by email, mail, fax, or in-person no later than 5 p.m. on the day of the deadline at:

Cowlitz County Elections
207 N 4th Ave, Rm 205
Kelso, WA 98626

email: elections@cowlitzwa.gov
fax: (360) 442-7879

A resolution cover sheet is required and must accompany each resolution. This cover sheet contains important information and contacts required by Elections. A resolution cover sheet may be found on page 23 of this manual or one will be provided upon request.

Checklist for submitting a resolution

- Submit the resolution on or before statutory deadline
- Include a completed resolution cover sheet (page 23 of this manual)
- Include an explanatory statement
- Include a Committee For and Against appointment form (page 24 of this manual)



Withdrawing a resolution

If a jurisdiction wishes to withdraw a resolution, the jurisdiction must do so in writing no later than 7 business days after the submission deadline.

Ballot titles for local measures

The format and content requirements for local measure ballot titles are very specific and must conform to state law. Ballot titles consist of three elements:

- The name of the jurisdiction submitting the measure and a statement of the subject matter (not to exceed 10 words);
- A concise description (not to exceed 75 words); and
- A question.

The ballot title is prepared by the Cowlitz County Prosecuting Attorney's Office; except ballot titles for a city or town, which are prepared by the city attorney.

Resolutions submitted by jurisdictions needing a ballot title prepared by the Cowlitz County Prosecuting Attorney will be forwarded to that office by the Auditor.

Appealing a ballot title

Any person dissatisfied with the ballot title for a local measure written by the city/town attorney, or Prosecuting Attorney, as the case may be, may appeal to the Cowlitz County Superior Court within ten days from the time of filing the ballot title, not including Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays. The decision of the Superior Court is final.

Explanatory statement rules

For every election, ballot titles must be submitted along with an explanatory statement. The explanatory statement is prepared by the Prosecuting Attorney for county measures and by the attorney for the jurisdiction submitting the measure if other than a county measure.

The purpose of an explanatory statement is to state the effect of the proposed measure if approved by the voters. It must be impartial, written in clear and concise language, avoid the use of legal and technical terms whenever possible, and conform to the formatting requirements on page 13. If prepared by the jurisdiction, proof of approval by the jurisdiction's attorney must be received by Cowlitz County Elections either by cover letter or email.

If a jurisdiction does not have an approval letter from its attorney, or if a jurisdiction does not retain legal counsel, the statement shall be submitted to the Prosecuting Attorney for review or preparation.



Formatting the explanatory statement

Length

Explanatory statements must be 250 words or less.

Format

Format your statement as an essay. Text must be written in paragraphs. Up to four paragraphs may be used.

Italics

Italics may be used to emphasize specific words or statements. Any other formatting, such as bold, underline, or all caps, will be changed to italics.

Lists or bullets

The use of lists or bullets is not allowed. Lists or bullets will be converted to block paragraphs with a semicolon separating each item.

Explanatory statements shall be printed exactly as submitted and shall not be checked for accuracy by Elections staff.

Submitting the explanatory statement

The deadlines for explanatory statements can be found on page 20 of this manual.

The explanatory statement should outline the effect the ballot measure would have if passed by the voters.

Explanatory statements shall be submitted, along with the pertinent resolution, by the resolution deadline to:

Cowlitz County Elections

207 N 4th Ave, Rm 205

Kelso, WA 98626

Email: elections@cowlitzwa.gov

Fax: (360) 442-7879

Local Voters' Pamphlet

Administrative rules for the local voters' pamphlet

Chapter 07

Publication of local voters' pamphlet and online guide

A printed local voters' pamphlet, as well as an online guide, will be available for all elections in Cowlitz County. The Auditor will determine how the pamphlet is produced and distributed based on the size of the election and number of jurisdictions participating. The pamphlet may be distributed:

- By mail to all households (one per household);
- By mail to all registered voter households (one per household); or
- By mail, enclosed within the ballot packet.

All local jurisdictions in the county, with measures or candidates on the ballot, shall participate.

Contents to be included in the printed Cowlitz County Local Voters' Pamphlet shall include, but are not limited to:

- The words "Cowlitz County Official Local Voters' Pamphlet" and "Published by the Cowlitz County Auditor's Office";
- The date of the election or primary;
- A list of jurisdictions participating in the pamphlet;
- Information on how a person may register to vote and obtain a ballot;
- Ballot titles of any measure submitted accompanied by an explanatory statement;
- Arguments "for" and "against" each measure, if submitted;
- Candidate names and party preference of races appearing on the ballot; and
- All candidate statements and photos received by the deadline.

An introductory letter from the Auditor will appear in every General Election pamphlet, except in years when the county auditor is a candidate, or when the pamphlet is to be printed on an insert included with the ballot.

The full text of resolutions calling for an election will be posted on the Cowlitz County Elections website for every election. Printed copies are available and will be mailed upon request.

The intent of the printed voters' pamphlet and online voters' guide is to provide citizens of Cowlitz County with informative, objective, consistent, and readable information regarding candidates and ballot measures.

These administrative rules set forth the manner and method in which the local voters' pamphlet is to be published and distributed. Rules are written in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 29A, section 32 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW).



Waiver of participation due to financial hardship

If the required participation in a local voters' pamphlet would create undue financial hardship for any unit of government, the legislative authority of the unit may petition the Board of County Commissioners to waive this requirement. The Board may provide such a waiver no later than 60 days prior to the publication of the pamphlet.

The request must be submitted in writing to the Board with a copy sent to Cowlitz County Elections.

Jurisdiction responsibility - appointing for and against committees

For all elections, the jurisdiction is responsible for appointing for and against committees to prepare statements in favor of and in opposition to each ballot measure. If such persons are not immediately known, the jurisdiction is encouraged to employ some formal means of notifying the public that committee members are being sought.

For and against committees consist of members of the public who commit to write a statement either in favor of or in opposition to a ballot measure. The authority shall appoint persons that reside within the jurisdictional boundaries

Each committee is limited to three members, but the committee can have an unlimited number of persons assist them in preparing statements.

Each committee must designate a spokesperson with whom Cowlitz County Elections will communicate all matters related to the local voters' pamphlet.

Jurisdictions are responsible for submitting a completed Committee For and Against appointment form for each measure to Elections by the resolution deadline for the election. The form can be found on page 24 of this manual. Jurisdictions are also responsible for providing committee members with copies of instructions, specifications, and deadlines for all statements.

Committee appointments by the Auditor

If a jurisdiction fails to appoint for and against committees by the deadline, the Auditor will seek out and, whenever possible, appoint up to three members to each committee. The Auditor shall issue a media release and publish information on the Elections website announcing the opportunity to form committees and provide statements. The Auditor will make appointments on a first-come, first-served basis if qualified committee members make contact by the appropriate deadline.

Committee appointment deadline

Completed appointment forms must be received by Cowlitz County Elections no later than 5 p.m. on the day of the deadline.

Committee appointment deadlines can be found on page 20 of this manual.



For and against committee responsibilities

Committees are responsible for submitting their statements directly to Cowlitz County Elections no later than 5 p.m. on the day of the deadline. After the deadline to submit for and against statements, Cowlitz County Elections will email the opposing committee's statement to the spokesperson identified on the appointment form. Each committee will then have the opportunity to write a rebuttal statement; however, a rebuttal statement is not required.

Committee member names and at least one point of contact, one phone number, and one email address shall be published in the local voters' pamphlet. This contact should be able to respond to questions from voters regarding the jurisdiction's ballot measure. Titles for committee member names will not be published. A website address will be published if provided but is not required. Names and contact information will not be included in the word limitation.

For and against statement length, format, content, and deadline

Length

For and against statements must be 250 words or less. Any statement exceeding 250 words will have the extra words omitted. If such a deletion creates an incomplete sentence, that sentence shall also be omitted.

Format

To promote readability, it is in the public interest that all statements published are of substantially similar format and style. The following standards have been established:

- Up to four headings may be used to summarize and identify major arguments.
- Space is limited, so formatting is important. Format your statement as an essay. Text must be written in paragraphs.
- No tables, bullets, or lists requiring multiple indentations. Lists or bullets will be converted to block paragraph, with a semicolon to separate each item.
- Words that are underlined, in bold, or all upper case will be changed to appear in italics.

Content

The Auditor may reject any statement or statement portion that is obscene; is libelous; is vulgar; promotes or advocates hatred, violence, hostility, ridicule, or shame upon any person or group of persons; or is received after the submittal deadline.

Other than corrections to format and length, committee statements shall be printed exactly as submitted and shall not be checked for accuracy by Elections staff.

Deadline

The deadlines for committee statements for and against can be found on page 20 of this manual.



Review of committee statements

Prior to the publication of the local voters' pamphlet, Cowlitz County Elections will email each committee spokesperson a proof copy of their statement as it will appear in the pamphlet.

Upon receipt of the proof, committees shall ensure that there are no discrepancies between the proof copy and the information they submitted.

No changes to the originally submitted statements will be accepted after the deadline. No new material will be accepted. The only permitted changes are updates to the contact information section.

Committees must notify the Elections Office of any discrepancies or contact information updates by 5 p.m. on the day of the deadline stated in the email containing the proof copy.

Rebuttal statement length, format, content, and deadline

Once committee statements are submitted, Elections will email the statement to the spokesperson for the opposing committee listed on the committee appointment form.

Rebuttal statements are not required; however, it gives each committee an opportunity to provide a response to the opposing statement.

Length

Rebuttal statements must be 75 words or less in block paragraph form. Any statement exceeding 75 words will have the extra words omitted. If such a deletion creates an incomplete sentence, that sentence shall also be omitted.

Format

No headings may be used in rebuttal statements.

Italics may be used to emphasize specific words or statements. Any other formatting, such as all caps, bold, or underlining, will be changed to appear in italics.

The use of tables, bullets, or lists is not allowed. Lists or bullets will be converted to block paragraph, with a semicolon to separate each item.

Content

Rebuttal statements may not interject new issues or arguments and are limited to addressing issues and arguments raised in the opposing statement.

Rebuttal statements shall be printed exactly as submitted and shall not be checked for accuracy by Elections staff.

Deadline

The deadlines for rebuttal statements can be found on page 20 of this manual. Rules at a glance can be found on page 18.

All statements shall be submitted by the required deadline to:

Cowlitz County Elections
207 N 4th Ave, Rm 205
Kelso, WA 98626

email: elections@cowlitzwa.gov
fax: (360) 442-7879

Committee Statement Rules at a Glance



Explanatory Statement	250	<p><i>Allowed:</i> Italics</p> <p><i>Not Allowed:</i> Bold, ALL CAPS, <u>underlining</u>, lists, bullets</p>
"For" and "Against" Statement	250	<p><i>Allowed:</i> Italics Up to four headings.</p> <p><i>Not Allowed:</i> Bold, ALL CAPS, <u>underlining</u>, lists, bullets, or tables</p>
Rebuttal Statements	75	<p><i>Allowed:</i> Italics</p> <p><i>Not Allowed:</i> Bold, ALL CAPS, <u>underlining</u>, lists, bullets, or tables</p>
Contact Information	Does not count as part of word limit.	<p><i>Allowed:</i> Committee member names; Contact phone number; Email address; Website; and Committee name. *At least one phone number and email address is required.</p> <p><i>Not Allowed:</i> Titles for committee members (Dr., PhD., President, etc.)</p>

Statements submitted may be rejected if:

- It is obscene;
- It is libelous;
- It is vulgar;
- Promotes or advocates hatred, violence, hostility, ridicule, or shame upon any person or group of persons; or
- Is received after the submittal deadline.

Other than corrections to format and length, "for" and "against" statements shall be printed exactly as submitted and shall not be checked for accuracy by Elections staff.

General Rules for all Submissions

Rules applicable to all submissions, rejection, and appeal

Chapter 08

Rules applicable to all submissions

The contents of statement, photo, and contact information are the sole responsibility of the authors.

Submissions do not represent the position of Cowlitz County Elections. Likewise, the Cowlitz County Elections Office is not responsible for the validity or accuracy of submissions.

Spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors will not be corrected. Submissions will be printed exactly as received, as long as it complies with format specifications and content rules.

Once the candidate statement and photo deadline has passed, all statements and photos submitted are final. They cannot be amended by the candidate.

If a submission is not received by the deadline, the text “No statement submitted” and “No photo submitted” will appear in the applicable sections.

Public inspection of statements

All statements become public information once approved by the County Auditor. Statements submitted for publication in the online voters’ guide or printed voters’ pamphlet are not available for public inspection or copying until all statements pertaining to the specified ballot measure or office have been received, or the deadline for submission of statements has passed.

Rejection and appeal

Rejection

The County Auditor may reject certain materials submitted for publication in the online voters’ guide and the local voters’ pamphlet. These materials include candidate statements, explanatory statements, for and against statements, rebuttal statements, and contact information.

Notice of rejected statements shall be sent to the proponent by email not more than two business days after the deadline for submittal.

Appeal

The proponent of aforesaid statement may appeal the decision to reject.

Written notice of appeal shall be submitted to the Cowlitz County Auditor, Elections Office by email no more than 48 hours after the notice of rejection was sent and shall set forth the specific grounds for appeal.

The Auditor shall issue a written decision granting or denying the appeal by email no more than three business days after the appeal was submitted. The decision of the Auditor to grant or deny an appeal shall be final.

RCW 29A.32.210
RCW 29A.32.230

2026 Submission Deadlines at a Glance



2026 Submission Deadlines - Deadlines are 5 p.m. on each designated day				
Election Dates	Feb. 10, 2026	Apr. 28, 2026	Aug. 4, 2026	Nov. 3, 2026
Jurisdiction's Responsibility and Deadlines				
Resolution	Dec. 12, 2025	Feb. 27, 2026	May 1, 2026	Aug. 4, 2026
Resolution Cover Sheet <i>Providing jurisdiction contacts</i>	Dec. 12, 2025	Feb. 27, 2026	May 1, 2026	Aug. 4, 2026
Explanatory Statement	Dec. 12, 2025	Feb. 27, 2026	May 1, 2026	Aug. 4, 2026
For and Against Committee Appointment <i>For and Against Committee Form must be completed and emailed by this date.</i>	Dec. 12, 2025	Feb. 27, 2026	May 1, 2026	Aug. 4, 2026
Committee's Responsibility and Deadlines				
Statement For and Statement Against <i>Written by the committees for and against the measure</i>	Dec. 19, 2025	March 6, 2026	May 8, 2026	Aug. 11, 2026
Rebuttal Statements	Dec. 24, 2025	March 12, 2026	May 14, 2026	Aug. 17, 2026
Candidate's Responsibility and Deadlines				
Statement			May 19, 2026	May 19, 2026
Photo			May 19, 2026	May 19, 2026

Election Costs

Information about calculating the cost of participating in an election and the cost of publishing a local voters' pamphlet

Cost of participating in an election

Election costs are based upon a jurisdiction's proportionate share. Each jurisdiction's cost is determined by taking the total number of registered voters in the jurisdiction and dividing it by the total number of all registered voters in all participating jurisdictions in the election.

Election costs vary from one election to the next depending on a variety of factors. For instance, whether or not the election is held in an odd or even-numbered year is a significant factor for determining costs in a primary or general election; but less of a factor for a special election held in February or April. This is primarily due to the number of participating jurisdictions in an odd-numbered year as opposed to an even-numbered year.

Although the overall cost of a primary or general election from one year to the next is somewhat comparable, a general election shared by five jurisdictions is going to cost more per voter for each jurisdiction than an election shared by fifteen jurisdictions.

Special elections in February and April are often shared by a smaller number of jurisdictions, thus the proportional share is often greater. In the case of a single jurisdiction election, the cost would be 100%.

Cowlitz County Elections will prepare and send billing notifications to participating jurisdictions at the end of each year.

Prior to deciding when to place a measure on the ballot, jurisdictions may contact Elections to request a cost estimate. Estimates will be based on a reasonable range, taking historical information into account. A specific cost or quote cannot be provided, as there are unknown factors such as the number of jurisdictions participating in an election.

Local voters' pamphlet cost

The cost of participating in the local voters' pamphlet is processed separately from election costs. This is done because the pamphlet printing and mailing costs will vary based on the election type.

All jurisdictions are automatically included in the local voters' pamphlet, which is printed and mailed every election to each registered voter or household in Cowlitz County. Costs are allocated between the jurisdictions participating in the election.

For all elections, Cowlitz County Elections will produce an online voters' guide. There is no additional cost to the jurisdiction.

General Election Turnout for Validation

Chapter 10

Information about bond and levy validation



Bond and levy election validations

Passing a levy or bond issue is not always a simple matter of majority rules. State law requires bond issues and some types of levies to have a “super majority” in order to pass; while other levies, such as a levy lid lift, only require a simple majority.

Levy validation for school districts

A school district levy requires a simple majority to pass.

Levy validation (excluding school levies)

Non-school district levies have two thresholds that must be met in order for the levy to pass:

1. The levy must receive a minimum 60% majority; and
2. A minimum number of “Yes” votes must be cast, which is determined by calculating 60% of 40% of the number of voters in the jurisdiction that cast ballots in the previous general election.

Bond validation

Bond issues also have two thresholds that must be met in order for the bond to pass:

1. The bond must receive a minimum 60% majority; and
2. The voter turnout for that jurisdiction must equal 40% of the voters who cast ballots in the previous general election.

General election turnout

Following certification of the general election each year, Cowlitz County Elections will publish the voter turnout report for each taxing district to the Elections website under the heading “Election Results & Archives.” This report will also be provided to each district.

This report includes the following for each jurisdiction:

- The total number of active registered voters at the time of the general election; and
- The number of votes cast for the general election.

In compliance with WAC 434-262-017, the County Auditor is not responsible for determining minimum turnout or yes votes required for ballot measures and will not determine if ballot measures meet requirements for passage. The district is responsible for making the final legal determination of whether a measure passed or failed based on the certified vote totals and applicable law.

WAC 434-262-017



Resolution cover sheet

This form **must** accompany each resolution.

Name of District: _____

District Address: _____

Date of Election: _____

Contact Person/Title: _____

Contact Phone: _____ Email: _____

Attorney for District: _____

Attorney Phone: _____ Email: _____

Type of Election (levy, bond, lid lift, etc.): _____

Pass / Fail Requirement for this measure as determined by your legal counsel.

Please circle one: simple majority, supermajority, 60% plus validation, other (explain below)

Questions?

Cowlitz County Elections
Monday - Thursday, 7 a.m. - 5 p.m.
207 N 4th Ave, Room 205
Kelso, WA 98626

Phone: (360) 577-3005

Fax: (360) 442-7879

Email: elections@cowlitzwa.gov

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

Committee For and Against appointment form

Name of Jurisdiction/Proposition No: _____

Jurisdiction Contact Name: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Jurisdiction's responsibility:

- Email completed form to elections@cowlitzwa.gov on or before the resolution submission deadline. (Submission deadlines are located on page 20)
- Provide committee members with statement submission requirements and deadlines. (Requirements and deadlines are located on pages 15-18)

Questions? Call (360) 577-3005 or email elections@cowlitzwa.gov

**1st Committee Member must provide contact information for print in the local voters' pamphlet. 2nd and 3rd committee member contact information will be printed if provided.*

For committee (1-3 members)

1st Committee Member
Name
*Email <i>(published in pamphlet)</i>
*Phone <i>(published in pamphlet)</i>
*Website <i>(published in pamphlet)</i>
2nd Committee Member
Name
Email
3rd Committee Member
Name
Email

Against committee (1-3 members)

1st Committee Member
Name
*Email <i>(published in pamphlet)</i>
*Phone <i>(published in pamphlet)</i>
*Website <i>(published in pamphlet)</i>
2nd Committee Member
Name
Email
3rd Committee Member
Name
Email

Filing fee petition
(Submitted in lieu of the filing fee required by RCW 29A.24.091)

<p>WARNING RCW 29A.24.101 and RCW 29A.72.140</p>	<p>Every person who signs this petition with any other than his or her true name, knowingly signs more than one of these petitions, signs this petition when he or she is not a legal voter, or makes any false statement on this petition may be punished by fine or imprisonment or both.</p>
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We, the undersigned registered voters of _____, (either state of Washington or the political subdivision for which the nomination is made),
 hereby petition that the name of _____ (candidate's name) be printed on the
 _____ ballot for the office of _____ (insert name of office including district / position number if applicable)
 (election year)

Signature	Printed Name	Residence Address	City	County
1)				
2)				
3)				
4)				
5)				
6)				
7)				
8)				
9)				
10)				