



# Your Vote

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*Your Vote is a joint production of the League of Women Voters of Washington and The Spokesman-Review.*

## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON

## MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

**A clear picture about voting**

Voting is a cornerstone of our democracy. It is the voice of the people exercised at the ballot box that establishes our laws, determines our leadership and sets the path of our opportunities and future.

Recognizing that heated political environments can make it difficult at times to distinguish between fact and mis- and disinformation about the voting process, the League of Women Voters of Washington set out earlier this year

**Lunell Haught**

to set the record straight on some common misbeliefs. Given the League's reputation for nonpartisanship and commitment to democracy, it was a fitting task for the 101-year-old organization to undertake.

To begin, League members sought to learn as much as they could about the common misinformation people were hearing – and repeating – about voting. Some of the stories were unbelievable. Some, despite being untrue, were a little more believable, leading some of us to understand why several might be mistaken for fact.

The Secretary of State's office has been working to help voters better understand what is true and not true when it comes to

the voting process. In addition to providing thorough reports and data on its website about voting, officials have launched social media campaigns to make the picture clearer for voters.

What follows are more than 30 responses to statements made by people who do not understand how the election process works. The information was derived from the agencies responsible for elections and certified citizen election observers.

It is important that all eligible voters exercise their rights at the ballot box. That participation is what makes a true democracy.

We want people to be confident as they

vote. We want them to be confident they have the right information they need to make informed choices as well as to be confident that their votes are safe and secure.

Over several months, League members investigated claims about how ballots are transferred, how they are counted, which ballots are counted and verified, and other topics related to security.

We share what we found here because your vote is important.

Your vote is your voice. Your vote is power.

**Lunell Haught***President of the League of Women Voters of Washington*

During the last major election, the Office of the Secretary of State received phone calls and emails asking about election security. The public expressed a variety of concerns.

Our elections are safe and your vote is secure. According to a Brennan Center for Justice report, an American is more likely to "be struck by lightning" than be impersonated at the polls. America's elections are among the safest and most secure worldwide.

Below are many of the protections in place in Washington to secure ballot and the integrity of the elections process.

- Election Officials diligently audit to prevent errors. The rare issues that arise can typically be traced to clerical or data-matching errors. Washington uses paper-based systems, and conducts voter-verifiable paper audit trails, independent testing, and pre- and postelection audits. The VoteWA.gov system is secured by skilled IT and the Washington State Elections Security Operations Center staff using state-of-the-art equipment and following IT industry best practices. The Office of the Secretary of State works with the Department of Homeland

Security to ensure election systems remain secure.

- The right to vote is reserved only for U.S. citizens and is guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. By law noncitizens are prohibited from registering to vote. If an undocumented immigrant or a documented resident alien attempts to register or vote, they risk being permanently deported. The risks are just too high compared to the rewards, if any, of casting just one vote in an election. That's why noncitizens rarely intentionally attempt to vote. There are a handful of cases nationally of inadvertent registration by noncitizens, but those instances are found in routine checks. All American citizens have the right to vote.

- Vote counts – both paper and electronic versions – are safeguarded for accuracy, and elections are well-protected. Physical safety measures prevent unauthorized access to the machines that count, or tabulate, the votes. Backup au-

dit trails or alarms warn of attempts to access any type of election machine, and these machines are never connected to the internet. Washington state uses paper ballots, which serve as the official record of the election, and the paper ballots can be recounted to confirm results. Vote counts are safe and accurate.

These additional topics are listed in order of the steps that occur during an active election cycle.

- Every American citizen in Washington state of voting age can register to vote. Each voter registration is checked to be sure that person is who they say they are, even if they share the same name with another person. A birthdate and either a Washington state ID or a Social Security number are required to register. One person, one registration, one vote.

- Washington's Future

Voter program permits 16- and 17-year-olds to sign up to be automatically registered to vote when they turn 18.

- Election offices maintain updated voter rolls. Either the Washington Department of Health or the Social Security Administration notifies county elections offices in Washington of all deaths reported within the state. On occasion, a ballot may end up being mailed to someone who died out of state or whose death has not yet been reported. It is the responsibility of the current resident to inform the elections office to prevent future ballots from being sent. Election rolls are well maintained and updated promptly.

- Every registered voter in Washington state is sent a ballot by mail. Election officials say they work diligently to ensure every registered voter is sent a ballot. But oc-

asionally, delivery mishaps may occur. Any registered voter who does not receive their ballot should contact their county elections office to determine the best way to receive a replacement ballot.

- If a citizen is registered to vote, that citizen will receive a ballot. The county elections office won't send or give a ballot to anyone who isn't registered.

- Ballots come with prepaid-postage envelopes addressed to the county elections office so voters can send their ballots through the U.S. Postal Service. However, timing may affect post office delivery. As long as a ballot is postmarked before or on Election Day, that ballot will be counted. Voters have the option of placing their ballots in an official drop box, which is open until 8 p.m. the day of the election. Drop box locations are available at VoteWA.gov. Both systems deliver ballots directly to the election office.

- Replacement ballots are available. Though rare, sometimes a voter doesn't receive their ballot in the mail, or a ballot may get damaged during handling. Voters may simply call their county elections office, which will mail a replacement ballot. Or the voter can download and print a ballot and signature declaration from the elections office website or VoteWA.gov. Both replacement ballot options require the ballot to be returned to the respective county elections office to be counted. Replacement ballots are safe and secure. Again, only one ballot can be counted for each voter.

- In Washington state, the voting process starts as soon as voters receive their ballots. If a voter marks, signs, and returns their ballot and then dies, their ballot is still valid. Multiple signature checks prevent forgery. Once a person's ballot has been accepted for counting, their vote will count – whether the person is alive or deceased at the time of counting.

- Using an official ballot drop box is secure. Designated officials, working in pairs, open drop boxes and remove and deliver the

See **FACTOIDS, 3**

## FACTOIDS

## Your vote, your voice



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON

## FACTOIDS

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ballots to their respective county elections office regularly. Ballot drop boxes are strong to prevent tampering and are highly secure. Ballots deposited in drop boxes are safe.

- All ballots are tracked and verified. The ballot-counting process begins with signature verification. Once they are validated, outer envelopes are opened to remove any connection to the voter's identity. Next, the anonymous security envelopes or sleeves are opened and ballots are flattened. Finally, votes are counted and ballots are preserved. At every point, the exact same number of ballots that move from the previous station must be accounted for at the next. From the moment they arrive, ballots are tracked and kept safe.

- Only the first valid ballot accepted is counted. Voters may, whether in error or willfully, send in multiple ballots, but only the first valid, verified ballot is counted. A central database tracks and records the receipt of each verified ballot. Multiple ballots are flagged and not counted. Only the first valid ballot received is verified and counted.

- Only one ballot per voter per election is counted. As each signature is validated, a database is checked to verify that a ballot has not been counted for that voter. If a person submits more than one ballot in the same election, the ballot envelopes are set aside and reviewed. In some cases, voters are contacted to determine if an additional ballot was intentional or not. Only the first valid ballot submitted is counted.

- All ballot envelopes returned must pass multiple-point scrutiny. A ballot that arrives in an unsigned envelope cannot be counted. A voter's signature is

The elections office keeps a complete record of the election, including ballots that were invalidated and not counted. For federal elections, ballots and other materials are retained for 22 months.



DAN PELLE/THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

**Spokane County Elections extra help Christa McQueen, center, counts a handful of ballots during a recount, on Aug. 24, 2021. Close tallies in an open seat Spokane City Council District 1 race between Naghmana Sherazi and Luc Jasmin III and a Rockford Council Position 3 race between Ivan Willmschen and Rachelle Arriaga prompted the recount.**

essential to the validation process. When counting ballots, the number of verified voters must match the number of validated ballots exactly.

- Signatures must pass multiple checks. Signatures are examined using Washington State Patrol procedures. If a ballot turns up without a signature, the voter is contacted and given until the last day before the end of the canvass period (the period from Election Day until the results are certified) to provide a signature that matches their official ballot signature. Election offices vigilantly match signatures before validating

a ballot.

- A provisional ballot is counted only if it is verified. A provisional ballot is issued if a voter's name is not listed as a registered voter, if they cannot sign their name, or if they do not have proper identification. The verification process checks registration, ensures the ballot is not a duplicate, and inspects the signature. Washington state offers in-person, same-day registration, which greatly reduces the need for provisional ballots. Only verified provisional ballots are counted.

- All valid ballots are counted in every election. Ballots without signatures,

ballots with mismatched signatures, or ballots identified as duplicates are declared invalid. Election results are certified only after all valid ballots are counted.

- Only valid ballots are counted. If someone fills out and submits another person's ballot, the signature will not match and the ballot will not be verified. All ballots must be verified before they are counted. Only ballots with valid signatures are counted.

- Every ballot returned to the elections office is saved. The elections office keeps a complete record of the election, including ballots that were invalidated and

not counted. For federal elections, ballots and other materials are retained for 22 months.

- Ballots are tracked at every point in the election process. Ballots are tracked from the moment they arrive at the county elections office until they are archived after counting. At each point, ballots are checked to ensure that the number of validated voters matches the number of ballots moving through the process. Totals must match exactly.

- The actual physical paper ballots are the important documents. Electronic scanners assist in counting

ballots, but actual humans check, recheck, and confirm that ballots are properly accounted for at every step of the process. Ballots can be hand counted in the case of extremely close elections. All ballots are preserved for possible recounts and examination.

- Vote-counting machines record the votes as they are entered. Scanners read the votes off a ballot and enter those numbers in the database. If a program is installed incorrectly, votes could appear for the wrong candidate. To protect our right to vote and ensure

See **FACTOIDS, 20**



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON

# 10 TIPS TO HELP ELIGIBLE VOTERS REGISTER AND VOTE IN WASHINGTON STATE

Registering and voting in Washington can be confusing. Spokane County Auditor Vicky Dalton, with 20 years in her role, is one of the longest-serving elected auditors in the state. She answers 10 questions to reduce the confusion.

**If I give the Department of Licensing my new address, will my ballot be sent to my new residence?**

No. Updating your address with the Department of Licensing or U.S. Postal Service isn't always enough to get your ballot delivered properly. You must also notify your county auditor. The easiest way is online at [Votewa.gov](http://Votewa.gov) at [votervotewa.gov/WhereToVote.aspx](http://votervotewa.gov/WhereToVote.aspx)

You can also contact your auditor's office by phone or in person. Check the secretary of state's website at [www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors/](http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors/) to find your county auditor's office in Washington.

**Do I need Washington state identification to register to vote?**

If a prospective voter has a Washington-issued driver's license or identification card, the license number must be included in the voter registration application.

A prospective voter without state-issued identification, like a person who moved recently to Washington from another state, must submit the last four digits of their Social Security number. All prospective voters must sign an affidavit attesting they are a United States citizen, will have lived at this address in Washington for at least 30 days before the next



COLIN MULVANY/THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Spokane County Auditor Vicky Dalton, left, Spokane County Commissioner Al French, seated at center, and Spokane County Prosecuting Attorney Larry Haskell, seated at right, meet on Nov. 24, 2020, at a canvassing board meeting to certify election results for the November 2020 election.

election in which they will vote, are at least 18 years old when they vote and have no restrictions against voting because of convictions or court orders.

**How important is readable handwriting?**

If you are signing up at a registration drive, take a few extra moments to make sure your handwriting is

legible. Election workers check names and identification against databases and their work can be slowed if they can't read your writing. Dalton recommends people print information, other than their signatures.

**How old must I be to register to vote?**

Voters must be 18 to vote, but 16- and 17-year-olds may

sign up for the Future Voter program to ensure they receive their ballot on the first Election Day after they turn 18. If you turn 18 on Election Day, you must visit the elections office in person to vote because officials are not permitted to mail ballots to voters under the age of 18. You can learn more about the Future Voter program at

[www.sos.wa.gov/elections/future-voter-program.aspx](http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/future-voter-program.aspx) on the secretary of state's website.

**Will my vote count if my registration isn't complete or my ballot isn't through the drop-box slot on Election Day?**

You can show up at the Elections Office on Election

Day a few minutes before 8 p.m., and as long as you've started the registration process, you will be given a ballot that will count. The same is true if you arrive at a drop box just as the clock strikes 8 and there's a line of cars or people in front of you.

"The same thing used to

See **TIPS, 5**



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON

## TIPS

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apply at poll sites. We would mark the end of the line," Dalton said. "We do the same thing with cars on election night that are lining up to drop ballots into the bins."

**Do I have to mark every race on my ballot for my vote to count?**

No. Leaving one or more races blank on your ballot will not make your vote invalid. Election officials track the number of ballots in each contest that have no choice marked. They list them in official results, counting them as "under votes."

**Must I place my ballot in the security envelope for my vote to count?**

Election officials prefer you seal your ballot in the unidentifiable security envelope that comes in your packet, but forgetting to do so won't make your votes invalid.

Election officials will put any ballot that is not in the security envelope into one when it is opened at the election office. That's to protect the voter's anonymity.

**What if I forget to sign my name on the outside of the envelope?**

Election workers check all signatures on submitted ballots, so failing to sign the outside of the envelope can result in your ballot not being counted. If the signature on the envelope is missing or does not match the signature in the voter registration record, election officials will send a letter to the voter to correct the signature. If the voter responds to the letter with a signature that matches, the ballot will be counted.

You can check the status of your ballot by visiting the VoteWA website at [votervotewa.gov/WhereToVote.aspx](http://votervotewa.gov/WhereToVote.aspx). Be sure to check the site if you think you forgot to sign your envelope.

**How can I stop the many phone calls and email solicitations from candidates and political parties?**

The surest way to stop those phone calls and end the mailers arriving at your home is to vote early, Dalton said. Candidates and campaigns are notified when your ballot is received and so it is not likely they'll continue to send you reminders once your ballot is in.

**Will my ballot be counted as long as I drop it in the mail on Election Day?**

Your ballot must be postmarked by Election Day. So, if you mail your ballot on Election Day, look on the mailbox to make sure a pickup is scheduled for later that day. If you are unsure, take your ballot to a ballot drop-off location. Drop boxes are located at public libraries and many city halls. A ballot put in a drop box will count as long as you drop it in by 8 p.m. on Election Day. Check your county auditor's website for drop box locations. Check the secretary of state's website to find your county auditor's office at [www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors](http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors) in Washington.

## SO YOU'RE REGISTERED?



JESSE TINSLEY/SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

On the stage at the Bing Crosby Theater from left, Spokesman-Review reporter Kip Hill, former state Senate Majority Leader and congressional candidate Lisa Brown, U.S. Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers and KHQ anchor Sean Owsley participate in a congressional candidate forum on Sept. 19, 2018. The debate was sponsored by The Spokesman-Review and KHQ. Debates can provide opportunities for voters to make informed choices.

## Here's what to do as you prepare to vote

We all need reminders from time to time, which is why the League of Women Voters of Washington offers this checklist to support your efforts to vote.

- Be sure you're registered to vote and that the elections office in your county has your current address to mail your ballot. Check [WAVote at voter.votewa.gov/WhereToVote.aspx](http://WAVote.at.voter.votewa.gov/WhereToVote.aspx) to be sure.
- Know the dates. Know when your ballot should arrive in your mail. If it doesn't, contact your local elections office. Know when your ballot must be returned.
- Follow the news. Read your local newspaper to learn where your candidates stand on the issues.
- Check out and bookmark

[Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org), the League of Women Voters' one-stop online source for information about the candidates. If you don't locate a race or a candidate's responses to questions, call the campaign and ask why they aren't participating.

- Attend forums or local debates. Many organizations host events to provide candidates an opportunity to share their views. The League of Women Voters is well known for conducting impartial events and not promoting or opposing candidates.

- Be sure to sign the back of the envelope used to return your ballot.
- Become familiar with a sample ballot. Check your county auditor's office online for a sample. A list of links to county auditors in Washing-

ton is available at [www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors](http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors).

- Spend a few minutes talking about the importance of voting with your parents, children or grandchildren. Show them the ballot. Let them see you mark your ballot.
- Remind five friends or family members to vote.
- If you know someone who needs to get to the voting center to register close to the election, offer to drive them or go with them on the bus to drop off their ballot on Election Day if they haven't mailed it.
- Consider clipping this list and posting it on your refrigerator to frequently remind you to prepare to exercise your voting rights and responsibilities.



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON

# Western Washington campus offered options for eligible voters

Legislature passed law to create 10 student-run voting hubs at universities across state

When the Washington State Legislature passed a bill to improve student accessibility to voting, most people didn't know COVID-19 still would be turning our lives upside down when the 2020 general election rolled around.

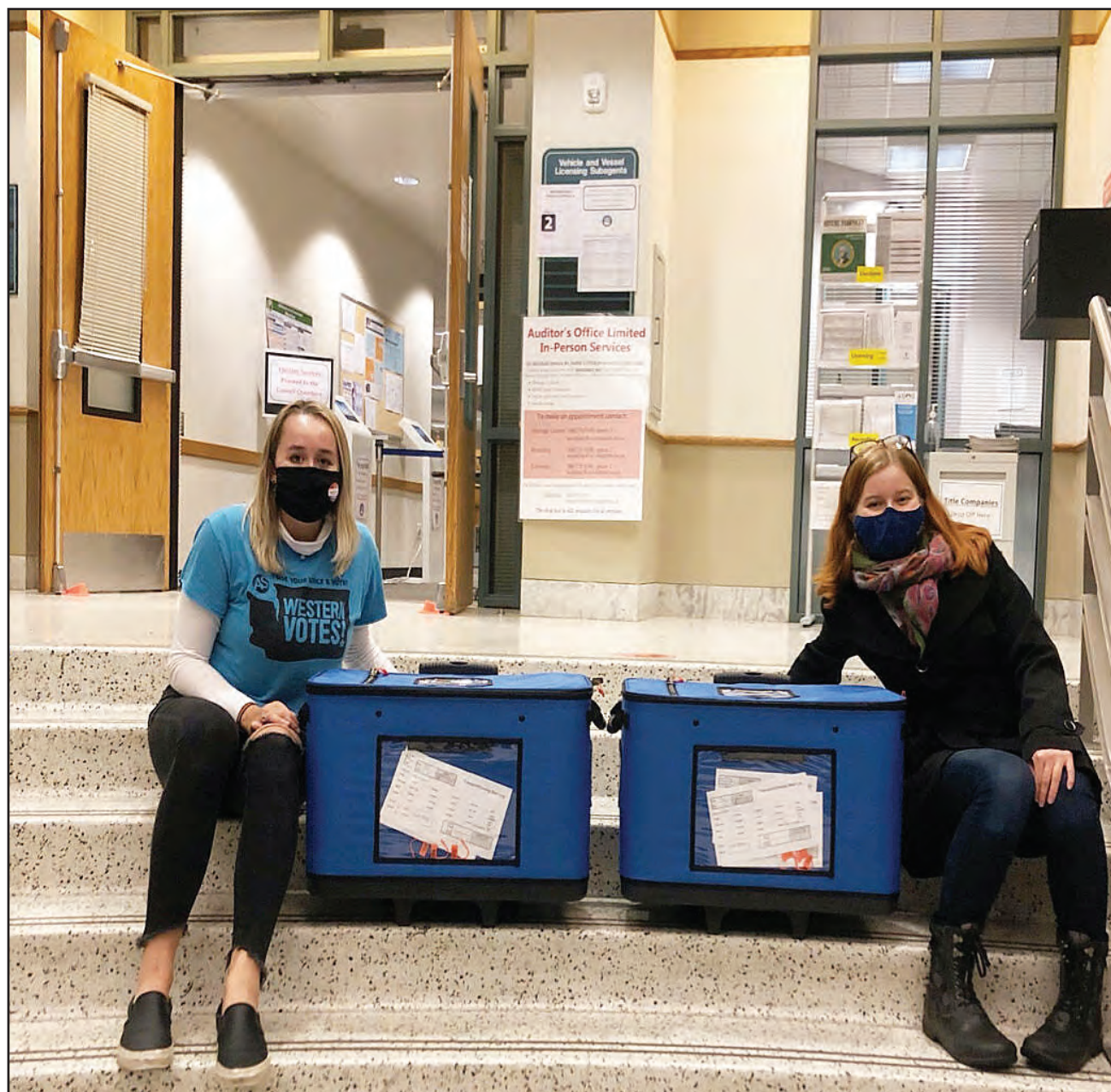
But in early November 2020, the virus still was raging. Classrooms, laboratories and lecture halls were empty. Most classes were offered online.

Nathalie Wagler, an environmental science student at Western Washington University, said the university resembled a ghost town. Nevertheless, students and the public turned to the campus to register, print out their ballots and turn them in on Election Day.

"We ended up helping about 80 people that day," said Wagler, who helped set up Western's Student Engagement Hub. "I think it turned out wonderfully, and we were really happy with it."

The creation of 10 student engagement centers – or hubs – was the cornerstone of the Voting Opportunities Through Education Act the Legislature passed in March 2020.

The bill also resulted in hubs at Washington State University Tri-Cities in Benton County, WSU Vancouver in Clark County, the University of Washington and the University of Washington at Bothell in King County, Central Washington University in Kittitas County, the University of Washington at Tacoma in Pierce County, Eastern Washington University in Spokane County, The Evergreen State College in Thurston County and Washington State University in Whitman County.



Western Washington University students Nathalie Wagler, left, and Adah Barenburg assisted students and members of the public who stopped by the campus Student Engagement Hub to vote on Election Day in November 2020.

COURTESY OF NATHALIE WAGLER

Whatcom County Auditor Diana Bradrick said her office provided training so students and others could access VoteWA, an online site for voting assistance. Her office also helped them get a replacement ballot online and enabled students to connect with the auditor's office to register.

Bradrick said her office followed protocol to ensure the integrity of the ballots.

"The ballot drop boxes were sealed by two people with a sealed log, and they were treated like any other official drop box, secured in place and serviced by my staff in teams of two," Bradrick said.

Wagler, who is from Billings, said a number of people needed help.

"We had a lot of folks who needed to re-register, people whose ballots had been sent to

their parents' home."

COVID-19 did require adjustments to the original plans.

"It created a big challenge," Wagler said. "Campus was essentially closed, and we had only a small number of students living on campus."

While some campus hubs were open a few days leading up to and including Election Day, Western's hours were

limited.

"The auditor suggested we just do Election Day and we were open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.," Wagler explained.

Despite the reduced hours, people valued the service.

"A lot of people said they wouldn't have voted if the hub hadn't been there," Wagler said.

The majority of Western students are not from Bellingham, she added.



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON



**First-time voter Jacob Whitman, 18, drops his ballot in the box at the Spokane County Elections Office on Aug. 6, 2019, in Spokane. Whitman took advantage of registering and voting on the same trip. Ten public university campuses in the state offer authorized voting centers where eligible voters can register, re-register and cast ballots. Central Washington University in Kittitas County was the first to offer on-campus voting center.**

DAN PELLE/THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

## ELLENSBURG CAMPUS MODEL FOR VOTING PROGRAM

While 10 Student Engagement Hubs made voting more accessible for university students across Washington starting in the spring of 2020, Central Washington University had the makings of the first center more than a decade ago.

"We've been doing this for a long time," said Jerry Pettit, who has been Kittitas County auditor since 2005. "We actually started what we called the Central Washington University Elections Assistance Center in 2009. It was primarily coordinated by students at CWU and the Associated Students, but we supported it."

Pettit said the idea surfaced in 2008, during the U.S. presidential election, when auditors' offices weren't forwarding CWU students their ballots. "Vote by mail was just starting out and students were trying to get

provisional ballots so they could vote," Pettit said.

"Every time a bus pulled up in front of the county courthouse where our office is, there would be more lines of students seeking provisional ballots."

Deluged office staff members did their best to keep up. But it was a massive effort.

The following spring, at the university's annual Civics Week, Pettit pitched an idea to ease the bottleneck: Set up an on-campus center at election time.

"The students went crazy over it. And it's happened every general election since then," Pettit said. "Students are happy that they don't have to leave campus to register or download their ballots, and we don't have lines out the door."

Pettit explained the system became formalized

when, a few years ago, student government groups sat down with Sen. Marko Liias, D-Everett, and drafted legislation that became part of a voting law approved in 2020 that expanded voting hubs to all public university campuses in Washington. "It helps out auditors because you don't have students showing up en masse and auditors have a way to deliver critical information," Liias said. "And students get the access they need."

Liias said despite improvements over the years, youth voting still lags behind participation by older voters. The hubs, Liias said, remove more barriers for young people.

Pettit agreed. "The hubs provide opportunities to allow more people to participate in the democratic process."



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON



COURTESY OF PIERCE COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

Amy Blair makes use of an Accessible Voting Unit, which enables people who are blind or have low vision to access their ballot using audio or Braille. Pierce County Auditor Julie Anderson said the AVU is available in the auditor's office 18 days before every election.

# Accessibility to ballot box, new technology make difference for voters with disabilities

Julian F. Wheeler, who volunteers as an election observer in Pierce County, appreciates the ways officials continue to make voting more accessible. A veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan,

Wheeler was injured and has a service-related disability that requires him to rely on some of those improvements.

What might be a simple change for some – a curb cut at a bus stop, for instance – can

make all the difference for a person with a disability who wants to vote.

State and federal laws as far back as the 1965 Voting Act required efforts to increase accessibility, according to the

Washington Secretary of State's Office.

Among those efforts are new technologies, such as the Accessible Voting Unit, which every county auditor's office is required by law to have.

Pierce County Auditor Julie Anderson said the unit, available 18 days before every election, allows those who are blind or who have low vision to access their

See **ACCESSIBILITY, 9**



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON



COURTESY OF PIERCE COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

**The Accessible Voting Unit is required at all county elections offices in Washington to assist voters with disabilities.**

## ACCESSIBILITY

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ballots via audio and use a touch paddle with Braille marks.

"Another tactic for low-vision voters is that the screen can blow up the size of the ballot and has contrast controls," she said. "For people with other disabilities, such as a degenerative muscle disease, where they can't hold a pen or use a keyboard, they can use their breath to navigate their

cursor."

For those who are deaf, the voting unit features a video remote interpreter.

"In 30 seconds, we can get an American Sign Language interpreter," Anderson said. "It's an iPad on wheels, and it's valuable because an auditor can't always have an in-person interpreter on hand."

In Vancouver, Washington, Elections Supervisor Cathie Garber said the Clark County Auditor's Office has produced an

audio voters' pamphlet for people who are blind or have visual issues. "In the past, we recorded the pamphlets on CDs, and then, when we created our website, people were able to access them there, listening on MP4 files."

Garber said the auditor's office has worked with a disability advisory committee on the better ways to provide information. The recordings are inexpensive, Garber said, noting it costs \$200 to \$600 for an audio specialist to record them.

Accessibility is a consideration in locating the county's 22 ballot drop boxes, too.

"For people with disabilities who don't have to get out of their vehicles to vote, that can be important," Garber said.

She noted the Clark County office has worked to strategically locate drop boxes.

"The city of Vancouver put in a device on one street so we could put up a platform so people driving both ways on the street could use the drop box.

"We want to make it possible for all of our voters to be able to vote," she added.

The state's vote-by-mail program improves accessibility for many. "With a mailbox, it means you have a ballot box right outside your home," she said.

For Wheeler, the veteran who returned from Afghanistan with a medical disability, the improvements in accessibility mean a great deal. "This is what I fought for, for more opportunities for all."



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON

National Woman Party's chairwoman Alice Paul, second from left, and officers of the National Woman's Party hold a banner in June 1920 with a Susan B. Anthony quote in front of the National Woman Party's headquarters in Washington, D.C.



ASSOCIATED PRESS



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Marchers stream across the Alabama River in this March 21, 1965, photo on the first of a five-day, 50-mile march to the state capitol at Montgomery. Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King, front right, led the procession of civil rights activists that pressured Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act.

## TIMELINE: THE RIGHT TO VOTE

### Original voting requirements of the 13 states:

- 1789**
- Male
  - 21 years of age
  - White
  - Property owner
  - In some states, Protestant

### African American males given right to vote

**1868**

The 14th Amendment is passed, granting citizenship and the right to vote to former male slaves. However, Southern states implement taxes and literacy tests to prevent African American men from voting. They also use intimidation and violence to suppress the Black vote.

### Native American males given right to vote with conditions

**1887**

The Supreme Court rules Native American men can vote if they give up their tribal affiliation. Congress later says they will have to apply for citizenship.

### Right to vote extended to women

**1920**

Women win the vote with the passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. (Wyoming is the first state to give women the right to vote in 1890, Washington in 1910.)

### All Native Americans given right to vote

**1947**

The right to vote is extended to all Native Americans.

### Poll taxes outlawed

**1964**

The 24th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution outlaws poll taxes.

### Voting age lowered to 18

**1971**

With the Vietnam War raging, the 26th Amendment passes, lowering the voting age to 18.

### Washington state creates same-day voter registration

**2018**

In Washington state, automatic voter registration, same-day voter registration, and the Future Voter program signed into law.



### Nonproperty-owners given right to vote

**1856**

The requirement to own property is eliminated in all states.

### People of Chinese ancestry banned from voting

**1882**

Congress passes laws barring people of Chinese ancestry from voting.

### Immigrants from Japan and India banned from citizenship and voting

**1922-1923**

The U.S. Supreme Court rules immigrants from Japan can't become citizens and vote. Immigrants from India are similarly barred in 1923.

### All Asian Americans given right to vote

**1952**

The right to vote is extended to all Asian Americans.

### Voting Rights Act

**1965**

The 1965 Voting Rights Act bars states from imposing restrictions on who can vote, including eliminating literacy tests. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is readopted and strengthened in 1970, 1975, and 1982.

### Felons given the right to vote

**2021**

New Washington law restores right to vote to people convicted of a felony after they serve their time.



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON

# HERE'S WHEN TO EXPECT A BALLOT TO ARRIVE IF YOU'RE A WASHINGTON STATE VOTER

Registered voters in Washington are mailed ballots whenever there's an election in the community where they live.

That will happen at least once a year, but could happen up to four times.

Dates of elections are set by Washington law.

They are:

- The second Tuesday of February.
- The fourth Tuesday in April.
- The first Tuesday in August.
- The first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

The February and April elections are considered "special elections" and are used by local governments, including school boards, fire dis-

tricts, city councils and county commissions, seeking voter permission to raise taxes or asking voters if they want to approve a certain law. Local governments can also choose to use the August or November elections to pose these questions to voters.

If a voter lives in a location where no local government has opted to seek voter approval for a tax or other proposal, voters there will not be mailed special election ballots.

Candidates for public office are selected only in the August and November elections.

The August election, called a primary, is used to eliminate all but the two most popular candidates when more than two candidates are vying

for an office. In Washington, for all public offices except United States president, the two candidates who receive the most votes – regardless of party – advance to the November election. That means two Republicans or two Democrats could advance.

The November election is called the general election. This is the election that selects the final winners for political offices.

In even number years, voters select candidates for county offices, state Legislature and Congress. Every four years coinciding with the presidential election, executive state offices, including governor, attorney general and secretary of state are chosen.

In odd number years, voters select candidates for city and town offices and other local governments, including school boards and fire district boards.

In odd number years, a race that includes two or fewer candidates will not appear on the primary ballot. In those circumstances, the candidates move directly to the general election ballot.

In even number years, races with two or fewer candidates will appear on the primary ballot even though both candidates are almost certain to advance to the November election.

Rules require that ballots be mailed to voters at least 18 days prior to an election.

## State elections website helps voters track their ballots

Washington's state election website allows voters to keep track of their ballots to ensure they get counted.

But it does much more than that.

Voters can check the status of their ballots at VoteWA.gov. From there, they can type in their names and birthdays to find out if their ballots have been mailed by the county elections office, and, if so, if they have been returned and accepted.

Voters also can check to make sure they're registered or registered to vote at the proper address.

If they're not, they can register to vote or change their addresses online if they have the proper documentation.

The website, operated by the state Secretary of State's office, pulls up a list of elected representatives

who currently represent the area, including a member of Congress, county commissioners, city council members and school board members.

Beyond that, voters can get background on issues and candidates who will appear on their next ballots.

Once voters type in their names and birthdays, they'll get a voter guide specific to their neighborhoods. Names of all the candidates who will appear on their ballots will be included, as will other information and background about candidates who choose to participate in the voter guide. If a proposition or initiative is on a voter's ballot, the voter guide will include information about those as well as statements in favor and opposed, if citizens stepped forward to provide them.



**Washington Secretary of State Kim Wyman talks to reporters in her office on Jan. 15, 2020, at the Capitol in Olympia. Wyman's office operates the VoteWA.gov website, which allows Washington voters to check on the status of their ballots.**

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## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON

# TEEN VOTER SIGN-UP PROVING WORTH IN GREATER PARTICIPATION

Psychology experts who help people establish good habits say it's best to start working on creating those habits early, which explains why many officials and others seeking to boost voter participation so broadly support the Future Voter program.

"Kids who get interested in civics at an early age tend to become active, life-long voters," Secretary of State Kim Wyman said of the program that went into effect July 1, 2019.

For 16- and 17-year-olds in Washington who register for the Future Voter program, signing up means they are automatically registered to vote when they turn 18.

And with support from the Office of Superintendent of Instruction, teachers help students prepare for the new responsibility. In mid-January, on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day, teachers offer a collection of special lessons and programs, some of which can be found in the Classroom Guide to Voter Registration on the Secretary of State's website.

## Young voter participation is up

Statistics indicate the program may be working. According to the secretary of state's "2020 Report on Elections in Washington State," nearly 73% of registered 18- to 24-year-olds voted in the 2020 election. That's up nearly 14% from 2016, when only 59% of registered 18- to 24-year-olds voted.

True, turnout across



JESSE TINSLEY/THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Braden Albertini, left, and Isaac Hansel, second from left, fill out voter registration forms under the watchful eye of Bev Austin, right, of the League of Women Voters, on Jan. 16, 2019, at a table in the entryway of Lewis and Clark High School. The nonpartisan group visit local high schools and offering voter registration to young people. Though they must be 18 to vote, teens ages 16 and 17 can sign up for delayed registration that will make them eligible on their 18th birthdays.

the country – including in Washington – was higher than usual in the 2020 general election. Among people age 65 and older, participation went up 2% between the 2016 and 2020 general elections.

But the youth vote in-

creased more than 13%. At the 2016 general election, about 60.2% of eligible 18- to 24-year-olds were registered to vote, but four years later, after the Future Voter program was in place, that number was 9% higher.

Spokane Public Schools' Susie Gerard has seen the impact on students firsthand. Gerard, who taught at Spokane's Lewis and Clark High School for 33 years before becoming the district's secondary social studies coordinator, said

she used to give each of her students a voter registration card on their birthday when they turned 18.

The Future Voter program broadens that opportunity to all students and makes those who sign up at 16 or 17 automatically

registered at 18.

It's become a popular program, Gerard said.

She and others who participate are careful to introduce the Future Voter program as an option.

See **TEENS, 13**



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON



COURTESY

Spokane Public Schools's Secondary Social Studies Coordinator Susie Gerard reviews a copy of "The State We're In," a civics education textbook for middle and high school students produced by the League of Women Voters of Washington.

## TEENS

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"We've never made it a requirement. It's not high pressure at all."

And when students sign up, Gerard said she and other teachers are careful not to influence how they vote.

"We just want to influence them to vote."

They also help students learn where to find information that aligns with their beliefs. The program has other benefits, too. For one, Gerard said, "They are a little more interested in the news."

State Rep. Steve Bergquist, who helped craft the Future Voter legislation, said the program promotes greater accountability.

"They feel their responsibilities sooner," he said. "It opens their eyes to the world around them and makes voting more real and relevant."

Bergquist graduated from Western Washington University's teaching program and taught social studies in Renton before he was elected to the Legislature in 2012.

When he started teaching, Bergquist remembers teens asking him why they should care and what civics had to do with them.

"I told them they should always care about their community and that they have a huge opportunity to get involved," he said. "But they didn't get it. It didn't resonate."

Shortly after reaching the Washington Statehouse, Bergquist began working on legislation that eventually became the Future Voter program. "It took six years after I was in office before we finally were able to get a bill past the goal post."

In the program's first year, more than 55,000 young people under 18

signed up, according to the Secretary of State's Office.

"One of the best investments we can make for our future is to educate young people," said Secretary of State Kim Wyman. "Instilling a sense of commitment to community at an earlier age better prepares them for lifelong civic participation."

Bergquist is adamant it is beneficial to introduce civics to young people.

"When they turn 18, they have as much of a right to vote in our system. If we aren't preparing them early, they will be less informed," Bergquist said. "What better way is there?"

## To sign up for Future Voter

A 16- or 17-year-old Washington citizen has four options for signing up to be a Future Voter:

- Online at [VoteWa.gov](https://VoteWa.gov) using a driver's license or state ID.
- Mailing in a paper Washington State Voter Registration form available on the secretary of state's website.
- In person at your county elections office or when you get your driver's license or ID at the Department of Licensing.
- At your school's Temperance and Good Citizenship Day event in January.
- If a would-be Future Voter doesn't have a driver's license, they can complete and mail in a paper form, using the last four digits of their Social Security number.

For protection, the law exempts all information provided by minors from the Public Records Act until they turn 18, and requires the Secretary of State's office to obtain a copy of the applicant's driver's license or identification signature from the Department of Licensing.



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON

# VOLUNTEER OBSERVERS BRING CREDIBILITY TO ELECTIONS



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE PIERCE COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

Political party observers in Pierce County watch a meeting of the canvassing board during a recent election.



The Pierce County Auditor's office is large enough to feature a glass-fronted walkway where observers can watch election officials at work.

Trained volunteers who watch paid election staff members count and process ballots are necessary to our democracy, says Christopher Johnson, who has volunteered to do just that for 15 years in Pierce County.

"It has to be done," said Johnson, who has also coordinated Republican Party volunteer observers in Pierce County the past decade.

Johnson, a retired statistician, says election observing by certified volunteers is like having citizens serve on a jury.

"Collectively, the jury process works," said Johnson. "It doesn't mean it's perfect. Likewise, properly run elections that are observed work well."

As far back as 2000 – and likely even earlier – presidential elections nationwide have prompted calls for people to watch the polls. In Washing-

ton, the practice stretches to 1977, when legislation set up a system of trained volunteers from both major political parties and independent groups to observe workers in each of the state's 39 counties.

The system adds credibility, say election officials and observers from across the state.

"It gives me peace of mind to know that we are ensuring the expert and professional handling of ballots by election staff," said Julian F. Wheeler, Johnson's counterpart, who coordinates Democratic Party observers in Pierce County.

Nan Peele of the Tacoma-Pierce County League of Women Voters coordinates the third group of volunteer observers in Pierce County – a collection of independents who don't represent any party.

The coordinators – Peele,

See **OBSERVERS, 15**



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON



Observers in Pierce County watch election officials at work from a glass-fronted walkway.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE PIERCE COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

## OBSERVERS

Continued from 14

Wheeler, and Johnson – say problems they've observed don't involve misconduct, despite claims made nationally.

"Most of the time the problems we run into are election staff trying to be proficient and maybe they cut corners to be efficient," said Johnson. "That's when observers from both parties see the problem. And it gets resolved."

Observer training for volunteers differs from county to county. In some, it's a brief overview; elsewhere it can be up to two hours of instruction. But it basically centers on this point: Observers observe and do not count or handle any processing.

"They can't touch ballots and

they can't touch machinery," said Mason County Auditor Paddy McGuire. They can't speak directly with election workers either. Instead, they are assigned a supervisor to whom they bring issues. "If they have an issue, they come find us."

McGuire said observers get to watch every aspect of ballot processing.

"They get to see ballots coming in the door, our sorting process, signature verification, opening the envelopes, flattening the ballots, checking the ballots and running the ballots through the scanners."

The most common issue observers bring up, McGuire said, has to do with signature verification. Verifying signatures is difficult and his staff takes annual training from the Washington State Patrol to master the skill.

The facilities and proximity of observers to elections workers vary from county to county, too.

"Our processing center is a former conference room and we don't have physical separation between workers and observers," McGuire said.

But his office recently installed cameras in the ballot-processing center, allowing people to watch the location 24 hours a day, seven days a week online.

"If someone says they saw someone in the ballot-processing room at 3 in the morning, we can say, 'Let's go look at the tape.'"

Julie Anderson, the Pierce County auditor, said citizen observers logged 1,121 hours during the November 2021 general election.

"We had a very stable and peaceful election in Pierce

County and I credit a lot of that to the observers. We have very strong political party members who vouch for the security. It's good for us because it holds us accountable.

"And it's good for the voter because there are others verifying that we are following our published procedures and acting with integrity."

Pierce has an area where the public can drop by and observe from behind a see-through divider. That's not the case in Spokane County, where Elections Manager Mike McLaughlin said some 100 citizens have trained to become observers. Spokane County has three groups of citizen observers: groups appointed by the two major political parties and a group appointed by candidates or campaigns.

At a single time, the Spokane

office can accommodate three observers from the Republican Party, three from the Democratic Party and two from candidates and campaigns. "There is a maximum of eight observers at any one time," McLaughlin said.

Despite the importance of the duty, Johnson from Pierce County cautions people from thinking observing will be exciting.

"I tell them it's not like watching paint dry. It's like watching other people watch paint dry."

Exciting or not, most observers and elections officials agree that volunteer observers are necessary.

"When people tell me that elections are fraudulent, I say, come watch," said Mason County's McGuire. "I think observing is an important component in helping dispel this craziness about fraudulent ballots."



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON



BETTINA HANSEN/SEATTLE TIMES

Sherita Cooks drops her ballot in a King County Elections ballot drop box on Election Day for the midterms on Nov. 6, 2018, in Burien, Wash.



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

# Washington's vote-by-mail system eliminates long lines to vote

League of Women Voters member Beth Pellicciotti remembers how easy she found voting when she moved to Spokane after nearly 40 years in the Midwest.

"I just couldn't believe it," Pellicciotti said. "You can just about fall out of bed in Washington and vote."

The voting system Pellicciotti and her husband, Joe, left in northwestern Indiana was a far cry from what greeted them after their 2015 move to Spokane. First, they left a state where you couldn't vote by mail. And there were no absentee ballots for when it was hard to leave work to vote.

"They were hard to come by," Pellicciotti said. "You just couldn't request one. You had to document you couldn't vote on Election Day, and in 40 years, I never had an absentee ballot."

Vote-by-mail, which has been the law in Washington state since 2011, is a benefit of living in the Evergreen State, according to three Spokane voters who moved to Washington in the last few years.

"Coming to Washington, of course, we were delighted to have the ballots mailed to us," said Jean Alliman, who moved from Louisville, Kentucky, two years ago. "It was very, very impressive to register and then have our ballots mailed to us."

Despite Kentucky not using vote by mail, Alliman said she was fortunate that she was able to avoid long lines at the polls.

"Over the 17 years we were there, probably the longest we had to wait was 30 minutes," she said. Because she was a professor and her husband was an administrator for a nonprofit organization, they had flexible work schedules. That allowed them to pick and choose times when the lines might be shorter.

"We had friends who had to wait a long time. They were able to go vote only before work and it was very, very stressful. Or after work, it cut into their family time."

Pellicciotti said she was able to avoid



**King County Election office workers Kyria Tietze, left, and Joseph Emanuel collect ballots from a drop box the morning of Aug. 7, 2018, in Seattle.**

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long lines in Indiana as well because of her flexible work schedule. But others in the Hoosier state didn't. "It wasn't so much where I voted, but certain parts of northwest Indiana, especially during presidential elections, had two-hour lines."

Kate Telis, who lived in Waterville, Maine, and Washington, D.C., indicated she voted by absentee ballots mailed from her home in Montana. But she and her husband returned to voting in person when they moved to Albuquerque, New

Mexico; then Los Angeles; and most recently Spokane.

"My husband is a surgeon and we moved quite a bit for his training," Telis said. Even in New Mexico, which had early voting – days before Election Day when voters could mark and turn in their ballots – Telis said her husband found it difficult to vote at times.

"Doing his surgical training he was often working 70 to 90 hours a week, maybe more," Telis said. "As a resident in medical school, your hours were always

unpredictable.

"Now, to be able to fill out a ballot and drop it off at my local library ballot box is pretty amazing," Telis added.

Alliman, previously from Kentucky, said she does miss an aspect of voting in person.

"There was a camaraderie that developed by gathering with others to vote," she said. "Waiting in line or going with neighbors to vote or putting on the 'I voted' sticker. It was something special that we miss and that is hard to re-create."



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON

## Redistricting panel to release first draft of legislative district map Sept. 21

Every 10 years, the country redraws its congressional and state legislative district boundaries using U.S. Census data.

In Washington, that process is done by the state Redistricting Commission, comprised of two Democrats, two Republicans and one nonpartisan, non-voting chair. Those members cannot currently or within the last two years be registered lobbyists or elected officials.

The 2021 commission includes Chair Sarah Augustine, executive director of the Dispute Resolution Center of Yakima and Kittitas Counties; Democratic appointees April Sims, secretary treasure of the Washington State Labor Council AFL-CIO, and Brady Piñero Walkinshaw, former state representative; and Republican appointees Paul Graves, former state representative, and Joe Fain, former state senator.

The first Redistricting Commission redrew boundaries in 1991. Until then, it was the Legislature that was charged with redistricting.

The commission will take the 2020 U.S. Census data, which shows populations and demographics of the state, and determine the best way to redraw the state's district boundaries. According to state and federal laws, the districts must encompass equal numbers of people, as much as possible and ensure minorities have an equal opportunity to elect representatives. Districts cannot be physically separated, and boundaries for cities, counties and neighborhoods with common interests must be respected. They cannot favor any party or candidate.

According to the commission's August monthly meeting, the state's legislative districts must include roughly 157,251 people each, and the Congressional districts must include roughly 770,528 people each.

The first draft of the legislative district map will be released Sept. 21. The first draft of the congressional district map will be released Sept. 28. Final maps should be released by Nov. 15.



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Washington state Rep. Tarra Simmons, D-Bremerton, holds blank voter registration forms as she poses for a photo at her home Dec. 9 in Bremerton. Simmons was incarcerated herself before being released and becoming a lawyer. "Her success is what we want for all people who are completing their prison term," Sen. Patty Kuderer, D-Bellevue, said during a floor debate on restoring voting rights for felons. "Let's give that opportunity to others as well by restoring their voices and their right to vote."

## Washington residents with felonies may soon have voting rights restored

As of this election cycle, those convicted of a felony in Washington can have their voting rights restored upon completing community supervision with the Department of Corrections, but beginning in 2022, those rights will expand even further.

The Legislature passed a bill in 2021 that automatically restores the right to vote for those convicted of a felony, as long as they are not serving a sentence in total confinement. That means even those currently on

parole or under some community custody will be able to vote. But that law doesn't go into effect until Jan. 1, 2022.

For this November's general election, those with felonies can have their voting rights restored upon completion of community custody. When their right is restored, either through a certificate of discharge, court order, final order of discharge or certificate of restoration, they can re-register to vote with the secretary of state's office.

Registering can be done online at [VoteWA.gov](http://VoteWA.gov) or mailing or turning in-person a form to their county elections department.

When the Legislature's new law goes into effect in 2022, those with felonies will have their voting rights automatically restored upon release, as long as they are not serving a sentence in total confinement. Total confinement means 24-hour confinement inside a facility or institution operated by the Department of Corrections.



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON



We don't just offer the voters the candidates' own statements.  
We try to ask questions to give voters real information.

**Beatrice Crane**  
Vote411 project manager

# Vote411.org provides nonpartisan voting guide for Washington elections

Want to find out who's running for office in a race in the next election? Need to make sure you're registered to vote? Need to register? Curious about debates in your area?

Want to compare candidates' positions on an important topic in your community?

Log onto your phone, notebook, or laptop and type in Vote411.org. Then type in your home address.

For the past nine years, Vote411.org has been the go-to site online for reliable and unbiased information about voting in Washington. That's because Vote411 delivers all types of voting details – about ballots, candidates, forums, registration and deadlines.

"Everything about elections in Washington state is on there, all the way down to who's running for the hospital, sewer, port, cemetery and utility commissions, to the mayor, the city and county councils," said Linnea Hirst, a member of the League of Women Voters who was instrumental in bringing Vote411 to Washington in 2012.

The League of Women Voters of the United States Education Fund created the initial Vote411 site in 2006. Over the years, the site's popularity has grown and expanded to all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In 2020, it provided accurate and unbiased information about



Launched by the League of Women Voters Education Fund in October 2006, VOTE411.org is a "one-stop-shop" for election-related information.

COURTESY PHOTO

voting to more than 6 million people across the country. For the first time, it also featured a version in Spanish.

Funded with tax-deductible contributions from individuals, Vote411 also has garnered the support of more than 80 organizations, including nonprofits like the American Library Association and the National Association of Broadcasters as well as companies like Target, Sweetgreen, Lyft, Nando's, Warby Parker and Seventh Generation.

It's also won impressive accolades, too, including three Telly awards, honoring excellence in video and television, and a People's Voice Webby award for the

best government and civil innovation website. Over the years, the popularity of the site in Washington has grown, said Beatrice Crane, the state League's Vote411 project manager. She estimated some 80,000 users in Washington logged on for voting information in 2020.

Washington is one of a few states where Vote411 serves the entire state, Crane noted. She said the secretary of state makes available information about all of the candidates and races throughout Washington to the public.

"The office provides the information automatically and we can download the names of

all of the candidates onto one spreadsheet. We don't have to go to each county individually to get information about who's running."

One of the highlights of Vote411 is the answers to questions the League poses to candidates. "We send out questions to all of the candidates in the state and we put their responses up there so voters can compare what they say, side by side," Crane explained.

Members of local Leagues submit topics about local issues that the state Vote411 committee then uses to produce questions for the candidates that are unbiased and straightforward. "The

value is we try to ask unbiased questions that will elicit meaningful responses," Crane said.

"We don't just offer the voters the candidates' own statements. We try to ask questions to give voters real information." Nor do League officials edit the candidates' responses.

Crane said one minus is that not all candidates answer the League's questions. So a candidate's name and general information appear but without any details about the person's positions on key issues.

In 2020, of the 644 candidates listed on Vote411, 56% replied to the League's questions. Of the contested races, meaning where more than one candidate ran, 65% of the winners had submitted answers.

League officials suggest that voters who are disappointed when a candidate doesn't provide answers should feel free to contact the candidate's campaign and urge them to do so. That a candidate is willing to provide their perspective is a real plus, Hirst said.

Hirst also said Vote411 is becoming more important as local newspapers across the country close or cut back on coverage. She mentioned a relative in New England who was looking to Vote411 as a resource for candidate information because his local newspaper had reduced its coverage.



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON

## FACTOIDS

Continued from 3

votes are counted accurately, premade test decks of ballots are used to check for problems. In a test deck, all results are known beforehand, and if the tabulator results do not match, the machine is reprogrammed and then retested until they do. Vote-tabulating machines record all votes as they appear on each cast ballot.

- Vote-counting records are kept safe. Multiple safety precautions, including built-in audit logs, prevent anyone from changing votes or from hacking the machines that tabulate the votes. Attempted changes are detected and the perpetrators are prosecuted.

- Official election observers are invited to be present at all times during the counting process. Ballots are unsealed, handled, and counted in the presence of observers. These include representatives of both major political parties, who are invited to watch in equal numbers, as well as nonpartisan representatives. Observers leave the building where the ballots are counted at the same time as the election staff. Ballots are processed only in the presence of staff and, if present, official observers.

- Not all ballots can be counted on election night. Election results



DAN PELLE/THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

**Ryan Dosch, voter services specialist, left, and Kit Anderson, supervisor at the Spokane County Elections Office, roll out carts with ballots headed to the post office on Oct. 18, 2018.**

are not final until all ballots are counted and the results are certified. Ballots received after Election Day may still be counted if they are postmarked on or before Election Day. Election officials will continue to process mailed ballots with acceptable postmarks until certification. Especially in close races, it may appear as if the winners are “flipping” during the counting process. But preliminary

results, especially when the outcome is close, do sometimes change because they are just that – preliminary.

- Invalidated ballots can't be added to the count. Photocopied ballots or forged ballots without a voter identification are not valid. They are not counted.

- All valid ballots are counted in every election. Photocopied ballots without a voter ID can't be

validated. They won't be counted. The number of valid voters who voted and the number of ballots counted must match.

- Party affiliation is private in Washington state. Washington voters don't register by political party. Voters are asked to declare their political party affiliation only during presidential primaries (part of the nomination process for U.S. president). That infor-

mation is recorded on the voter's registration record for 60 days, per state law, before being permanently removed from the voter's record. If a candidate or political party has personal information, they got it from somewhere other than the government.

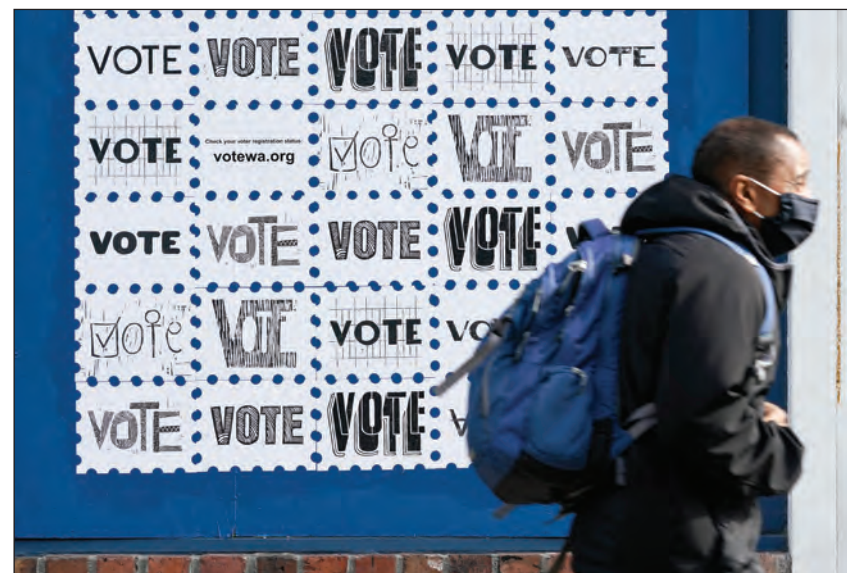
- Our votes are private. Other than ensuring that a ballot returned by mail is properly delivered to its respective county elections office, the U.S. Postal Service has no way to track ballots or their contents. Voter privacy is secure.

- How a person votes is strictly private. No one can obtain information from the elections office about how you voted on candidates and measures. Political parties gather what information they can from many sources, hoping to figure out whether a voter is conservative or liberal, to target their mailings accordingly. But ballot privacy is secure and protected.

- American elections are secure. Multiple layers of safeguards prevent outside interference from other countries. That we have a decentralized system, where elections occur at the local level, reinforces this. Across the country, in each state and in each county, election officials work diligently to keep elections safe from outside interference.



**LEFT: Mary Coltrane, voter service liaison for the League of Women Voters of Washington, holds up her ballot as she stands with Gypsy Temple lead singer Cameron Lavi-Jones and urges audience members to vote during a performance by the band at Shoreline Community College on Oct. 25, 2018, in Shoreline, Wash. RIGHT: A pedestrian passes by a mural encouraging people to in Washington state to vote, Tuesday, Oct. 13, 2020, in downtown Seattle.**



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