
Washington

Voter Registration & Voter List Maintenance Guide

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State Guide to Voter Registration & Voter List Maintenance Statutes

This is a guide to your state's laws relating to voter registration and voter list maintenance.

The statutes/codes cited in this guide may not be the most recent version. States may have more current or accurate information. We make no warranties or guarantees about the accuracy, completeness, or adequacy of the information contained in the individual state guides or the information linked to on the state site.

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Who can I contact with election related questions?

[Link to Elections Official](#)

Chief Elections Office:	Secretary of State State Elections Division
Physical Address:	416 Sid Snyder Ave SW Olympia, WA 98501
Mailing Address:	P.O. Box 40229 Olympia, WA 98504-0229
Phone Number:	360-902-4180
Fax Number:	360-664-4619
E-mail:	elections@sos.wa.gov
Webform:	Contact Us Webform
County Election Offices:	https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/voters/voter-registration/county-elections-offices



How do I register to vote?

[Link to Register](#)
[Link to Statutes](#)

[WA Constitution Article VI, Section 1 Qualifications of electors](#)

All persons of the age of eighteen years or over who are citizens of the United States and who have lived in the state, county, and precinct thirty days immediately preceding the election at which they offer to vote, except those disqualified by Article VI, section 3 of this Constitution, shall be entitled to vote at all elections.

[WA Constitution Article VI, Section 3 Who disqualified](#)

All persons convicted of infamous crime unless restored to their civil rights and all persons while they are judicially declared mentally incompetent are excluded from the elective franchise.



How do I cancel my voter registration?

[Link to Form](#)
[Election Offices](#)

You may voluntarily cancel your Washington State voter registration by completing [this form](#) and returning it to your [county elections office](#). The signature you submit on this form will be compared to the signature in your Washington State voter registration record before it is cancelled.

How is voter list maintenance handled?

[RCW 29A.08.510 Death](#)

The registrations of deceased voters may be canceled from voter registration lists as follows:

- (1) Periodically, the registrar of vital statistics of the state shall prepare a list of persons who resided in each county, for whom a death certificate was transmitted to the registrar and was not included on a previous list, and shall supply the list to the secretary of state. The secretary of state shall compare this list with the registration records and cancel the registrations of deceased voters.
- (2) In addition, each county auditor may also use government agencies and newspaper obituary articles as a source of information for identifying deceased voters and canceling a registration. The auditor must verify the identity of the voter by matching the voter's date of birth or an address. The auditor shall record the date and source of the information in the cancellation records.
- (3) In addition, any registered voter may sign a statement, subject to the penalties of perjury, to the effect that to his or her personal knowledge or belief another registered voter is deceased. This statement may be filed with the county auditor or the secretary of state. Upon the receipt of such signed statement, the county auditor or the secretary of state shall cancel the registration from the official state voter registration list.

[RCW 29A.08.515 Guardianship](#)

Upon receiving official notice that a court has imposed a guardianship for a person under RCW 11.130.265 and has determined that the person is incompetent for the purpose of rationally exercising the right to vote, if the person subject to guardianship is a registered voter in the county, the county auditor shall cancel that person's voter registration.

[RCW 29A.08.520 Felony conviction—Restoration of voting rights](#)

- (1) For a felony conviction in a Washington state court, the right to vote is automatically restored as long as the person is not serving a sentence of total confinement under the jurisdiction of the department of corrections. For a felony conviction in a federal court or any state court other than a Washington state court, the right to vote is automatically restored as long as the person is no longer incarcerated. A person who has been convicted of a felony and is either sentenced to a term of total confinement under the jurisdiction of the department of corrections or otherwise incarcerated as provided for in this subsection must reregister to vote prior to voting.
- (2) At least once a month, the secretary of state shall compare the list of registered voters to a list of persons who are not eligible to vote as provided in subsection (1) of this section. If a registered voter is not eligible to vote as provided in this section, the secretary of state or county auditor shall confirm the match through a date of birth comparison and suspend the voter registration from the official state voter registration list. The secretary of state or county auditor shall send to the person at his or her last known voter registration address and at the department of corrections, if the person is serving a sentence of total confinement under the jurisdiction of the department, a notice of the proposed cancellation and an explanation of the requirements for restoring the right to vote and reregistering. To the extent possible, the secretary of state shall time the comparison required by this subsection to allow notice and cancellation of voting rights for ineligible voters prior to a primary or general election.
- (3) For the purposes of this section, a sentence of total confinement does not include confinement imposed as a sanction for a community custody violation under RCW 9.94A.633(1).

RCW 29A.08.610 Dual registration or voting detection

The secretary of state shall conduct an ongoing list maintenance program designed to detect persons registered in more than one county or voting in more than one county in an election. This program must be applied uniformly throughout the state and must be nondiscriminatory in its application.

The office of the secretary of state shall search the statewide voter registration list to find registered voters with the same date of birth and similar names. Once the potential duplicate registrations are identified, the secretary of state shall refer the potential duplicate registrations to the appropriate county auditors, who shall compare the signatures on each voter registration record and, after confirming that a duplicate registration exists properly resolve the duplication.

If a voter is suspected of voting in two or more counties in an election, the county auditors in each county shall cooperate without delay to determine the voter's county of residence. The county auditor of the county of residence of the voter suspected of voting in two or more counties shall take action under RCW 29A.84.010 without delay.

RCW 29A.08.615 "Active," "inactive" registered voters—"Pending" registrations

- (1) Registered voters are divided into two categories, "active" and "inactive." All registered voters are classified as active, unless assigned to inactive status by the county auditor.
- (2) Persons signing up to register to vote as future voters as defined under RCW 29A.04.070 are classified as "pending" until the person will be at least eighteen years of age by the next election, or eligible to participate in the next presidential primary or primary under RCW 29A.08.110 or 29A.08.170.

RCW 29A.08.620 Change of address information for mail ballots—Assignment of voter to inactive status—Confirmation notice-

- (1) Each county auditor must request change of address information from the postal service for all mail ballots.
- (2) The county auditor shall transfer the registration of a voter and send an acknowledgment notice to the new address informing the voter of the transfer if change of address information received by the county auditor from the postal service, the department of licensing, or another agency designated to provide voter registration services indicates that the voter has moved within the county.
- (3) The county auditor shall place a voter on inactive status and send to all known addresses a confirmation notice and a voter registration application if change of address information received by the county auditor from the postal service, the department of licensing, or another agency designated to provide voter registration services indicates that the voter has moved from one county to another.
- (4) The county auditor shall place a voter on inactive status and send to all known addresses a confirmation notice if any of the following occur: (a) Any document mailed by the county auditor to a voter is returned by the postal service as undeliverable without address correction information; or (b) Change of address information received from the postal service, the department of licensing, or another state agency designated to provide voter registration services indicates that the voter has moved out of the state.

RCW 29A.08.625 Voting by inactive or canceled voters.

- (1) A voter whose registration has been made inactive under this chapter and who requests to vote at an ensuing election before two federal general elections have been held must be allowed to vote a regular ballot applicable to the voter's current residence address, and the voter's registration record updated and restored to active status.
- (2) An eligible voter whose registration has been properly canceled under this chapter shall be allowed to register to vote at the voter's current residence address.

RCW 29A.08.630 Return of inactive voter to active status—Cancellation of registration

- (1) The county auditor shall return an inactive voter to active voter status if, prior to the passage of two federal general elections, the voter: (a) Notifies the auditor of a change of address; (b) Responds to a confirmation notice with information that he or she continues to reside at the registration address; or (c) Votes or attempts to vote in a primary, special election, or general election.
- (2) If the inactive voter fails to provide a notice or take an action as described in subsection (1) of this section, the auditor shall cancel the person's voter registration.
- (3) The county auditor must cancel an inactive voter registration when receiving information indicating that the inactive voter has moved out of state or died.

RCW 29A.08.635 Confirmation notices—Form, contents

Confirmation notices must be on a form prescribed by, or approved by, the secretary of state and must request that the voter verify that the voter continues to reside at the address of record and desires to continue to use that address for voting purposes, or provide a new residence address for voting, or provide information that the voter no longer resides in the state. The notice must inform the voter that if the voter does not respond to the notice and does not vote in either of the next two federal general elections, the voter's registration will be canceled.

RCW 29A.08.640 Confirmation notice—Response, auditor's action

- (1) If the response to the confirmation notice from the voter indicates that the voter has moved within the county, the auditor shall transfer the voter's registration and send the voter an acknowledgment notice.
- (2) If the response from the voter indicates that the voter moved out of the county, but within the state, the auditor shall cancel the voter's registration and notify the county auditor of the voter's new county of residence.
- (3) If the response from the voter indicates that the voter has left the state, the auditor shall cancel the voter's registration on the official state voter registration list.

RCW 29A.08.810 Basis for challenging a voter's registration—Who may bring a challenge—Challenger duties

- (1) Registration of a person as a voter is presumptive evidence of his or her right to vote. A challenge to the person's right to vote must be based on personal knowledge of one of the following:
 - (a) The challenged voter has been convicted of a felony that includes serving a sentence of total confinement under jurisdiction of the department of corrections, or a felony conviction in another state's court or federal court and the voter is serving that sentence of total confinement and the person's voting rights have not been restored under RCW 29A.08.520;
 - (b) The challenged voter has been judicially declared ineligible to vote due to mental incompetency under RCW 29A.08.515;
 - (c) The challenged voter resides at a different address than the residential address provided, and is not subject to RCW 29A.04.151 or 29A.08.112, in which case the challenger must either: (i) Provide the challenged voter's actual residence on the challenge form; or (ii) Submit evidence that he or she exercised due diligence to verify that the challenged voter does not reside at the address provided. The challenger must, at minimum, provide evidence that the challenger personally: (A) Sent a letter with return service requested to the challenged voter's residential address provided, and to the challenged voter's mailing address, if provided; (B) Searched local telephone directories, including online directories, to determine whether the voter maintains a telephone listing at any address in the county; (C) Searched county auditor property records to determine whether the challenged voter owns any property in the county; (D) Searched the statewide voter registration database to determine if the voter is registered at any other address in the state; and (E) Searched the voter registration database of another state to determine if the voter is registered to vote in any other state;
 - (d) The challenged voter will not be eighteen years of age by the next general election; or
 - (e) The challenged voter is not a citizen of the United States.

RCW 29A.08.810 Cont.

- (2) A person's right to vote may be challenged by another registered voter or the county prosecuting attorney.
- (3) The challenger must file a signed affidavit subject to the penalties of perjury swearing that, to his or her personal knowledge and belief, having exercised due diligence to personally verify the evidence presented, the challenged voter either is not qualified to vote or does not reside at the address given on his or her voter registration record based on one of the reasons allowed in subsection (1) of this section. The challenger must provide the factual basis for the challenge, including any information required by subsection (1)(c) of this section, in the signed affidavit. The challenge may not be based on unsupported allegations or allegations by anonymous third parties. All documents pertaining to the challenge are public records.
- (4) Challenges based on a felony conviction under RCW 29A.08.520 must be heard according to RCW 29A.08.520 and rules adopted by the secretary of state.

RCW 29A.08.820 Times for filing challenges—Hearings—Treatment of challenged ballots

- (1) Challenges must be filed with the county auditor of the county in which the challenged voter is registered no later than 45 days before the election. The county auditor presides over the hearing.
- (2) Challenges may be filed after 45 days before the election, only when the challenged voter registered to vote less than 60 days before the election, or changed residence less than 60 days before the election without updating the residence address of the voter's voter registration. A challenge may then be filed not later than 10 days before any primary or election, general or special, or within 10 days of the voter being added to the voter registration database, whichever is later.
- (a) If the challenge is filed after 45 days before an election at which the challenged voter is eligible to vote, a notation of the challenge must be made immediately to the challenged voter's registration in the voter registration system, and the county canvassing board shall preside over the hearing.
- (b) If the challenge is filed before the challenged voter's ballot is received, the ballot must be processed as a challenged ballot, and held until the challenge is resolved.
- (c) If the challenge is filed after the challenged voter's ballot is received, the challenge cannot affect the current election. However, the process shall proceed until the challenge is resolved.

RCW 29A.08.850 Challenge of registration—Forms, availability

The secretary of state must provide forms for voter registration challenges, and the county auditor must make such forms available. A challenge is not required to be submitted on the provided voter challenge form, but may be prepared using an official electronic voter challenge form template provided by the auditor or secretary of state that has been printed and signed by the challenger for submission.

[The National Voter Registration Act of 1993](#)

Congress enacted the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (also known as the “NVRA” and the “Motor Voter Act”), to enhance voting opportunities for every American. The Act has made it easier for all Americans to register to vote and to maintain their registration. Section 8 of the NVRA contains requirements with respect to the administration of voter registration by States and requires States to implement procedures to maintain accurate and current voter registration lists.

For more information about the NVRA, please visit the [Department of Justice website](#).

List of voter registration statuses and their definitions

Registration Statuses	
Active - All registered voters are classified as active, unless assigned to inactive status by the county auditor.	RCW 29A.08.615
Inactive - The county auditor shall place a voter on inactive status and send to all known addresses a confirmation notice if any of the following occur: (a) Any document mailed by the county auditor to a voter is returned by the postal service as undeliverable without address correction information; or (b) Change of address information received from the postal service, the department of licensing, or another state agency designated to provide voter registration services indicates that	RCW 29A.08.620
Pending - Persons signing up to register to vote as future voters as defined under RCW 29A.04.070 are classified as "pending" until the person will be at least eighteen years of age by the next election.	RCW 29A.08.615

How do I file a HAVA complaint?

[Link to Form](#)

Any person who believes that a violation of Title III of the federal Help America Vote Act has occurred, is occurring, or is about to occur may file a complaint with the Office of the Secretary of State. Title III of the Help America Vote Act includes:

- Standards and requirements for voting equipment;
- Requirements to offer provisional voting;
- Requirements for posting voting information on election day;
- Requirements for a statewide voter registration system; and
- Requirements for voters who register by mail

If your complaint falls under one of the above categories, you may use this form to file a complaint with the Office of the Secretary of State. A letter containing the same information is also acceptable. All complaints must be notarized and filed with the Office of the Secretary of State no later than 30 days after certification of the election.

How do I file a non-HAVA election complaint?

[Link to Statutes](#)

[Voter Registration Challenge Form](#)

Concerns about the election process may be directed to [County Election Offices](#) or the [Secretary of State office](#).

If you believe an election crime has been committed, please file a report with law enforcement.

Who can I contact regarding an election related complaint?

Secretary of State, Elections Division	
Physical Address:	416 Sid Snyder Ave SW Olympia, WA 98501
Mailing Address:	Secretary of State, Elections Division P.O. Box 40229 Olympia, WA 98504-0229
Phone Number:	360-902-4180
Fax Number:	360-664-4619
E-mail:	elections@sos.wa.gov
Email Webform:	Contact Us Webform

Washington State, Office of the Attorney General	
Physical Address:	1125 Washington Street SE Olympia, Washington 98504-0100
Mailing Address:	P.O. Box 40100 Olympia, WA 98504-0100
Phone Number:	360-753-6200
Contact Webform:	https://fortress.wa.gov/atg/formhandler/ago/ContactForm.aspx
County Prosecuting Attorneys:	https://waprosecutors.org/prosecutordirectory/