

Columbia County Local Voters' Pamphlet Administrative Rules

Purpose

The purpose of these Administrative Rules is to establish the rules and requirements for participation, production and distribution of the local voters' pamphlet.

1. Notice of Intent to Publish a Local Voters' Pamphlet (RCW 29A.32.220)

The Auditor's office shall prepare a local voters' pamphlet for all primaries, general and special elections.

2. Inclusion in the Local Voters' Pamphlet (RCW 29A.32.220)

All districts with a race or measure on the ballot in a primary or election in which a local voters' pamphlet is produced will participate in the local voters' pamphlet. Submissions from federal, state and judicial candidates with the exception of district court judges will not be published in the local voters' pamphlet.

3. Costs associated with the Local Voters' Pamphlet (RCW 29A.32.220, RCW 29A.32.270)

The cost to produce, print and mail a local voters' pamphlet is an election cost that is included when districts with a race or measure on the ballot are billed for their portion of the cost of the election.

If a district believes that the costs of inclusion in the voters' pamphlet would create an undue financial hardship, the district may petition the Board of County Commissioners to exclude the district's measures and candidates from the pamphlet. The petition must be submitted to the Commission at least 60 days prior to the publication of the next pamphlet and will include all elections for the following two years. A district receiving a waiver for local voters' pamphlet costs will continue to be responsible for their remaining portion of the cost of the election. If a district has been granted a waiver, the Auditor's Office will note in the pamphlet that the district is not included at their request.

4. Local Voters' Pamphlet Content (RCW 29A.32.241)

The local voters' pamphlet shall include at a minimum:

- a. A cover page or page header containing the words "Official Local Voters' Pamphlet," "Columbia County," the county seal, and the date of the primary or election;

- b. A list of districts that have measures or candidates in the pamphlet. This may be in the form of a Table of Contents or Index.
- c. Information on how a person may register to vote and obtain a ballot.
- d. The text of each measure accompanied by an explanatory statement prepared by the prosecuting attorney for any county measure(s) or by the attorney for the local district submitting the measure(s).
- e. Arguments for and against each measure submitted by committees pursuant to RCW 29A.32.280. Note that it is the legal responsibility of the district placing a measure on the ballot to prepare the arguments in accordance with the above statute.
- f. Statements and photos submitted by eligible candidates in races on the ballot.

District Submissions

1. **Deadlines** - The Auditor's Office will establish deadlines at least 30 calendar days before filing deadlines.

- a. The Auditor's Office will notify districts of information on district submissions including word limits, due dates, submission requirements at least 30 calendar days before filing deadlines.

2. **Formatting Rules**

- a. Only *italics* will be used to emphasize words or phrases. Bolding, underlining, and all caps are not allowed.
- b. Tables, lists, and bullets are not allowed.
- c. Graphs, charts, photographs, cartoons or caricatures are not permitted.
- d. Text must be written in paragraphs.
- e. The Auditor's Office will not correct errors in spelling, grammar or punctuation.
- f. The Auditor reserves the right to edit the formatting of any of the submissions.

3. **Ballot Measure Explanatory Statements** (RCW 29A.32.230, RCW 29A.32.241)

An explanatory statement addresses the anticipated effect of a measure if passed into law.

The statement may be no more than 200 words and must be prepared by the attorney for the district submitting the proposition or measure. A letter from the district's attorney confirming they prepared and approve the explanatory statement is required.

If there is no letter from the district's attorney or if a district does not retain legal counsel for the review, the statement will be submitted to the Columbia County Prosecuting Attorney's Office for review and final discretion on language.

4. **Ballot Measure Argument (For/Against) Committees** (RCW 29A.32.280)

- a. **Appointed by District** - The legislative authority of a district submitting a measure has the responsibility of appointing members to a committee that will write the statement for the measure and to a committee that will write the statement against the measure. Each committee is allowed up to 3 members, but can ask the advice of any number of individuals.

All committee appointments shall be submitted by the deadline to submit measures and resolutions.

Each committee shall identify a chair who will serve as the primary contact for the Auditor's Office.

- b. **Appointed by Auditor** - In the event a district does not submit appointments for either committee, the Auditor's Office will issue a media release announcing the opportunity to be on the committee. The auditor shall make appointments on a first-come, first-serve basis if qualified committee members contact the auditor by the appropriate deadline. The auditor shall not make any appointments after the first deadline for ballot measure arguments.

If a committee has been appointed by the auditor less than 3 days before the argument deadline their deadline will be three business days after the appointment.

5. **Ballot Measure Arguments (For & Against)**

- a. **Ballot Measure Argument (For & Against)** are written to support or oppose a ballot measure. The word limit for an argument for or against a measure is 250 words. The Auditor's Office will not edit or advise committees on statements. Arguments will be shared by the Auditor's Office with the opposing committee once both arguments have been received.
- b. Arguments must be signed or otherwise approved by all members of the committee. It is not the role of the Auditor's Office to coordinate between committee members. Once submitted, arguments cannot be withdrawn or changed. If committee members cannot agree on an argument by the deadline, no argument will be published in the voters' pamphlet.

Candidate Submissions

1. **Deadlines** - The Auditor's Office will establish deadlines at least 30 calendar days before candidate filing.
 - a. Candidates will be provided information on candidate submissions including word limits, due dates, submission requirements and the appeals process at the time of filing for office.

2. **Formatting Rules**
 - a. Only *italics* will be used to emphasize words or phrases. Bolding, underlining, and all caps are not allowed.
 - b. Tables, lists, and bullets are not allowed.
 - c. Graphs, charts, photographs, cartoons or caricatures are not permitted.
 - d. Text must be written in paragraphs.
 - e. The Auditor's Office will not correct errors in spelling, grammar or punctuation.
 - f. The Auditor reserves the right to edit the formatting of the statement submitted.

3. **Eligible Candidates** – Only local candidate submissions will be published in the local voters' pamphlet.
 - a. Submissions from federal, state and judicial candidates with the exception of district court judges will not be published in the local voters' pamphlet.

4. **Biography** - Candidates may provide a **100 word biography**.
 - a. **If a candidate submits their statement online**, they will be prompted to respond with information on the following topics: Elected Experience, Other Professional Experience, Education, and Community Service. The sum total of the information in these categories must not exceed 100 words.
 - b. **If the biography is submitted via email** to auditor_elections@co.columbia.wa.us it can be in a paragraph that does not exceed 100 words **or** with information on the following topics: Elected Experience, Other Professional Experience, Education, and Community Service; the sum total of the information in these categories must not exceed 100 words.

5. Statement – Candidates may provide a **200 word statement**

- a. Statements can be submitted via the online candidate portal or by email to auditor_elections@co.columbia.wa.us
- b. Candidate statements should only address campaign issues, plans, and ideas of the candidate. Statements shall not contain obscene, inappropriate or libelous language. Candidate statements shall not comment on or make any judgments about opponents or incumbents. The Auditor has the authority to reject statements that are deemed inappropriate per RCW 29A.32.230.
- c. Candidates not submitting a statement will have “No statement submitted” printed in the pamphlet.

6. Candidate Photo

- a. A photo may be submitted by an eligible candidate on the ballot for a primary or election.
- b. The photo may not be more than 5 years old. The photo can include only the head or head and shoulders of the candidate.
- c. The photo may not be an informal candid photo, cartoon, caricature or any other image that does not accurately portray the candidate.
- d. The photo cannot show the candidate wearing a uniform, judicial robe, hat, anything bearing an insignia or otherwise suggest holding of a public office.
- e. The Auditor’s Office will adjust and/or crop photos as necessary. Photos are published in a black and white format. Photos should reflect the candidate in a professional and tasteful manner. Candid/casual social media style photos are not recommended and may be rejected at the discretion of the Auditor.
- f. Candidates not submitting a photo or whose photo is rejected will have a “No photo submitted” statement printed in the pamphlet.

7. Public Inspection of Candidate Submissions

Candidate submissions that have been submitted for publication in the local voters’ pamphlet shall not be available for release to the public until all submissions pertaining to the race have been received. Requests for public inspection shall be made in the same manner as requests for public records.

8. Rejection of Arguments or Statements (RCW 29A.32.230)

- a. The Auditor's Office reserves the right to reject any argument or statement if it does not meet requirements or if a statement or argument is deemed to be obscene, libelous or otherwise inappropriate. If it contains matter not limited to the measure or comments on other candidates or incumbents. If it doesn't follow formatting guidelines or was received after the submittal deadline.
- b. If a statement is rejected, the candidate or committee chair will be notified by email and given 48 hours from the time of notification to submit an adjusted statement. The time of notification will be the time the email was sent to the candidate or committee.
- c. If the adjusted statement does not meet requirements, a "No statement submitted" notation will be printed for the candidate or measure.
- d. Candidates or committee chairs may appeal the rejection of the statement by submitting a written appeal to the Columbia County Prosecuting Attorney within 48 hours of notification. The Prosecuting Attorney's decision on the appeal will be final.

9. Format and distribution of the Local Voters' Pamphlet

The Auditor's Office retains complete control over content and format of the pamphlet and may print the pamphlet in combination with the Secretary of State Voters' Pamphlet. If the Auditor's Office produces the pamphlet in combination with the state, the requirements of RCW 29A.32 and these rules will be adhered to as much as is practical.