

Mason County Local Voters' Pamphlet Administrative Rules for Measures



Mason County Elections

411 N 5th St

PO Box 400

Shelton, WA 98584

(360) 427-9670 ext. 470

elections@masoncountywa.gov

www.masoncountyelections.us

Purpose

The purpose of these Administrative Rules is to establish the rules and requirements for inclusion in and production and distribution of the Mason County Official Local Voters' Pamphlet.

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

The Auditor's Office, Elections Department shall prepare a local voters' pamphlet for all special, primary and general elections. The Auditor's Office, Elections Department shall notify all districts within the county prior to November 1 of the submission deadlines for the next year. Notification will be made via email or standard mail to the district's contact person. The deadlines and required documents for submissions will also be on the Mason County Election website.

Process for Submitting Resolutions (RCW 29A.04.330)

A Resolution calling for an election by a district shall be submitted to the Election Department by the date described in RCW 29A.04.330 for the election in which they want the measure to appear on the ballot. Each Resolution *must* be submitted with:

- A completed Mason County Resolution Cover Sheet
- An Explanatory Statement
- A letter or email from the attorney for the district approving the statement (if legal counsel was retained)
- A completed Mason County Argument For/Against Committee Appointment Form.

Complete resolution submissions shall be submitted to the Election Department via email, in person or by mail and *must* be received on or before the deadline. We recommend asking for confirmation of receipt to ensure the resolution is received by the Election Department in time. It is the district's responsibility to properly submit resolutions by the deadline.

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

All districts with a race or measure on the ballot in an election will be included in the local voters' pamphlet unless exempted by the Board of County Commissioners.

Exclusion from the Local Voters' Pamphlet (RCW 29A.32.220)

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 ninety days prior to the submission deadlines 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. The district must reapply to the Board of County Commissioners every two years.

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

The cost to produce, print and mail a local voters' pamphlet is an election cost that is billed to the district with a race or measure on the ballot for their portion of the cost in the same manner as other election costs.

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

The local voters' pamphlet shall include at a minimum:

- The words "Mason County Official Local Voters' Pamphlet" and the date of the election on the cover
- 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
- Information on how a person may register to vote and obtain a ballot
- The text of each measure and an explanatory statement prepared by the Prosecuting Attorney for any Mason County measure or by the attorney for the local district submitting the measure
- Arguments 'for' and 'against' each measure submitted by committees
- Statements and photos submitted by eligible candidates in races on the ballot.

Mason County will publish submissions in reference to measures from the Elma or McCleary School Districts as approved by the Grays Harbor County Auditor Elections.

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

The explanatory statement explains in common and neutral language the measure's purpose, the financial impact and the laws that will be affected by the measure's passage. The statement shall not exceed 200 words and should be prepared by the attorney for the district submitting the measure. A letter or email from the district's attorney confirming they prepared and approve the explanatory statement must be submitted with the statement, if legal counsel was retained. Once the statement is received, all statements are final and may not be amended. If there is not an approval from the district's attorney the statement will be submitted to the Mason County Prosecuting Attorney's Office for review and final approval.

Explanatory Statement Submission and Formatting Rules

All statements shall be submitted:

- Electronically in .doc, .docx or .txt format, such as a Word document or the text of an email. A .pdf is not an acceptable submission format
- Only text is permitted. Tables, lists, bullets, graphs, charts, photographs, cartoons, or caricatures are not allowed
- **Bolding** or use of ALL CAPS of more than ten percent of the word limit is not allowed

The Auditor's Office, Election Department reserves the right to edit the formatting, but will not correct errors in spelling, grammar or punctuation.

Public Inspection of Statements (RCW 29A.32.100)

Statements submitted for publication in the local voters' pamphlet shall not be released to the public until all statements pertaining to the specified ballot measure have been received, reviewed and approved. Requests for public inspection of statements shall be made in the same manner as requests for public records.

Explanatory Statement Content Responsibility

The contents of explanatory statements, 'for' and 'against' statements are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not represent the position of the Auditor or Mason County regarding the measure or of any material contained therein; neither the Auditor nor Mason County is responsible for the validity or

accuracy of the statements. Statements should be edited and prepared carefully. Spelling, grammar and punctuation errors will not be corrected. Statement content will be printed exactly as received, so long as it complies with content, format and word limit specifications.

Ballot Measure ‘For’ and ‘Against’ Committees (RCW 29A.32.280)

It is the legal responsibility of the district placing a measure on the ballot to appoint committees to prepare the arguments. The district shall appoint a committee of not more than three people who are ‘for’ the measure to prepare a statement advocating voters’ approval of the measure AND a committee of not more than three people who are ‘against’ the measure to advocate voters’ rejection. Each committee shall identify a person to serve as the contact for the Auditor’s Office, Elections Department. The deadline for the appointment of the committee is the resolution deadline.

A diligent effort must be made by the district to appoint a committee ‘for’ and a committee ‘against’ the measure. Diligent effort is defined as attempting to solicit participation by at least three of the following means:

- Posting the request on the district’s website
- Requesting volunteers to serve at any commissioner meeting when the proposal is being discussed
- Making phone calls to potential committee members
- Putting up flyers seeking volunteers on bulletin boards in schools, libraries, stores or other community gathering places
- Submitting a news release to the newspaper and radio station requesting volunteers. A paid ad in the Legal Notices is not required
- Posting on a reader board or sandwich board
- Recruiting at any district events, i.e., monthly pancake feed or PTA meeting.

If after a diligent effort is made, the district is unable to identify a ‘for’ and/or ‘against’ committee, the district must submit a list of efforts made to the Auditor’s Office, Elections Department when submitting the measure. The Auditor will review the efforts, confirming at least three of the options were attempted. If the Auditor determines further attempts should be made, the Auditor will seek volunteers from among our county voters (or district residents in shared districts that are outside of our county) and appoint them to the committee. The district is responsible for providing committee members with copies of instructions, specifications and deadlines. The committee is solely responsible for submitting their statements to the Mason County Elections Department by the appropriate deadline.

Ballot Measure ‘For’ and ‘Against’ Statements Submission and Formatting Rules

Statements are written to support and oppose a ballot measure. The statements ‘for’ and ‘against’ a measure may not exceed 250 words. All statements shall be submitted:

- Electronically in .doc, .docx or .txt format such as a Word document or the text of an email. A .pdf is not an acceptable submission format.
- Only text is permitted. Tables, lists, bullets, graphs, charts, photographs, cartoons, or caricatures are not allowed.
- **Bolding** or use of ALL CAPS of more than ten percent of the word limit is not allowed.

The Auditor’s Office, Elections Department will not edit or advise committees on statements. It is not the role of the Auditor’s Office, Elections Department to coordinate between committee members. Once submitted, statements cannot be withdrawn or changed. Statements will become public record when

both, 'for' and 'against' statements for each measure are received, reviewed and approved or at the deadline for receipt, whichever is later. Committee member names and contact information will be published in the voters' pamphlet and are not included in the 250-word count. At least one method of contact (phone or email) must be provided for each committee member.

'For' and 'Against' Statement Content Responsibility

The content of the 'for' and 'against' statements is the sole responsibility of the authors and do not represent the position of the Auditor or Mason County regarding the measure or of any material contained therein; neither the Auditor nor Mason County is responsible for the validity or accuracy of the statements. Statements should be edited and prepared carefully. Spelling, grammar and punctuation errors will not be corrected. Statement content will be printed exactly as received, so long as it complies with content, format and word limit specification.

Content Rejection and Appeal Process (RCW 29A.32.230)

The Mason County Auditor reserves the right to reject any submission to the local voters' pamphlet. Such rejection will be to the entire submission; the Auditor will not edit the submission to remove inappropriate content. Content submitted for publication may be rejected if it:

- Is deemed obscene, libelous or otherwise inappropriate
- Contains a commercial advertisement
- Contains matter prohibited by law from distribution through the mail
- Contains matter not relevant to the measure
- Contains matter that is otherwise inappropriate or does not comply with applicable law
- Does not comply with formatting and other rules herein
- Is received after the submission deadline.

If any material is rejected by the Mason County Auditor, a notice of rejection shall be sent to the submitter by email within two business days after receipt thereof and shall explain the specific grounds for rejection. The submitter will have until 4:00pm the next business day to submit amended material. The Auditor shall review the resubmitted material and will either accept or reject it and will inform the submitter of the decision within one business day.

The submitter may appeal the decision to reject the resubmitted material to the Mason County Prosecuting Attorney, by 4:00pm on the next business day and shall explain the specific grounds for appeal. The Prosecuting Attorney shall issue a decision granting or denying the appeal by email no more than five business days after receiving the notice of appeal. The decision of the Prosecuting Attorney to grant or deny an appeal shall be final.

If the material submitted is rejected, the local voters' pamphlet will be printed without the rejected material and will include a notice that the material was rejected.