

King County Elections' goal is to ensure maximum transparency in all aspects of our elections. We aim to provide the public, observers from both major political parties and nonpartisan observers with optimum viewing of the entire elections process.

1. Observers requested for each election

Observers from both major political parties are requested to be on site for every election (RCW 29A.40.100, WAC 434-261-020). Nonpartisan observers are also requested from the League of Woman Voters and the Citizens' Elections Oversight Committee (CEOC) will be notified of observer opportunities (KCC 2.53.041). The number of observers allowed in the secure processing areas at the King County Elections Building is typically 4 for each party, 2 for nonpartisan observers, and 4 for the CEOC but this can change for health and safety reasons. All will be notified when the request for observers is sent and how many observers will be allowed in the secure processing areas.

2. Observers requested for recounts

Two observers for each side of a recount will be requested as required by RCW 29A.64.041, and we will also request observers from each of the two major political parties, and nonpartisan observers from the League of Woman Voters as space allows. (RCW 29A.64.041, WAC 434-264-030). The CEOC will also be notified of observer opportunities.

3. Observation schedules

Observer schedules are created and maintained by the observation coordinators of the political parties, the League of Woman Voters, and the CEOC, not King County Elections.

4. Official observer training

Official observers must attend observation training provided by King County Elections every two years.

5. Respect and professional courtesy

Respect and professional courtesy are expected at all times from observers, including interactions with elections staff, voters, and other observers. Disrespectful or discourteous behavior shall not be permitted.

6. Safety protocols

The safety of the public and our workers is paramount while securely processing ballots in our facility. To address this concern, we have protocols in place that allow us to continue to process ballots efficiently while making the process observable. Observers must follow these protocols.

7. Independent observation

Observers are expected to remain independent from King County Elections. This means that observers are not allowed to direct staff on how to complete their work.

8. No handling ballots, ballot containers or vote tallying equipment

Observers may not touch ballots, ballot containers, or vote tallying equipment. Under no

circumstance may an observer inhibit elections staff from doing their job. Observers may not record images of voted ballots. (WAC 434-261-020)

9. Observers may not challenge decisions

Observers may not challenge signature check decisions, object to decisions to count or not to count votes or ballots or disrupt ballot processing (WAC 434-261-020). Any questions or objections by observers must be directed toward the county canvassing board, supervisory personnel or another designated staff person present. Under no circumstance may an observer interrupt the process in objection to the decision to count or not count a ballot (WAC 434-264-030).

10. Food and beverages

No food or open beverage containers are allowed in the secure processing area.

11. Pens, paper and other materials

Observers will be provided a locker for their personal belongs (coat, bag, etc.) as these are not allowed in the secure processing area. No pens, paper or other materials are allowed to be brought into the secure processing area. We will provide observers with red pens (no blue or black pens allowed) and paper for notes. Observers may take their notes with them when they finish observing.

12. Phones

Observers are prohibited from having phones, tablets, laptops and cameras on the 2nd floor of the King County Elections building (including the 2nd floor loop). These devices may be stored in a locker on the 1st floor.

13. Badges and lanyards

Upon arrival at the King County Elections Building observers are required to check-in with King County Elections staff. If they are on the list of approved observers and if they have attended the official observer training, they will be issued an observation badge and lanyard. Their badge and lanyard must be worn and visible at all times while in the secure processing area. Observers must turn in their badge and lanyard at their end of their observation shift.

14. No electioneering

Electioneering of any kind is prohibited within 100 feet of the 1st floor Vote Center and the secure ballot processing areas. All conversation in either area must be non-partisan.

Observers and the public are not allowed to campaign, exit poll, talk about a candidate or ballot measure, or wear a campaign t-shirt/button/sticker.

15. No weapons

Weapons of any kind are prohibited in the secure processing area, even for people with a valid concealed carry permit. The only exception is for law enforcement and election security personnel. Prohibited weapons include, but are not limited to, firearms, air guns, stun guns, tasers, spring blade knives and other dangerous weapons such as daggers and metal knuckles. (RCW 9.41.284)

16. Questions while observing

Observers may only direct questions about a process to any staff person wearing a grey lanyard. These are full-time managers, supervisors, and leads at King County Elections.

17. Observers not following rules

Observers not following these policies will be removed from the secure processing areas and in some instances from the King County Elections Building. They also may be removed from the list of official observers at the discretion of the Director of Elections. (WAC 434-261-020, 434-264-030).

References:

- [RCW 29A.40.100](#), Elections by Mail - Observers
- [WAC 434-261-020](#), Counting Center Procedures – Observers
- [RCW 29A.64.041](#), Recounts - Procedure—Request to stop—Observers.
- [WAC 434-264-030](#), Recounts – Observers
- [RCW 9.41.284](#), Possessing Dangerous Weapons at Voting Facilities