

## A Description of King County Election Processes

"Don't whistle, drink coffee, chew tobacco. and keep your cotton pickers off the ballots."

AJ Culver, CEOC

This is a quick primer  
for those interested in Volunteering at King County Elections  
as Democratic Party Volunteer Observers

**GENERAL:** When processes are started in the morning the cages are unlocked and when they end in the evening, the cages are locked. If observers are present they witness and sign the record. There are a total of 4 cages in the different areas. If you are present you will be called upon to witness the opening or locking and sign the record.

**MAIL PROCESSING:** When mail is received in trays, it is necessary to remove the flap that covers the signature. Mail is also counted in each tray. It then goes to the mail machine(s) which sort the mail into Legislative Districts and 're-trays' the mail.

In addition, a picture is taken of the signature on the envelope and the voter registration signature is called up for use in verification. Each tray is a batch and there is a record of how many ballots are in each tray. A "tally sheet" is assigned each batch and data is entered on the sheet at each step in the process. This keeps track of how many ballots are in each batch, as ballots may be removed for legitimate reasons. Entry of the number of ballots in each batch is entered each step of the way.

**SIGNATURE VERIFICATION:** The pictures of both signatures are displayed (that on the envelope and that from registration records) and the employees decide if they match (employees are trained in what to look for). If they do not match, the name is written down and the envelope is pulled to the front of the box.

**SIGNATURE RECONCILIATION:** A more senior group looks at the questionable signatures and decides whether there is a question or not. If so, the ballot is removed from the "good" tray and the voter is contacted to provide additional information.

At the end of the day, the total number of ballots is reconciled, i.e. the number counted on the machine should equal the number of ballots to go forward plus the number with questions. If they match, the ballots are ready to go to OPENING the next morning, if not, they find and reconcile the problem.

**OPENING:** Ballots are physically slit open on the mail machine. They are kept in the same batches as they started. Ballots go to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor and are distributed, one batch per worker at a time. Each batch is re-counted prior to removing anything, and any discrepancy is dealt with to correct the issue. Opening is a 3-step process. Outer envelopes, which have voter ID information on them, are removed from all ballots in the batch and then are strung on a plastic tie. Inner envelopes, plain white, are removed from the ballots and they too are strung on a separate plastic tie. Only then are ballots examined to see if they need to be duplicated or if they will be OK to be read by the voting machine. All ballots are examined front first, and then the batch is examined from the rear. Any problem ballots are separated, and the worker puts their initials and a sequential number on the ballot. Ballots which are OK for tabulation are put into a box; those with problems are kept outside the box, in a group. When the batch is completed, a separate group checks the envelopes and ballots.

If all is OK, the ballots for tabulation are sealed until tabulated, and those for duplication go into a box, wrapped in a rubber band, until that box is full, when it is also sealed. Each group is separate and the number of ballots in each group is noted.

**DUPPLICATION:** Ballots sent over are checked in terms of number and are examined to determine whether they have write-ins, should go to Canvass Board, need duplication or don't need duplication. Those that don't are recorded and go to tabulation. If they need duplication, they first need a duplicate ballot pulled. The folks who do this write down the ballot ID of each ballot in the group on a sheet, and pull a ballot. Marked ballots are not allowed in the room with blank ballots. Each group of ballots is checked. When ready for duplication they go to a team of 2 people who duplicate the ballots. Person A reads from the marked ballot and person B marks the new ballot. When done, they exchange ballots and person B reads from the original ballot while person A checks the new ballot. Each ballot ID number is recorded in a log book. At the end of the day, the ballots are counted and the log book is checked against the count. The numbers must agree.

**TABULATION:** Each box of ballots is run through a machine which either counts the votes or ID's any which it cannot count such as double marks. Ballots are either counted or rejected into a separate pile. All ballots from each group then go back into the ballot box for that group.

**ADJUDICATION:** A copy of those that were rejected show up on a "duplicating" machine, which is manned by two people (similar to manual duplication). The images on the ballot are blanked out and Person A reads the votes from the ballot, Person B marks the ballot image on the screen. When completed, they reverse the roles to check that correct actions were taken.

On Election Day, the votes are counted and the results are announced after 8 PM. On subsequent days, the votes are counted at the end of each day and results are posted. The Canvass Board meets several times in order to resolve issues about how individual ballots should be counted. On Wednesday, February 24, 2010, the Canvass Board will certify the election.

--by Emily A Willoughby, KCDCC Fourth Vice Chair of Elections, January 6, 2010