

Thurston County Local Voters' Pamphlet Administrative Rules for Jurisdictions

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Purpose

To establish uniform requirements and procedures for local jurisdictions within Thurston County included in the local voters' pamphlet for Special, Primary, and General Elections.

Duty to Print and Distribute (RCW 29A.32.210)

It is the duty of the Auditor's Office to print and distribute a local voters' pamphlet for every election.

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

Thurston County shall notify all jurisdictions within the county of its duty to publish a local voters' pamphlet for a special, primary or general election at least 90 calendar days before the publication of the local voters' pamphlet. Notification will be made via email or standard mail to the jurisdiction's contact person on file with the Elections Division of the Auditor's Office.

Thurston County will send two notifications: one in early September and one in January. The September notice will be for the possible February and April elections and will include a survey asking if the jurisdiction will be submitting a resolution for either. The notification sent in January will include a questionnaire for jurisdictions to confirm the offices open for elections, the name of the incumbent, and the annual salary for the position.

Local Jurisdictions shall respond to the January notice by March 1 of each year in accordance with WAC 434-215-005.

All voters' pamphlets published by the county pursuant to RCW 29A.32.210 must include the elective offices and ballot measures of the county and the elective offices and ballot measures of each unit of local government within the county which will appear on the ballot at that primary or election.

Financial Hardship (RCW 29A.32.220)

The Thurston County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) has the authority to waive financial responsibility of any jurisdiction where participation in the local voters' pamphlet would create undue financial hardship. A petition from a jurisdiction must be submitted to the BOCC and County Auditor no later than 60 days before the publication of the local voters' pamphlet.

Publication of the pamphlet is defined as the date on which the County Auditor signs the final pamphlet proof and sends it to the printer.

A jurisdiction receiving a waiver for local voters' pamphlet costs will continue to be responsible for their remaining portion of the election cost.

Costs Associated with the Local Voters' Pamphlet (RCW 29A.04.410, RCW 29A.32.270)

The cost of preparing a local voters' pamphlet is billed to local jurisdictions included in the pamphlet. It is prorated and charged in the same manner as other election costs. Each jurisdiction is responsible for paying its proportionate share of costs.

Content (RCW 29A.32.241)

The local voters' pamphlet shall include at a minimum that apply to jurisdictions:

1. A list of jurisdictions that have measures or candidates in the pamphlet. This may be in the form of a table of contents or index.
2. The text of each measure and an explanatory statement prepared by the Prosecuting Attorney for any county measure or by the jurisdiction's attorney submitting the measure for any non-county measure. All explanatory statements for city, town, or district measures not approved by the attorney for the jurisdiction submitting the measure shall be reviewed and approved by the county prosecuting attorney or city attorney, when applicable, before inclusion in the pamphlet.
3. Arguments for and against each measure if submitted by committees.

Submittal Process for Resolutions (RCW 29A.04.330)

Resolutions calling for an election by a jurisdiction shall be submitted on or before the resolution deadline established by state law. Resolutions calling for a special election in February or April must be submitted at least 60 calendar days prior to the election date.

Resolutions calling for an election in conjunction with the Primary or General election must be submitted by the established deadlines for each election. See page **12** for resolution deadlines.

How to submit a resolution

To place a measure on the ballot, a resolution must be submitted to the Elections Division by the deadline.

- email to: elections@co.thurston.wa.us (preferred method)
- bring to: Thurston County Auditor's Office
Elections Division
2915 29th Ave SW
Tumwater, WA 98512

A **Resolution Cover Sheet** contains important contact information required by the Elections Division. This cover sheet is mandatory and must accompany each resolution. There is a Resolution Cover Sheet on page 14. Upon receipt of the cover sheet and resolution, the Elections Division will send an acknowledgment notice to the jurisdiction's contact person via email.

General Provisions Applicable to All Statements

Statements

- Microsoft Word will be used to verify word counts (see "Format" for exceptions).
- No changes will be allowed after submission if after the pamphlet deadline.

Format

Italics may be used to emphasize specific words or statements. Any other formatting, such as bold, underline, or all caps, will be changed to italics.

The use of lists or bullets is not allowed. Lists or bullets will be converted to block paragraph with a semicolon to separate each item.

Words typed out and separated by a slash, using symbols or no spaces will be counted accordingly. Example: "ideas/thoughts" would be counted by Microsoft Word as 1 word; we will consider it 2 words. "#1GoalNewPrograms" would be 4 words.

How to Submit Statements

Statements must be submitted electronically in .doc, .docx, or .txt and are due on the prescribed deadline. See page **12** for deadlines.

- email to: pamphlet@co.thurston.wa.us (preferred method)
- bring to: Thurston County Auditor's Office,
Elections Division
2915 29th Ave SW,
Tumwater WA 98512

Review Proofs

A proof copy of the statement as it will appear in the local voters' pamphlet will be sent to each jurisdiction and committee for review. Only errors made by the Thurston County Auditor's Office may be corrected.

Public Inspection of Statements

Statements submitted for publication in the local voters' pamphlet shall not be available for release to the public until all statements pertaining to the specified ballot measure have been approved. Requests for public inspection of arguments or statements shall be made in the same manner as requests for public records.

Contents Sole Responsibility of Authors

The contents of explanatory statements, “For” and “Against” statements, and rebuttal statements are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not represent the position of the Auditor or Thurston County regarding the measure or of any material contained therein; neither the Auditor nor Thurston County is responsible for the validity or accuracy of the statements.

Statements should be edited and prepared as carefully as one would edit and prepare a resume. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors will not be corrected. Statement content will be printed exactly as received, so long as it complies with format specifications.

After submittal, all statements are final and may not be amended.

Ballot Titles for Local Measures (RCW 29A.36.071)

The official ballot title for measures submitted to the voters of a city or town shall be prepared by the city or town attorney. The official ballot title for measures submitted to the voters of a local government other than a city or town (e.g., a county, fire district or school district) shall be prepared by the Thurston County Prosecuting Attorney.

The format and content requirements for local measure ballot titles are very specific and must conform to state law. Each ballot title must contain the following elements (except as allowed in other statutes or provisions of law):

- Identification of the enacting legislative body.
- A statement of the subject matter.
- A concise description of the measure not exceeding 75 words in length (except as allowed under other statutes or provisions of law).
- A question.

Resolutions submitted by jurisdictions that need a ballot title prepared by the Thurston County Prosecuting Attorney will be forwarded to that office.

Upon receipt of the final official ballot title from the Prosecuting Attorney, city attorney or town attorney, the Elections Division will notify the jurisdiction contact person and anyone else who requests a copy via letter or email. The ballot heading statement must be approved by the Auditor.

Ballot Title Notice (29A.36.080)

The Auditor’s Office will provide notice of the exact ballot title language prepared by the Prosecuting Attorney’s Office to the jurisdiction for acknowledgement.

Ballot Title Appeal (RCW 29A.36.090)

Jurisdictions dissatisfied with the ballot title for a local measure written by the city attorney, town attorney, or Prosecuting Attorney may appeal to the Thurston County Superior Court, pursuant to RCW 29A.36.090.

Explanatory Statement for Local Measure (RCW 29A.32.241)

Each ballot title must be accompanied by an explanatory statement. The explanatory statement is prepared by the attorney for the jurisdiction submitting the ballot measure. The explanatory statement explains in common and neutral language the measure's purpose, the financial impact, and the laws/statutes that will be affected by the measure's passage.

If a jurisdiction does not have an approval letter or email from its attorney concerning the explanatory statement, or if a jurisdiction does not retain legal counsel, the statement shall be submitted to the Prosecuting Attorney for approval.

Explanatory statements must be 175 words or less and no more than 3 paragraphs in block paragraph form.

Jurisdictions Shall Appoint Committees “For” and “Against” a Local Measure (RCW 29A.32.280)

For each jurisdiction measure that is included in the local voters' pamphlet, the legislative authority of that jurisdiction shall formally appoint (by the deadline) committees “For” and “Against” the measure. The “For” and “Against” Committee Member Appointment Form must be submitted by the deadline to appoint committees. (See page **15** for form.)

The jurisdiction shall appoint persons known to favor the measure to serve on the “For” committee and persons known to oppose the measure to serve on the “Against” committee. Committee members must live in the jurisdiction.

Each committee shall consist of not more than three members; however, a committee may seek the advice of other persons.

If such persons are not immediately known, the jurisdiction is encouraged to formally notify the public that it is in search of members for the “For” and “Against” committees.

The jurisdiction is responsible for providing committee members with copies of instructions, specifications, and deadlines for all statements.

The committees are solely responsible for submitting their statements to the Elections Division in accordance with the specified timeline for that election. (See page **12** for deadlines.)

Committee Appointments by the Auditor (RCW 29A.32.280)

If a jurisdiction fails to appoint “For” and “Against” committees by the deadline, the Auditor’s Office will seek out and, whenever possible, appoint up to three members to each committee.

The Auditor’s Office may, in its sole discretion, seek committee appointments through press releases, notices on the Auditor’s website, Facebook and any other means necessary.

The Auditor’s Office will use the following criteria when making appointments:

- Appointee(s) shall reside in the district of the jurisdiction that submits the resolution
- Have a free email address and phone number and the demonstrated ability to communicate rapidly by email and phone number. Emails sent through paid email systems that require the receiver to pay for email communications are prohibited and the auditor’s office cannot accept collect calls.
- Agree to work collaboratively with co-committee members

The deadline for anyone seeking committee appointment is 4:30 pm on the original “For” and “Against” statement deadline, had the jurisdiction appointed a committee. Requests must be emailed to elections@co.thurston.wa.us or pamphlet@co.thurston.wa.us.

Appointments will be made in the order requests from qualified applicants are received by email. Appointed committee members will be notified by email. The appointed committee must abide by the specified timelines for submitting statements for that election.

Committees can create a common access, (free) email to communicate with the Auditor’s Office, e.g.: Gmail or yahoo, account. Emails sent through paid email systems that require the receiver to pay for email communications are prohibited. It is not the responsibility of the Auditor’s Office to coordinate communications between committee members or to arbitrate disagreements among them.

The first person appointed by the Auditor’s Office will be designated the “1st Committee Member” and spokesperson for the committee. If the committee is unable to agree or if multiple statements are submitted, the statement submitted by the “1st Committee Member” will be the statement printed in the local voters’ pamphlet.

If a committee member wishes to withdraw, he or she must notify the Auditor’s Office by email at least 24 hours prior to the submittal deadline for the statement.

“For” and “Against” Statements

Length

“For” and “Against” statements must be **250** words or less and no more than 4 paragraphs in block paragraph form.

If a “For” or “Against” statement is received before the deadline and exceeds the applicable word limit, the committee will be notified by email and asked to delete words, paragraphs, or sentences. Only deletions are allowed; no changes or additions to the statement will be allowed. The shortened statement must be received by the deadline.

If the deadline has passed and the statement exceeds the 250 words limit, it will be shortened to be within the word limit.

Format

Up to four headings may be used to summarize and identify major arguments or paragraphs of the statement for the convenience of the reader. Headings may not exceed **15** words. Headings **are** included in the 250 statement word count.

Committee member names and, contact information will be printed in the local voters’ pamphlet; but this information isn’t included in the 250-word count. At least one method of contact (phone, email, website address) must be provided for print in the local voters’ pamphlet.

Titles of committee members will *not* be published in the local voters’ pamphlet.

Rebuttal Statements

If both “For” and “Against” statements are submitted, the Voters’ Pamphlet Coordinator will email the text of the statement to the spokesperson for the opposing committee listed on the committee appointment form.

Committees may submit a rebuttal statement, but it is not required. The failure of a committee to submit a “For” or “Against” statement will disqualify the committee from submitting a rebuttal statement.

Length

Rebuttal statements must be **75** words or less and no more than 2 paragraphs, in block paragraph form.

If the rebuttal statement exceeds the applicable word limit, it will be shortened to be within the word limit.

Format

No heading may be used in rebuttal statements.

Content

Rebuttal statements may not interject new issues or arguments and are limited to addressing issues and arguments raised in the opposing statement.

Once submitted, the argument and rebuttal statements may not be withdrawn or changed.

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

Rejection

The Auditor's Office reserves the right to reject any submission to the local voters' pamphlet, if it does not meet submission requirements, or is deemed libelous or otherwise inappropriate.

Material submitted for publication in the local voters' pamphlet may be rejected if:

- It's obscene.
- It's libelous.
- 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.
- Was received after the submittal deadline.

If an explanatory statement, "For" or "Against" statement, rebuttal statement, or contact information is rejected by the Elections Division Manager, a written notice of rejection shall be sent to the committee spokesperson by email within 48 hours after receipt and shall explain specific grounds for rejection.

The committee will have 24 hours from the time of notification to submit a modified statement or contact information if their rejected material was submitted on time.

Appeal

The spokesperson of a rejected explanatory statement, "For" or "Against" statement, rebuttal statement, or contact information may appeal the Elections Division Manager's decision to the Thurston County Auditor. A written notice of appeal shall be submitted to the Auditor by email (TCAuditor@co.thurston.wa.us) no more than 48 hours after the notice of rejection was sent and shall explain the specific grounds for appeal. The Auditor shall issue a written decision granting or denying the appeal by email no more than 48 hours after receiving the notice of appeal. The decision of the Auditor to grant

or deny an appeal shall be final.

If material is rejected, the local voters' pamphlet will be printed with the rejected material omitted and the appropriate space left blank.

Statement Deadlines

ELECTION DATES	February 10, 2026	April 28, 2026	August 4, 2026	November 3, 2026
Jurisdiction Responsibility and Deadlines				
1. Resolution 2. Resolution Cover Sheet 3. Explanatory Statement 4. For and Against Committee Appointment For and Against Committee Form must be completed and emailed by this date.	December 12, 2025 (same deadline for all four items)	February 27, 2026 (same deadline for all four items)	May 1, 2026 (same deadline for all four items)	August 4, 2026 (same deadline for all four items)
Committee's Responsibility and Deadlines				
1. Statement "For" and "Against" Written by the committees for or against a measure	December 19, 2025	March 6, 2026	May 8, 2026	August 11, 2026
2. Rebuttal Statement	December 22, 2025	March 9, 2026	May 11, 2026	August 14, 2026

Deadlines are 4:30 pm on each designated day.

Statements – At a Glance

Statement Type	Word Limit	Formatting
Explanatory Statement	175	<p>Allowed: <i>Italics</i> 3 paragraphs.</p> <p>Not Allowed: Bold, ALL CAPS, <u>underlining</u>, lists, bullets</p>
“For” and “Against” Statement	250	<p>Allowed: <i>Italics</i> Up to four headings (up to 15 words each). Heading included in word count. Four paragraphs.</p> <p>Not Allowed: Bold, ALL CAPS, <u>underlining</u>, lists, bullets</p>
Rebuttal Statement	75	<p>Allowed: <i>Italics</i> Two paragraphs.</p> <p>Not Allowed: Bold, ALL CAPS, <u>underlining</u>, lists, bullets</p>
Contact Information	Does not count toward word limit	<p>Allowed: Committee members names; A contact phone number; An email address; A website. At least one method of contact (phone, email, website address) must be provided.</p> <p>Not Allowed: Titles of committee members (Dr., President, Ph.D.)</p>

All Statements

Material submitted for publication in the local voters’ pamphlet may be rejected if:

- It’s obscene.
- It’s libelous.
- 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 that does not comply with applicable law.
- Was received after the submittal deadline.

Resolution Cover Sheet



This form must accompany each resolution filed with Thurston County Elections. The contact person or persons should have the authority to do so and be available to answer questions.

Name of District: _____

District Address: _____

Date of Election: _____

Contact Person: _____ Title: _____

Contact Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Contact Email: _____

2nd Contact Person: _____ Title: _____

2nd Contact Phone: _____

2nd Contact Email: _____

Attorney for District: _____

Attorney Phone: _____ Attorney Fax: _____

Attorney Email Address: _____

Type of Election (levy, bond, lid lift, etc.): _____

Please state the pass/fail requirement for this measure (i.e. simple majority, 60%, etc.) as determined by your legal counsel, together with applicable statutory references: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____
of person filing this form

This form may be filled out and printed.

This mandatory resolution cover sheet must accompany any resolution.

For/Against Committee Member Appointment Form



Name of District: _____
District Contact Name: _____
Email Address: _____ Phone: _____

Jurisdiction's responsibility:

1. Email completed form to pamphlet@co.thurston.wa.us by the resolution submittal deadline.
2. Provide committee members with statement submission requirements and deadlines. Committees are solely responsible for submitting voters' pamphlet statements to the Elections Division.

Deadlines are located in the administrative rules. Questions? Contact the Elections Division at: Pamphlet@co.thurston.wa.us or call 360.786.5408.

Information for inclusion in voters' pamphlet:

"For" Committee (1-3 members):

Committee Name: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____ Web: _____
Committee Member #1: _____ Email: _____
Committee Member #2: _____ Email: _____
Committee Member #3: _____ Email: _____

"Against" Committee (1-3 members):

Committee Name: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____ Web: _____
Committee Member #1: _____ Email: _____
Committee Member #2: _____ Email: _____
Committee Member #3: _____ Email: _____