



THE ELECTION Connection

KING COUNTY ELECTIONS | DECEMBER 2010

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Wrapping up 2010 at King County Elections

It's been a year full of enthusiastic voters, new innovations, a high level of media interest, and responding to new laws and the many needs of voters at the King County Elections office. We saw some of the highest voter turnout in recent history during the Primary and General Elections. During the General, 71.6 percent of King County voters turned out, exceeding projections of 68 percent.

Our office conducted four elections this year – Special Elections on February 9 and April 27, the Primary Election on August 17 and the General Election on November 2. Each of these elections ended with zero discrepancies, which means that we accounted for every single ballot returned to our office.

New technologies and innovations helped us process ballots more efficiently and improved the voting experience. In the General Election, voters could watch ballots being opened on the live election cam and download "I Voted" stickers. Double the number of people used the online ballot tracker this year to keep track of the progress of their ballot. New technology and process refinements helped us to reduce the amount of ballot paper we use in replicating damaged ballots and those with corrections, resulting in a more efficient and eco-friendly process. Ballots must be made from virgin pulp, so the less we need to use, the less we spend and the better for the environment!

In fact, our innovative use of technology earned national recognition. The Vote by Mail (VBM) Transition Program won a CIO 100 award from CIO magazine for its effectiveness in streamlining and modernizing elections in King County. VBM also received an Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo), which recognizes innovative county government programs.

VBM, considered a national model, involved significant investments in new hardware, software, and business process re-engineering, and involved upgrading the tabulation systems, ballot tracking and overall accountability process. This program also enhanced citizen participation opportunities by allowing voters the ability to track their own ballots online and access our live webcam to observe a step in the ballot process.



Verifying voter signatures



Ballots returned to King County Elections

2010 General Election

This year's General Election drew the most ballots and the highest turnout we've seen since becoming an all vote by mail county with 786,461 ballots returned to our office. Even with the high number of ballots, the election reconciled to 100 percent (zero discrepancies). And voter turnout of 71.6 percent surpassed the statewide number of 71.24 percent. We are thrilled when voters turn out in numbers that exceed our projections and vote!

The high turnout, along with many voters waiting until the last minute, led to very long lines at Accessible Voting Centers (AVCs) on Election Day. The three AVCs served 2,480 people, 1,933 on Election Day alone, and more than double the 2009 General Election. For the most part, voters who experienced the lines accepted that it was because they waited until the last minute to visit us for help. Our office will, however, be evaluating this issue in preparation for 2011 elections.



Long lines at AVCs in General Election

We also worked with more political party observers than we typically interact with over the course of this election. More than 90 were on site as representatives of candidates and both political parties, and King County Elections offered two special, in-depth trainings for them beforehand.

Over the last two months, we placed election-oriented public service announcements on local TV stations, radio and online. These focused on ways to be an informed voter, and make sure your vote counts and elections are run efficiently. You may have seen quite a bit of media coverage of this election as well. Our office received visits and coverage from most local and many national outlets, including ABC and NBC Nightly News, 60 Minutes and CNN.



Rack of sorted ballots

King County Elections increased the number of ballot drop boxes from 2 to 11 in time for the General Election, and they were heavily used by voters. More than 91,000 ballots were returned at drop boxes – 59,000 of those on Election Day! The locations with the most use were Downtown Seattle (16,617), Ballard Library (10,479) and Bellevue Crossroads Shopping Center (9,493).

To wrap up this election, it snowed in King County just as we were preparing to certify! Our staff continued to process ballots and serve voters through the last day of the election, Monday, Nov. 22. Certification was delayed by one day due to the wintry conditions. The Canvass Board met on Wednesday, Nov. 24 to certify the results and send the District 41 State Senate race to a machine recount. The recount was completed on Dec. 1 and certified Dec. 3 with no change in the outcome of the race, wrapping up the final election of 2010!

Get ready for 2011

Now is a good time to register to vote and for voters to update their registration in preparation for 2011. If you have changed your name or address, or would like to register, visit the King County Elections website or call 206-296-VOTE (8683). The next election will be the February 8, 2011 special election.

Recounts

One race, District 41 State Senator, was close enough that it required a recount after the certification of the General Election. Recount requirements are determined by state law, and there are two types – machine recounts and manual recounts.

A machine recount is required if the difference between the top two candidates is less than 2,000 votes and less than one half of one percent of the total votes cast for both candidates. The District 41 race met these criteria in the General, with a 194 vote and .3 percent difference. During a machine recount, we double check our scanning and tabulation process by programming our computers to review the specific race being recounted, and flag any ballots that may need closer inspection because it appears the voter did not vote in the race or voted for more than one candidate.



Staff prepare for the District 41 recount

2010 General Election: By the Numbers

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| AVC visits this election: | 2,480 |
| AVC visits in 2009 General: | 1,017 |
| Calls to voter hotline: | 21,278 |
| Visits to ballot tracker: | 100,200 |
| Registered voters in King County: | 1,069,791 |
| Ballots returned: | 786,461 |
| Ballots counted: | 766,477 |
| Ballots returned at ballot drop boxes: | 91,133 |
| Ballots cast on Accessible Voting Units: | 2,286 |
| Discrepancies: | 0 |
| Ballots returned too late: | 6,581 |
| Total signature challenge ballots: | 21,560 |
| Number of challenged ballots cured: | 10,707 |
| Ballots returned as undeliverable: | 7,909 |

A manual recount is activated for a race if the difference is less than 150 votes and less than one quarter of one percent. In this case, all ballots are pulled, sorted and sent to counting teams of at least two people. Tabulations from the counting teams are sent to teams that aggregate the data. Political party observers are a part of this entire process.

The District 41 recount resulted in adding two more votes to the count, but did not alter the outcome.

Partners in elections

King County Elections works with a number of important groups and partners to conduct elections and provide oversight. Observers from both political parties are on site for every election as added assurance to voters that independent oversight is taking place, enhancing existing accountability measures.

2011 Important Upcoming Dates

January 10

February Special Election
deadline for mail and
online voter registration

January 19

February Special Election
ballots mailed

January 31

February Special Election
deadline for in-person
registration

February 8

Special Election Day

February 23

February Special Election
Certification

The Citizens' Election Oversight Committee is made up of 13 members from a number of organizations and state offices, including political parties, the Secretary of State's office and the League of Women Voters, along with people representing the general voting public. They monitor county elections and recommend improvements.

The Canvass Board meets throughout each election to review challenged ballots and certify results. The board has three members: the Elections Director, and representatives from the County Prosecutor's Office and the County Council.



Observers and Election staff prepare for the day

Contact us

Please note our physical address is different than our mailing address.

In person: 9010 East Marginal Way S. Tukwila, WA 98108

Phone: 206-296-VOTE (8683) – TTY: Relay: 711

E-mail: elections@kingcounty.gov

By mail: 919 Southwest Grady Way, Renton, WA 98057

Online: www.kingcounty.gov/elections

Stay current with election news

How do you get your news? If you're like many King County voters, and prefer to go online for news and information, here are some great ways to keep up with the latest from King County Elections:



Website, www.kingcounty.gov/elections



Facebook, www.facebook.com/KingCountyElections



Blog, www.kingcountynews.wordpress.com



Twitter, www.twitter.com/kcnews

In accordance with federal law, King County produces election materials in both English and Chinese. If you need election materials in Chinese please contact King County Elections.

根據聯邦法律，金郡編製的選舉資訊都有英文和中文版本。如果您需要中文選舉資訊，請與金郡選舉部聯絡。