

**Chapter 29A.16 RCW
PRECINCTS**

Sections

- 29A.16.040 Precincts—Boundaries may be altered.
29A.16.050 Precincts—Restrictions on precinct boundaries—
Designated by number.
29A.16.070 Precincts—Boundary changes—Registration transfer.

RCW 29A.16.040 Precincts—Boundaries may be altered. The county legislative authority of each county in the state shall divide the county into election precincts and establish the boundaries of the precincts.

(1) Precinct boundaries may be altered at any time as long as sufficient time exists prior to a given election for the necessary procedural steps to be honored. Except as permitted under subsection (3) of this section, no precinct changes may be made during the period starting seven days prior to the first day for candidates to file for the primary election and ending with the day of the general election.

(2) The county legislative authority may establish by ordinance a limitation on the maximum number of active registered voters in each precinct within its jurisdiction. The number may be less than the number established by law, but in no case may the number exceed one thousand five hundred active registered voters.

(3) The county auditor shall temporarily adjust precinct boundaries when a city or town annexes unincorporated territory to the city or town, or whenever unincorporated territory is incorporated as a city or town. The adjustment must be made as soon as possible after the approval of the annexation or incorporation. The temporary adjustment must be limited to the minimum changes necessary to accommodate the addition of the territory to the city or town, or to establish the eligible voters within the boundaries of the new city or town, and remains in effect only until precinct boundary modifications reflecting the annexation or incorporation are adopted by the county legislative authority. [2023 c 394 s 8. Prior: 2011 c 349 s 5; 2011 c 10 s 26; 2004 c 266 s 10; 2003 c 111 s 404; 1999 c 158 s 3; 1994 c 57 s 3; 1986 c 167 s 2; 1980 c 107 s 3; prior: 1977 ex.s. c 361 s 4; 1977 ex.s. c 128 s 1; 1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 129 s 3; 1967 ex.s. c 109 s 1; 1965 c 9 s 29.04.040; prior: (i) 1921 c 178 s 1, part; 1915 c 11 s 1, part; 1907 c 130 s 1, part; 1889 p 402 s 7, part; Code 1881 s 3067, part; 1865 p 30 s 1, part; RRS s 5171, part. (ii) 1907 c 130 s 2, part; 1889 p 408 s 21, part; RRS s 5278, part. (iii) Code 1881 s 2679; 1854 p 65 s 4, part; No RRS. Formerly RCW 29.04.040.]

Effective date—2011 c 349: See note following RCW 29A.04.255.

Notice to registered poll voters—Elections by mail—2011 c 10: See note following RCW 29A.04.008.

Effective date—2004 c 266: See note following RCW 29A.04.575.

Severability—1994 c 57: "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the

remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1994 c 57 s 55.]

Effective date—1994 c 57: "Sections 1 through 3, 7, 10 through 12, 21, 22, 25, 27, 28, 31 through 34, 37 through 40, 42, 44 through 52, and 54 of this act take effect January 1, 1995." [1994 c 57 s 56.]

Severability—1986 c 167: "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1986 c 167 s 26.]

Effective date—1977 ex.s. c 361: "This 1977 amendatory act shall take effect January 1, 1978." [1977 ex.s. c 361 s 113.]

Severability—1977 ex.s. c 361: "If any provision of this 1977 amendatory act, or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act, or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1977 ex.s. c 361 s 112.]

Severability—1977 ex.s. c 128: "If any provision of this 1977 amendatory act, or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act, or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1977 ex.s. c 128 s 6.]

Effective date—Severability—1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 129: See notes following RCW 29A.76.040.

"Precinct" defined: RCW 29A.04.121.

RCW 29A.16.050 Precincts—Restrictions on precinct boundaries—Designated by number. (1) Every voting precinct must be wholly within a single congressional district, a single legislative district, a single district of a county legislative authority, and, if applicable, a single city.

(2) Every voting precinct shall be composed, as nearly as practicable, of contiguous and compact areas.

(3) Except as provided in this subsection, changes to the boundaries of any precinct shall follow visible, physical features delineated on the most current maps provided by the United States census bureau. A change need not follow such visible, physical features if (a) it is necessitated by an annexation or incorporation and the proposed precinct boundary is identical to an exterior boundary of the annexed or incorporated area which does not follow a visible, physical feature; or (b) doing so would substantially impair election administration in the involved area.

(4) After a change to precinct boundaries is adopted by the county legislative authority, if the change does not follow visible physical features, the county auditor shall send to the secretary of state an electronic or paper copy of the description, a map or maps of the changes, and a statement of the applicable exception under subsection (3) of this section. For boundary changes made pursuant to subsection (3)(b) of this section, the auditor shall include a

statement of the reasons why following visible, physical features would have substantially impaired election administration.

(5) Every voting precinct within each county shall be designated by number for the purpose of preparation of maps and the tabulation of population for apportionment purposes. These precincts may be identified with names or other numbers for other election purposes.

(6) After a change to precinct boundaries in a city or town, the county auditor shall send one copy of the map or maps delineating the new precinct boundaries within that city or town to the city or town clerk.

(7) Precinct maps are public records and shall be available for inspection by the public during normal office hours in the offices where they are kept. Copies shall be made available to the public for a fee necessary to cover the cost of reproduction. [2003 c 111 s 405; 1999 c 298 s 1; 1989 c 278 s 1; 1977 ex.s. c 128 s 2; 1965 c 9 s 29.04.050. Prior: 1921 c 178 s 1, part; 1915 c 11 s 1, part; 1907 c 130 s 1, part; 1889 p 402 s 7, part; Code 1881 s 3067, part; 1865 p 30 s 1, part; RRS s 5171, part. Formerly RCW 29.04.050.]

Severability—1977 ex.s. c 128: See note following RCW 29A.16.040.

RCW 29A.16.070 Precincts—Boundary changes—Registration transfer. If the boundaries of any city, township, or rural precinct are changed in the manner provided by law, the county auditor shall update the registration records of every registered voter whose place of residence is affected thereby. It shall not be necessary for any registered voter whose registration has been changed from one precinct to another, by a change of boundary, to apply to the county auditor for a transfer of registration. The county auditor shall mail a notice to each registered voter. [2013 c 11 s 78; 2003 c 111 s 1903; 1971 ex.s. c 202 s 27; 1965 c 9 s 29.10.060. Prior: 1933 c 1 s 17; RRS s 5114-17. Formerly RCW 29A.76.030, 29.10.060.]