

RE: Alternative Verification Options Pilot Projects

December 31, 2025

In accordance with RCW 29A.40.111(4)(b), the Office of the Secretary of State (OSOS) respectfully submits this progress report regarding the alternative verification options pilot projects.

In summary, the OSOS encourages the Legislature to continue considering the expansion of alternative verification option pilot projects. **These alternatives to traditional signature verification provide meaningful benefits for voters with disabilities who, if they are unable to sign, are otherwise required to obtain two witnesses in order to return a ballot.** This requirement can present a barrier for these voters in Washington's vote-by-mail system.

Additionally, military and overseas voters are currently permitted to use approved alternative verification options when returning their ballots, helping ensure that their votes are counted regardless of their location worldwide.

As a reminder, Senate Bill 6269, passed during the 2024 Legislative Session, established the alternative verification option pilot projects. The pilots are limited to special elections held in February or April. Because the bill took effect on June 6, 2024, the February and April 2025 special elections represented the first opportunity for county auditors to apply for OSOS review and approval to participate.

The OSOS invited all county auditors to participate in these pilots, including the option to use existing technology within VoteWA, the state's centralized voter registration and election management system, at no cost to the county.

The OSOS received and approved pilot project applications from King County and Pierce County for the 2025 special elections. Pierce County's pilot was exploratory in nature and was not widely publicized. King County, by contrast, did publicize its pilot and provided information to voters on ballot return envelopes.

Following the pilot, King County reported that nearly 60 percent of military and overseas voters who returned their ballots electronically used the alternative verification. King County has approximately 34,000 UOCAVA voters among its 1.4 million active registered voters. A copy of the report published by King County Elections is included following this letter.

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Elections Division

Following the successful pilots in 2025, the OSOS approved pilot project applications from King County and Pierce County for the April 2026 special election. This pilot will be the first multi-county implementation of alternative verification options.

In addition, Mason County has submitted and received approval for a pilot project. This pilot will utilize handwritten information, an approach used in other states, as an alternative to signature verification, rather than a technology-based solution.

The OSOS looks forward to continuing to collaborate with the Legislature and County Auditors on this work and will provide the next progress report no later than December 31, 2026.



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King County Elections

Alternative to Signatures Pilot Project Report

April 2025 Special Election

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Introduction

During the April 2025 Special Election, King County Elections (KCE) piloted a program to provide voters with a new option for verifying their ballot. Voters were able to verify their ballot as usual by using their signature or could choose to verify by providing their Washington State driver's license or ID number or the last four digits of their Social Security Number (SSN).

The April 2025 Special was an all-county election, with six measures on the ballot, including one county-wide proposition. Final turnout was around 25%.

2.67% of voters who turned out in this election chose to verify using an identification number. Ballots verified using this method were marked in the system as "pre-verified." Pre-verified ballots, like all ballots, had to be returned by 8 p.m. on Election Night. 10,936 ballots were pre-verified during the April Election, of which 9,752 (89%) were returned on time and counted.

Background

In early 2024, the Washington State legislature passed SSB 6269, establishing an alternative voter verification options pilot project. Codified under RCW 29A.40.111, counties across Washington were given the option to apply to the project by submitting an application to the Secretary of State.

The team at KCE was happy to submit our application in late 2024. We have long known that signature verification works for many voters but not all. Research has shown that some voters of color, younger and older voters, and voters who speak English as a foreign language have their signatures challenged at higher rates than others. In addition, signatures can present a barrier to voting for some disabled voters, and our Disability Advisory Committee has strongly encouraged us to seek out alternatives to verifying mail ballots.

Based on what we'd learned from both the data and our Disability Advisory Committee, in 2022 KCE partnered with U.S. Digital Response (USDR), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works with government agencies to address barriers to service. This partnership was created to research possible alternatives to signatures for ballot verification.

USDR Research

During this process, we considered the following possible alternatives to signatures for verification:

- State (or other) ID number
- One-time passcodes connected to phone numbers
- Knowledge-based authentication (aka "security questions")
- Biometric authentication (e.g. face id)
- Voter-chosen pin codes
- Voter-chosen security questions

Other than signatures, verification with state or other ID numbers was determined to be the best option that was both highly secure and voter-friendly.

Alternative Verification Options Pilot Project
King County Elections—November 2024

King County Elections is applying to participate in the Alternative Verification Options Pilot Project during the April 22, 2025, Special Election.

KCE proposes implementing an alternative verification method allowing voters to provide an identification number—a Washington State driver's license number, a Washington State ID number, or the last four digits of their Social Security number—which would be compared to the corresponding number in their voter registration record in VoteWA.

Under the proposed system, whatever ID number a voter provides must match exactly with the corresponding number in VoteWA to be accepted. If a voter's record in VoteWA does not contain a specific ID number, the voter may not use that ID to verify their ballot.

How a voter submits their ID information will depend on how the voter is accessing their ballot.

MAIL BALLOT

Voters using a mail ballot, including a ballot issued at a Vote Center, will be able to use an online tool we are developing with Democracy Live. Democracy Live is currently reviewing our proposed plans and system requirements.

What follows is a description of the proposed tool, including draft processes, system requirements, and rationales. To proceed to each next step, every prior step must be successful.

1. Voter logs in to the tool using their name and date of birth.

Screenshot of application for Alternative Verification Options Pilot Project.

Method and Tools

KCE created a working group comprised of members of our Ballot Processing, External Relations, Information Technology (IT), Elections Services, and Voter Services teams to launch the program.

The working group partnered with DemocracyLive and the Office of the Secretary of State to develop an online tool for voters to “pre-verify” using a Washington state identification number or the last four digits of their SSN.

KCE has worked with DemocracyLive for many years to create similar online tools.

DemocracyLive handles ID information for other states they provide services for, including Colorado, Delaware, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, and West Virginia, and we had confidence in the security measures they have in place to protect their data. The Office of the Secretary of State helped to create a secure API connection between the DemocracyLive portal and VoteWA, which contains the registration information for all of the voters in Washington state. This connection allowed the information voters entered into the portal to be checked against the voter registration database in real time.

Functionality

Most voters who pre-verified used the online tool in combination with their mail ballot. On the provided return envelope, KCE included a QR code and link to the online portal, as well as brief information about the pilot.

Voters logged in using their name and date of birth. The direct API connection with VoteWA allowed the tool to verify that the voter was registered and eligible to vote in the election, and that all information they provided was accurate.

The screenshot displays the 'Verify your ballot!' web form. At the top, there are navigation links for 'Home', 'Track my ballot', and 'View Voters' Pamphlet'. The form includes the following fields:

- First Name *Required**: A text input field.
- Last Name *Required**: A text input field.
- Birth Date *Required**: A dropdown menu for Month, Day, and Year.

Below the form is a blue 'Continue' button. To the right of the form, there is a text box with the following instructions:

This election, King County voters in participating jurisdictions may verify their ballot using their Washington State ID or driver's license number, or the last four digits of their Social Security Number.

Don't forget! After completing a verification process, you must **return your ballot by 8 p.m. sharp on April 22**. View the [list of official ballot drop boxes](#) near you.

[Contact us](#) with any questions.

Overlaid on the top right of the screenshot is a sample ballot envelope. It features a QR code and a link to the verification portal. The envelope text includes: 'YOU MUST VERIFY your ballot This election, you can verify online OR by signing below.', 'Verify your identity at kce.wiki/verify', and 'Return the ballot envelope'. It also lists the election day as April 22, 2025, and the name of the ballot as CHRIS TEST PORTER.

Screenshot of King County Elections Pre-Verification portal: kce.wiki/verify

Voters with matching information were shown the ballot declaration and prompted to read and attest to the declaration.

Eligible voters then entered the unique ballot ID number printed on their ballot return envelope. This ensured that the system was verifying that the specific ballot and not just the voter in general.

At this point, voters were required to provide either their full Washington State driver's license or ID numbers or the last four digits of their SSN. The tool compared the number the voter entered against the information in their voter registration record in VoteWA. For security reasons, voters who entered nonmatching information three times were locked out of the tool and needed to call KCE or sign their ballot as they normally would.

Voters who submitted information that matched VoteWA reached a "Success" screen

and were reminded to return their ballot by 8 p.m. on Election Night. In the background, VoteWA would flag the ballot the voter verified with a pre-verified flag for later processing.

Online Ballot Access

Some of voters who chose to pre-verify accessed and printed their ballots using the Online Ballot Marking Program (OBMP). These voters went through a very similar process to the one described above, except they were not asked to provide a unique ballot ID number as those ballots only get assigned the unique ID after completing the process and the online ballot gets issued. If successful, the ballot declaration page that is printed as part of the ballot packet included a giant checkmark indicating that the voter had pre-verified the ballot they accessed online.

Enter your Ballot ID and Identification Information

Enter your Washington State ID or driver's license number or the last four digits of your Social Security Number.

The ID information you enter must match what we have on your voter registration record.

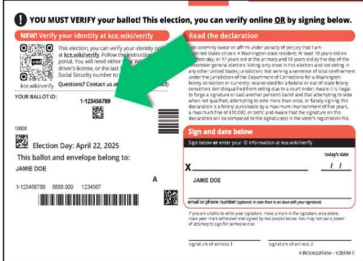
Enter your Ballot ID number *Required

Washington State ID or Driver's License Number *Required

Last four digits of Social Security Number *Required

[Continue](#)

You must enter your complete Ballot ID to proceed. Your unique Ballot ID is found on your ballot return envelope, above the election date.



[Contact us](#) with any questions.

"Enter Ballot ID and Identification Information" webpage.

April 22, 2025
Special Election
King County, Washington

Return this page to King County Elections.

Overseas and service voters
Declaration and voter information sheet

Instructions Complete steps 1-2 below. This sheet must be returned with your ballot.

1 Voter information
CHRIS TEST PORTER
134 MAIN ST
ENUMCLAW, WA 98022
12/11/1975
123456789

2 Return your ballot
Thanks for completing the verification process! Don't forget you must return your ballot by 8 p.m. sharp on April 22. View the list of official ballot drop boxes near you at [VoteWA/obmp](#).

3 Ballot declaration
I do solemnly swear or affirm under penalty of perjury that I am:

- A United States citizen;
- A Washington state resident;
- At least 18 years old on election day, or 17 years old at the primary and 18 years old at the day of the November general election;
- Not serving a sentence in this election and not voting in any other United States jurisdiction;
- Not serving a sentence of total confinement under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections.

Do you want to verify your ballot by providing ID information?

This election, King County voters in participating jurisdictions may verify their ballot using their Washington State ID or driver's license number, or the last four digits of their Social Security Number.

Don't forget! After completing a verification process, you must return your ballot by 8 p.m. sharp on April 22. View the [list of official ballot drop boxes](#) near you.

[Contact us](#) with any questions.

Please select an option

Yes, I want to provide ID information to verify my ballot

[Continue](#)

No, I'll sign my declaration sheet to verify my ballot

[Continue](#)

OBMP Webpage

Processing

Each morning Ballot Processing staff downloaded a file from VoteWA containing pre-verified ballot ID numbers and loaded that file into the BlueCrest mail sorting equipment. When sorting incoming ballots, the BlueCrest sorters separated out the pre-verified ballots from other ballots. These pre-verified ballots were then uploaded into VoteWA separately from all other ballots, and Ballot Processing staff marked all pre-verified ballots as accepted in VoteWA. The pre-verified ballots could then move on in the process to ultimately be counted.

At various points during this process, Ballot Processing staff conducted quality control checks to make sure that all pre-verified ballots were processed correctly. Staff also confirmed that pre-verified ballots were accurately validated by manually reviewing the data entered by the voters and comparing that data to what was in the VoteWA database.

All returned pre-verified ballot envelopes were physically stamped with “Pre-Verified” to help the teams downstream identify which ballots had been successfully pre-verified.

Voter Education

A robust communication plan for voter education focused on two primary paths, broadly understood as usability and outreach. The communications timeline ran for approximately four months, beginning in January and running through the election period.

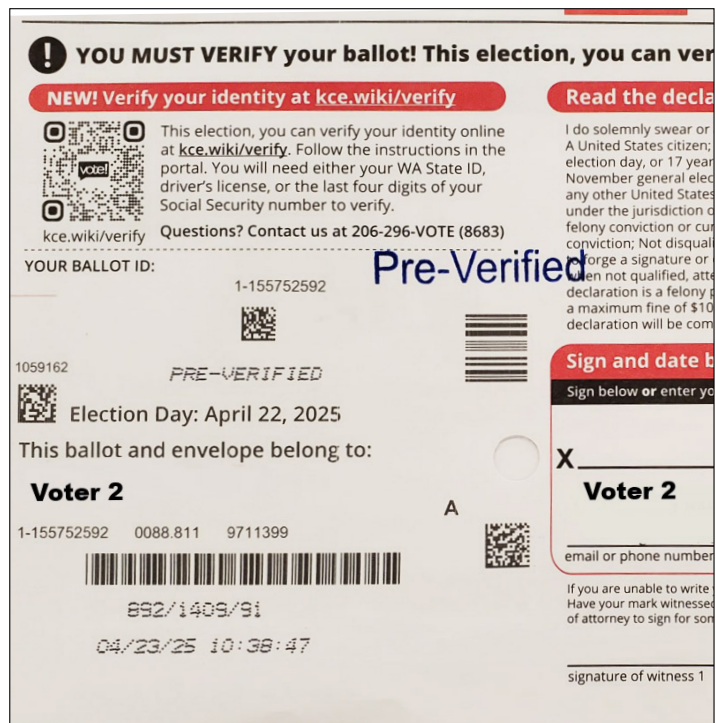


Image of a Return Envelope that was stamped with “Pre-Verified”

Outreach began early, when the Communications Team designed a one pager for the Elections Director to share information about the pilot with jurisdictions and partners in January. January also saw usability implemented with the initial design and build of the ballot wrap and return envelope, as well as early drafting of the verification tool's how-to content.

In February, the Elections Director briefed the King County Council. The ballot materials were finalized and shared with our Language Access team for translation into the six languages – Chinese, Korean, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese – we offer voters in addition to English.

KCE also posted on our social media channels about the pilot program and instructions for

voters on how to use the online portal. In both static and video, across multiple languages, KCE posted and boosted this education to reach our voters beyond our followers.



Information about the pilot program, in addition to step-by-step instructions, was added to the KCE website on the April Special Election webpage to provide another place where voters could go to get the information they needed to participate.


Finally, as ballots were mailed to local voters, KCE sent a press release highlighting the program and providing basic information about how to use the portal.

In this election, you have options!

For this election only, you can verify your identity online! Prefer to sign? That works too. You only need to do one or the other.

Visit kce.wiki/verify and follow the instructions online.

Need help? Contact us at 206-296-VOTE (8683) or elections@kingcounty.gov.



kce.wiki/verify

Vote Center

Open in Renton for person assistance. You can vote or get your ballot at Election Day. Access is available for large print ballot, assistance.

Access your ballot

If your ballot is lost or damaged, you can print a replacement from home, the library, or wherever is convenient. The Online Ballot Marking Program (OBMP) is available for all registered voters. It's designed with disabilities, print or low vision, private.

Visit kingcounty.gov

April 22, 2025 Special Election Edition 1

King County Official Local Voters' Pamphlet
as requested by King County

Sign up for ballot alerts!
Get texts or emails as your ballot is processed and counted. Opt in at kce.wiki/TrackMyBallot.

Register to vote

- Online:** Visit VoteWA.gov to register to vote online. The deadline to register online for the April Special Election is April 14.
- By mail:** Download and print a registration form from kce.wiki/VoterReg and mail to King County Elections: 919 SW Grady Way, Renton, WA 98057. It must be received by April 14.
- In person:** You can register in person through April 22, Election Day, at King County Elections headquarters. More information about hours and services can be found at kingcounty.gov/elections.

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kce.wiki/verify

Learn more about drop boxes, vote centers, and more!


We are here to help!
Elections staff can help you register and get a new ballot all the way up to Election Day. Need a replacement ballot and want to mark your ballot privately? Access your ballot online at kingcounty.gov/elections/obmp to utilize the Online Ballot Marking Program.

Wrapped around your ballot is vital information about how to return your ballot, receive assistance, and more. Be sure to check out your ballot wrap for:

- The five closest drop boxes to you
- Where to get in-person assistance
- How to print your ballot if yours is lost or damaged.

206-296-VOTE (8683)
elections@kingcounty.gov
kingcounty.gov/elections

Get social with us: [@kcelections](https://www.facebook.com/kcelections)

King County Elections 





votel!
King County Elections
Last updated: December 2024


Alternatives to Signature Verification Pilot

Washington currently uses signatures as the sole method of verifying that the intended voter is the person who voted the ballot. While signatures work well for most voters, we know they do not work for all. **In April 2025, King County Elections (KCE) will pilot giving voters additional verification options when voting.**



During the April Special Election, voters will have the option to provide their Washington State driver's license or ID number, or the last four digits of their Social Security number, instead of a signature to verify their identity. This option will remove barriers to voting for those voters who encounter obstacles when it comes to signatures.

THE VOTER EXPERIENCE

 <p>Using a secure online tool, voters login using their name, date of birth, and the ballot ID printed on their return envelope.</p>	 <p>Once logged in, voters will enter their Washington State driver's license or ID number, or the last four of their Social Security number.</p>
 <p>To complete the process, voters must attest to the ballot declaration before they can submit their identification.</p>	 <p>Whether they sign their ballot or use an identification number to verify their identity, all voters must return their ballot by 8 p.m. sharp on Election Night.</p>

 Voters who access their ballot online will have the option to include ID information on the ballot declaration page that prints out with the rest of their ballot packet.

CONTACT US

 206-296-VOTE (8683)
  elections@kingcounty.gov
 kingcounty.gov/elections

Results and Feedback

9,752 were ultimately counted through the alternative verification pilot, which represents 2.67% of all ballots counted during the April Election. This percentage was significantly higher for UOCAVA voters who chose to return their ballots electronically, 60% of those voters utilized the alternative verification pilot.

The final signature challenge rate for the 2025 April Election was 0.45%. While not significantly lower than some other recent elections, and only a single data point, this does represent one of the lowest signature challenge rates King County has had in any election in the last decade. The most closely comparable election, the 2023 April Election which was also a countywide special election, had a final signature challenge rate of 0.78%. Below are the final signature challenge rates for special elections in King County over the last few years.

Election	Final Signature Challenge Rate
April 2025	0.45%
February 2025	0.46%
April 2024	0.67%
February 2024	0.63%
April 2023	0.78%
February 2023	0.85%
April 2022	1.03%
February 2022	0.72%

KCE collected voter feedback on the alternative verification process throughout the election, both by monitoring the questions and input we received on our customer service channels and by sending out a survey to voters who utilized the process (successfully or otherwise) via email after the election. 1,329 voters responded to the survey. Feedback was on the whole incredibly positive. 91.52% of survey respondents said that they would be willing to utilize the process again in a future election. It was especially popular with our UOCAVA voters, as evidenced by how many of those voters utilized the process. UOCAVA voters who access their ballots online typically need to print their ballot in order to sign it before returning the ballot electronically, but by utilizing the alternative verification process they no longer needed to print the ballot before returning it, which makes the process of voting significantly more convenient for them.

That being said, we did also receive feedback we can use to help improve the process in future pilots. Specifically, we got some useful feedback on how we can improve the voter instructions and some of the user interface elements in the online tool.

Next Steps

KCE has received a plethora of feedback from voters and partners alike about the alternative verification pilot program. We are looking forward to bringing this tool back to test further in future Special Elections, and plan to make improvements to both the tool and educational efforts before the next round of spring elections.

For example, while we know this is an important first step in providing voters with disabilities the ability to cast a private and secure ballot, there are many aspects that can be improved upon to make the experience more intuitive and seamless for all.

Ballot Return Statistics - April 2025 Special Election

King County Elections Internal Data Collection from Power BI

