

Q. What triggers a mandatory recount?

If the difference between the candidates is less than one half of one percent and also less than 2,000 votes, a recount is required (see chart below). Similarly, if the difference between the responses of a statewide measure is less than one half of one percent and also less than 2,000 votes, a recount is required. Statute does not specify how to conduct the recount, manual or machine, unless the difference between candidates requires a manual recount.

Q. When is a manual recount required?

In a statewide race or measure, the difference between the candidates or responses is less than one quarter of one percent and also less than 1,000 votes (see chart below). For all other races, the difference between the candidates is less than 150 votes and one quarter of one percent.

Q. When a recount is not mandated, may it be requested?

Yes. An application for a requested recount must be filed within two business days after the County Canvassing Board or Secretary of State has declared the official results of the primary or election for which the recount is requested. The application must specify the race or state measure to be recounted.

Q. Who pays for the recount?

The state reimburses counties for mandatory recounts of state measures. The counties pay for all other mandatory recounts. In the case of a requested recount, the individual or group who makes the request pays for the recount unless the outcome is reversed, in which case the county pays. At the time the recount is requested, the individual or group must pay a deposit of 25 cents per ballot cast for a hand recount or 15 cents per ballot for a machine recount. The requestor is responsible for the full cost as determined by the County Canvassing Board.

Q. Who calls for a recount?

The Office of the Secretary of State orders recounts for state races, state measures, and multi-county legislative, congressional, and judicial offices. The County Canvassing Board orders recounts for local races and single-county jurisdictions.

Q. When is the recount conducted?

The County Canvassing Board(s) determine the date and time of the recount. If the Office of the Secretary of State orders the recount it may require counties to submit results of the recounts on a uniform date.

Q. Can a county prepare by sorting ballots before the official date of the recount?

Observers need the opportunity to observe the preparation work for the recount. Candidates need to have time to designate observers. For these reasons, a county should wait the two days for candidates to be notified before opening storage boxes and sorting ballots.

Q. Are people allowed to observe the process?

Observers appointed by the political parties, as well as the candidates or their representatives, are encouraged to observe all stages of the recount. They should ask questions to the appropriate person about their observations, but may not disrupt the process. Other members of the public may also be allowed to observe the process. If space is limited, [WAC 434-264-030](#) provides a priority list for viewing space.

Q. What happens after the recount?

The County Canvassing Boards certify the results of the recount by submitting an amended abstract of votes. If the recount was for a statewide race, state measure, or multi-county legislative, congressional, or judicial office, County Canvassing Boards submit the results to the Office of the Secretary of State, which certifies the results.

Q. When is a recount not conducted?

There are no recounts for state advisory votes or local measures. There are also no recounts to settle a margin between first- and second-place candidates in a primary election.

Q. How are ballots recounted on a digital ballot tabulation system?

Digital tabulation systems count votes on scanned images of paper ballots. In a machine recount, the ballot images, instead the paper ballots, are recounted by the tabulation system software. The software also identifies ballots without votes in the recounted race or measure. These ballot images are examined to inspect for potential marks and verify no votes were cast. The County Canvassing Board resolves ballot questions raised during the recount.

Q. Do mandatory recounts apply to local ballot measures?

No. Mandatory recounts do not apply to local (non-statewide) ballot measures. Any group of five or more registered voters may file a written application for a recount of votes cast upon any question or issue. The application for a recount must be filed within two business days after certification of the election by the county canvassing board. The requestors are responsible for the actual cost of the recount, which could be substantially more than the deposit. See [RCW 29A.64.021](#) and [RCW 29A.64.030](#) for more details.

MACHINE RECOUNTS				
All races and statewide measures	Less than 2,000 votes...	...and less than...	.5% of the total votes cast for both candidates	RCW 29A.64.021(1)

MANUAL RECOUNTS				
Statewide races and measures	Less than 1,000 votes	...and less than...	.25% of the total votes cast for both candidates	RCW 29A.64.021(1)(b)(i)
All other races	Less than 150 votes	...and less than...	.25% of the total votes cast for both candidates	RCW 29A.64.21(1)(b)(i)

PRIMARY VS. GENERAL	
Primary	A mandatory recount may be ordered if the difference between the 2nd and 3rd place candidates meets the necessary threshold.
General	A mandatory recount may be ordered if the difference between the 1st and 2nd place candidates meets the necessary threshold.