



San Juan County Elections

F. Milene Henley, Auditor

Camolyn Armstrong, Elections Supervisor

Mail: PO Box 638, Friday Harbor, WA 98250 • (360) 378-3357 • *Fax:* (360) 378-8856

Location: 55 Second Street, Friday Harbor, WA • elections@sanjuanco.com

PRESS RELEASE

September 14, 2021

Elections FAQs

It's that time again, Islanders! With the 2021 General Election just around the corner, and the heightened focus on our electoral process, your Elections Team wanted to take a moment to share some frequently asked questions.

Q: When will my ballot arrive?

A: Ballots are mailed about 20 days prior to the Election. If you don't have yours two weeks before the election (by Tuesday, October 19), give us a call at (360) 378-3357.

Q: I forgot to sign my ballot! Can I come in and sign it?

A: As soon as you mail or drop off your ballot, it is no longer accessible. However, once it has been received by the elections staff, we will mail you a signature form to sign in order for your vote to be counted.

Q: I know I signed my ballot, but I received a letter saying my signature didn't match. What does that mean?

A: We have a signature on file for every registered voter. In order for us to accept your ballot, the signature on your ballot needs to match the signature(s) in your voter registration record. We know that signatures change as people age, if they are in a hurry, etc. Still, we are required to verify against what we have on file. If you have multiple signatures (formal, rushed, initials, etc.), then include all variations when you send back the signature form so we can have more data on file for you. You can also come into our office or request a mailed copy of a signature form.

Q: My (spouse, roommate, partner, parent) signed my ballot. What should I do?

A: This is a common mistake. Draw a line through the incorrect signature and sign your name directly above it.

Q: Why did I receive a second ballot in the mail?

A: We are required by law to send out a ballot to your most recent address. If you change your address during the election period, you will receive a new ballot sent to the new address. Ballots will not be forwarded even if you have mail forwarding set up.

Q: So, which ballot should I vote and return?

A: You should vote the ballot that has your most current address. The issues on your ballot are based on where you live. If you've moved to a new precinct, the issues on your new ballot may be different from those on the ballot you were first mailed.

Q: What if I already voted my first ballot and then I get the second one in the mail?

A: This one can be confusing, as there are many possible scenarios. An insert with instructions will come with the new ballot. If you're not sure what to do, give us a call at (360) 378-3357.

Q: What if I accidentally mailed in two ballots?

A: Don't worry, we count only one vote per person. Once a ballot has been received, all other ballots become void. Any additional ballots we receive are retained as informational but do not count as votes.

Q: I'm concerned about election security. How do I know my ballot is processed securely?

A: Ballots are always under dual control. This means that whenever ballots are handled, there are always two people present. When they are removed from locked and sealed cages or ballot boxes, both people have to sign and date security logs and verify every security seal. Ballot drop boxes are locked and sealed with tamper-evident seals. Ballots picked up from the Post Office are picked up by two people and they are stored securely at the post office prior to pickup. Every step of the process is checked by someone else and then checked again. Ballots are never left unattended; they are either in plain view of at least two people or they are locked and sealed.

Q: Can elections staff tell how I voted?

A: Absolutely not! These are the steps in the ballot handling process, from the envelope's arrival to its being ready to count:

1. The signature on the outer envelope is verified against the voter's signature on file.
2. The voter is credited as voting in the election. The outer envelope includes an identifier that links to the voter's record, in order to ensure that only one vote is counted for each voter.
3. The outer envelope – which identifies the voter- is separated from the inner security sleeve that contains the ballot. This step ensures that the ballot cannot be traced back to you, the voter.
4. All ballots are inspected to make sure the tabulation machine will be able to read the votes. The tabulation equipment is tested for accuracy before each election.

Q: That sounds great, but I'm still not convinced.

A: We want to be as transparent as possible! You are welcome to observe ballot retrieval from the ballot boxes, to see for yourself how secure the process is. We also have a YouTube channel where we livestream crucial parts of the election process, including ballot processing and election certification, so you can tag along with us. You are even able to come and observe ballot processing at the office – but call first, as space is limited. Please participate and ask as many questions as you need to in order to feel confident.

Remember: when in doubt, seek us out: call (360) 378-3357 or email elections@sanjuanco.com