

What's on the Ballot? Let's Discuss

Companion guide & resources



August 4 is the Primary Election

- Decide top 2
- Some local measures – like a library levy in Seattle

Tip: In WA, a lot of things that affect your daily life - like extra funds for schools, libraries, safety, and public transit - are voted on in special elections or primaries, not in the November elections

FYI: November 3 is the General Election

- Decide winners for races
- Vote on statewide initiatives

What you need to do to vote:

- Register
- Learn about the issues or candidates
- Mark your choices on the ballot
- Return ballot

Voting accommodations for people with disabilities:

<https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/voters/voter-eligibility-resources/voters-disabilities>

REGISTER TO VOTE

Can you vote?

- 18 or older
- US citizen
- Legal resident of WA state
- Not currently incarcerated for a felony
- Not disqualified due to a court order

- Note: If you have a legal guardian, check to see if you have voting rights
 - Sometimes voting rights are taken away during the guardianship process
 - If the right was taken away, you can petition to get it back
 - Voting rights for people under guardianship,
<https://thearc.org/resource/voting-rights-for-people-with-disabilities-who-have-a-guardian/>

How do you register?

<https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/elections/how-to-vote/register-to-vote>

- For the August 4 primary:
 - Online by July 27
 - In-person at a Vote Center through Election Day (Aug 4)
 - You can also register by mail, but the application must be received by July 27
- For the November 3 general election
 - Online by October 26
 - In-person at a Vote Center through Election Day (Nov 3)
 - You can also register by mail. The application must be received by October 26

LEARN ABOUT THE ISSUES & CANDIDATES

Library levy for Seattle

Seattle's library levy replaces an expiring one and increases it. It will pay to run the city's libraries and maintain its collections.

Annual cost: \$163 for median-value property (Median means half above, and half below)

There is property tax relief for older folks and people with disabilities, but it is limited to income up to \$84,000.

What are local levies?

- Local excess levies are short-term property taxes; money must be spent on what the levy says
- Often supplements money from other state or local taxes
- Used for local services like schools, public transit, parks and libraries

Why do we use local excess levies?

The state limits how much and how local government can tax. Increases in the sales and state property taxes are capped. And most of the regular property taxes collected go to the state to help pay for schools.

This leaves local excess levies as a popular option for local government.

Other options are to add user fees or increase taxes on business.

About business taxes:

- Since WA does not have an income tax, we have business and operating taxes. They are based on gross proceeds and value of property – not profit.
- Seattle also has payroll tax

Federal, state, county offices - context

This election we are voting on top 2 candidates for legislative offices, the courts, and the county assessor.

- We are not voting on executive offices – those include the president, governor, county executive or mayor.

What do these positions do?

Legislative offices allocate money and make laws

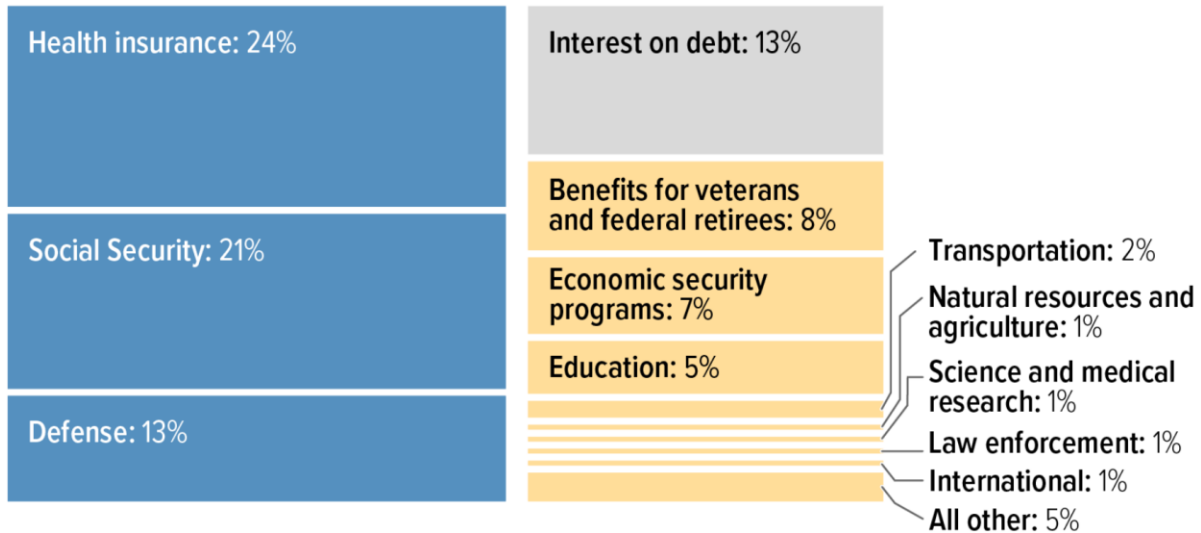
- They do not run government agencies
- They represent the interests of people in their voting district

FEDERAL: CONGRESS MEMBERS

- Congress is made up of the US Senate and US House.
- They only consider federal laws and federal budgets
- Can impeach federal officials
- Make up:
 - 100 senators – 2 per state. They have 6-year terms
 - 435 representatives. 10 for WA. They have 2-year terms
 - Federal districts that include parts of King County: 1st, 7th, 8th, 9th

- 6 non-voting delegates (District of Columbia/federal district, Puerto Rico/commonwealth, and the US territories of American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, US Virgin Islands)

The Majority of the Budget Goes for Health, Social Security, and Defense



Note: Figures differ from OMB's for technical reasons related to the shifting status of the Administration's 2022 student loan forgiveness policy and its effect in 2023. Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: 2023 figures from the Office of Management and Budget, March 11, 2024

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

STATE: STATE LEGISLATORS

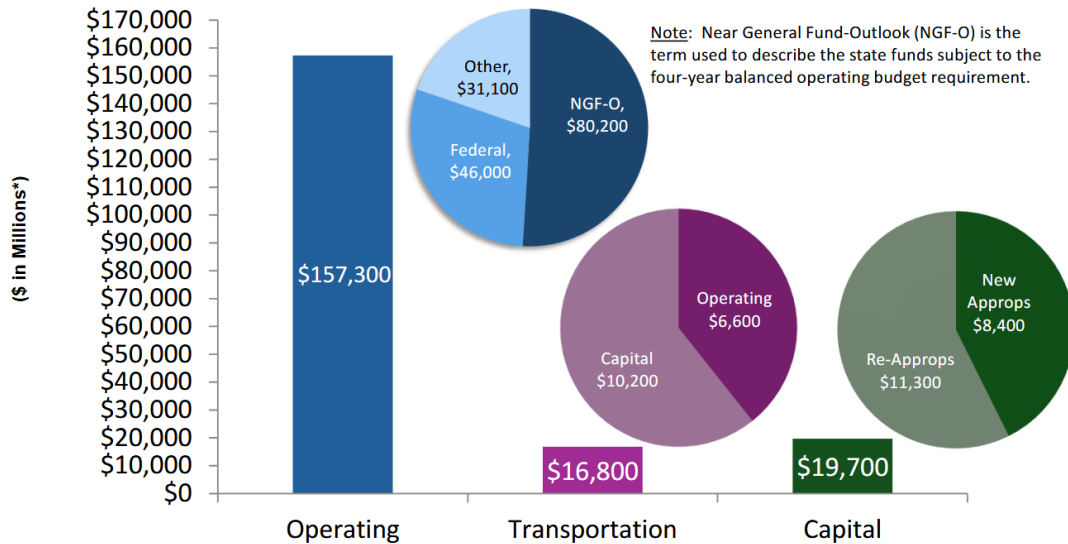
- The WA legislature is made up of the WA Senate and WA House
- They only consider state laws and state budgets
- Confirm appointments made by the governor
- Make up:
 - 49 senators – 1 per legislative district. They have 4-year terms
 - 98 representatives – 2 per legislative district. They have 2-year terms

Passing budgets is a HUGE part of what state legislators do.

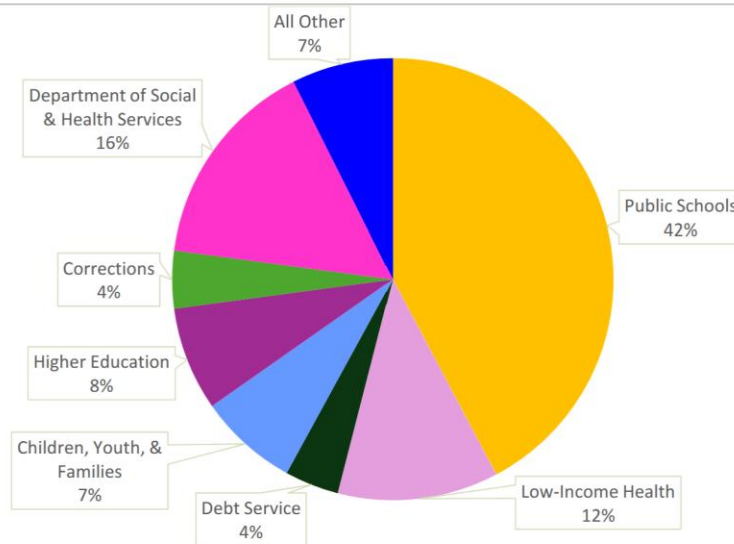
The biennium they are going to have to figure out what to do about federal cuts to Medicaid and food assistance.

They can cut reduce eligibility for services like Medicaid and long-term care; cut provider pay; or cut “optional services” (IDD services are optional)

There are three different budgets totaling \$193.8 billion for the 2025-27 biennium through the 2026 Supplemental budgets.



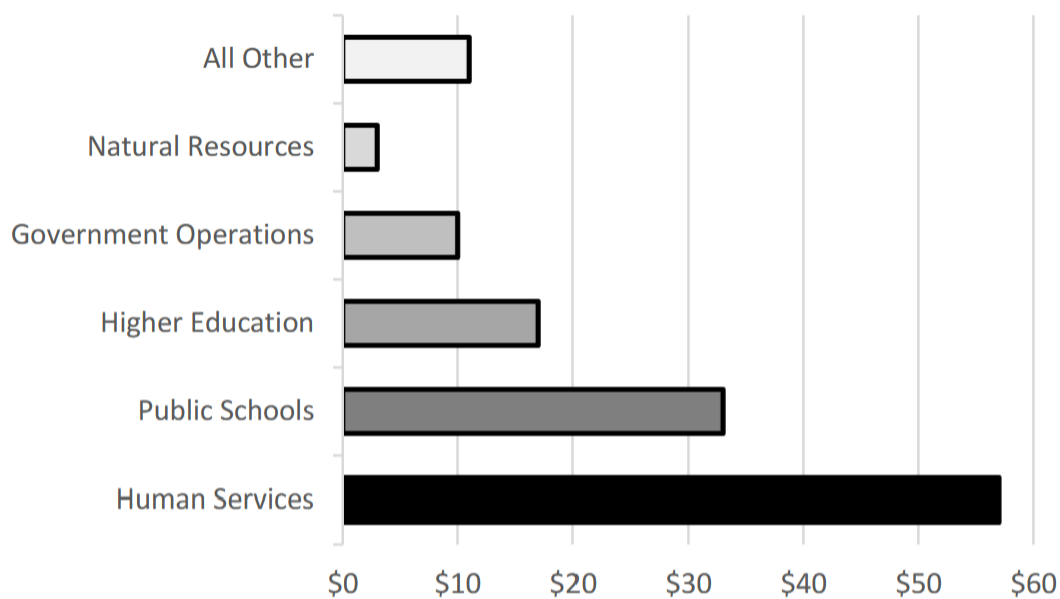
Over 90% of NGF-O in the Enacted 2026 Supplemental Operating budget is within several major areas, primarily education and health & human services.



Note: Low-Income Health includes all HCA programs, including community behavioral health.

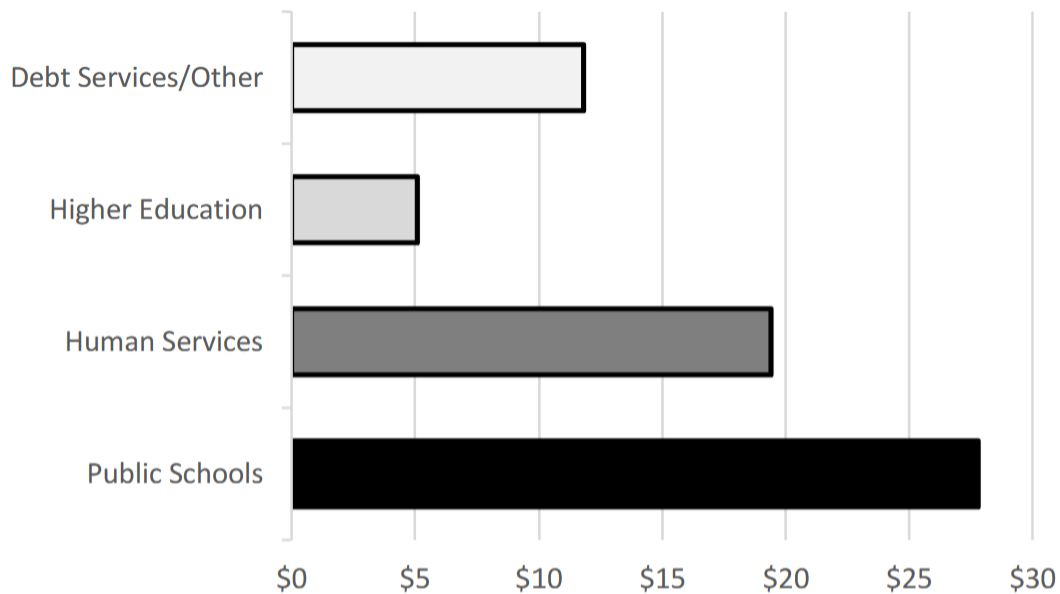
- July 20, 2026 presentation:
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/committeeschedules/Home/Document/300524#toolbar=0&navpanes=0>
- Citizen's guide to the operating budget (2023 data)
<https://fiscal.wa.gov/PublicationsAndReports/2023%20Citizens%20Guide%20to%20Operating%20Budget.pdf>

All funding sources (including federal)



<i>2021-23 Biennium</i>		
<i>Human Services</i>	\$57 B	44%
<i>Public Schools</i>	\$33 B	25%
<i>Higher Education</i>	\$17 B	13%
<i>Government Operations</i>	\$10 B	7%
<i>Natural Resources</i>	\$3 B	2%
<i>All Other</i>	\$11 B	9%
Total	\$131 B	

State-only revenue



	2021-23 Biennium	
Public Schools	\$28 B	43%
Human Services	\$19 B	30%
Higher Education	\$5 B	8%
Debt Services / Other	\$12 B	19%
Total	\$64 B	

KING COUNTY COUNCILMEMBERS

9 members are on the council.

About King County Council: <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/council/governance-leadership/county-council/about-king-county-council>

They only consider county policies and the county budget

- County's legal system (funding)
- County sheriff (unincorporated areas)
- Health and human services
- Metro Transit
- Waste management
- County parks

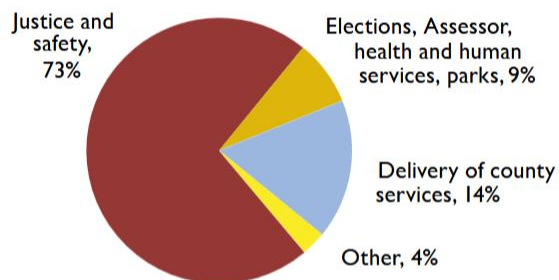
- Elections, records, licensing

Laws they pass become part of the King County Code

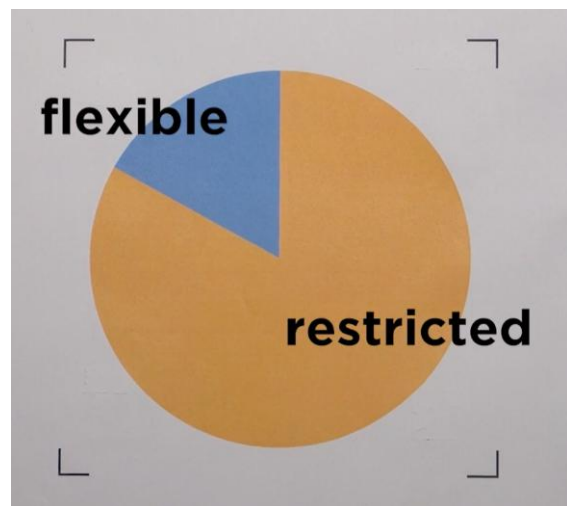
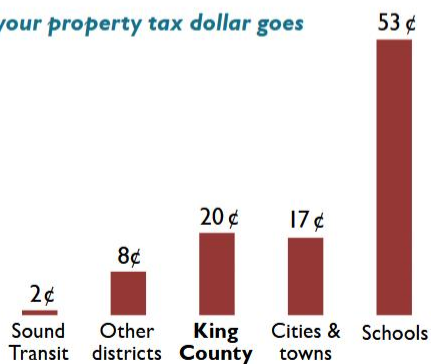
<https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/council/governance-leadership/county-legislation-codes/king-county-code>

2026 County Brochure: https://cdn.kingcounty.gov/-/media/king-county/depts/council/documents/2026/council_brochure_2026.pdf?rev=957a9c6e99cd409b99b62e1b58e71b99&hash=6496C732383B788588F3964689F182A2

General Fund expenditures



Where your property tax dollar goes

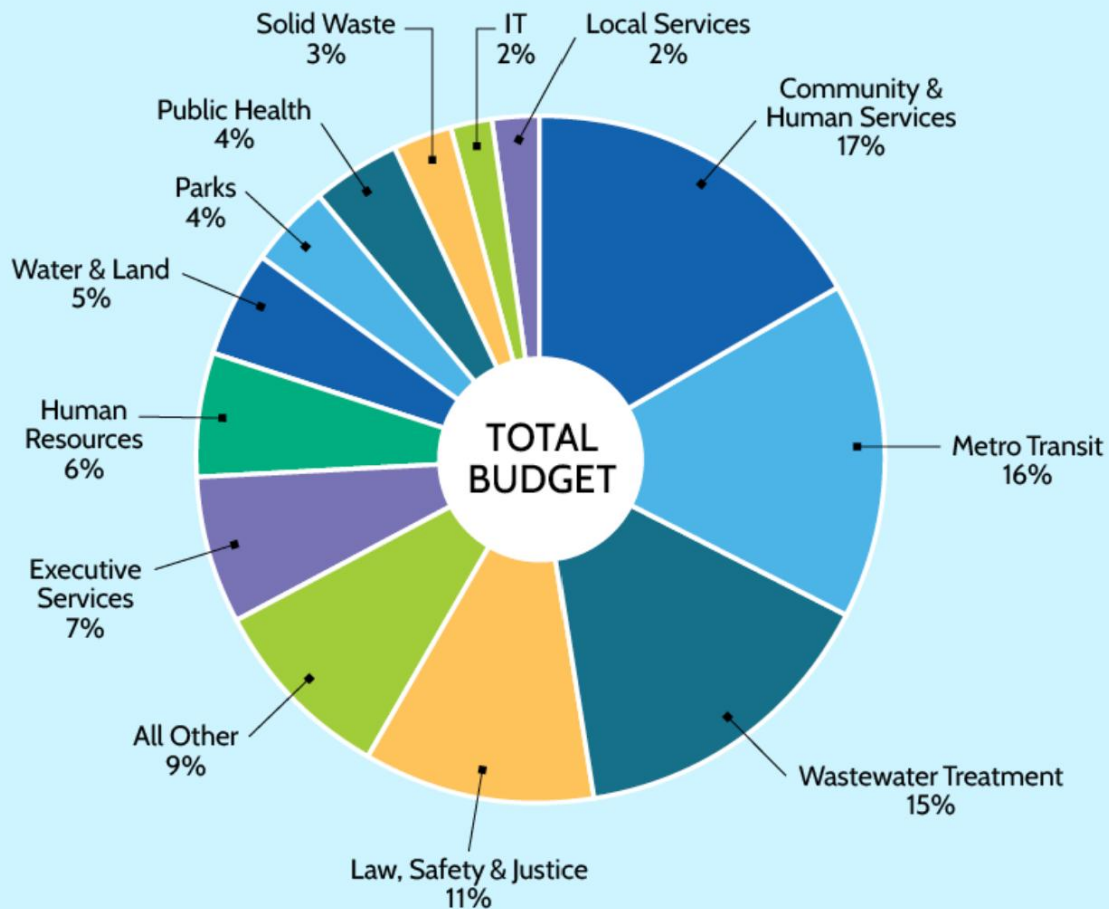


Note: the county collects our property taxes but only keeps 20 cents of every dollar.

- 53 cents of the rest goes to the state fund for schools.
- The rest goes to local cities and towns, Sound Transit, and other local taxing districts.

About the county budget process, <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/council/governance-leadership/county-council/budget-review-2026-27>

Budget Breakdown



JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Judges and justices oversee how laws are implemented.

- WA Supreme Court Justices decide whether state and local laws or decisions by lower courts follow the state constitution. They hear appeals and review decisions. They serve for 6 years
 - 5 of the 9 seats are up for vote
 - The Supreme court weighs in on things like tax policy, gun laws, and environmental regulations
- District Court Judges decide misdemeanor criminal cases, small claims, traffic cases, and protection orders. They serve for 4 years

OTHER POSITIONS

King County is voting on an assessor. They set property values for county taxes

Some local cities may have special elections for a vacancy. For instance, Seattle needs to elect a new city council member.

INFORMATION ABOUT CANDIDATES AND MEASURES

King County Official Local Voters Pamphlet - online (written)

- Links you to a pdf. These were also mailed to registered voters.
- Offers plain language explanation, URLs (not clickable) and QR codes
- <https://cdn.kingcounty.gov/-/media/king-county/depts/elections/how-to-vote/voters-pamphlets/2026/08/english/edition-2.pdf?rev=f2b0d689447647d9805f2c53d27a71d9&hash=44B36EA23AFFE163266A3AB5289C32AD>

WA Primary Election Voters' Guide – online (written)

Links you to a website

- Same information as the printed guide
- **Has live links**, to take you to candidate websites, contact information, and campaign contribution information
- https://voter.votewa.gov/genericvoterguide.aspx?e=898&c=99&_gl=1*pdfvfe*_ga*M_Tl2NTl4ODY1MS4xNzY3ODg5ODAw*_ga_7B08VE04WV*cze3ODUwOTM5MDIkbzUkZzEkdDE3ODUwOTYzOTQkajU5JGwwJGgw*_ga_X6SDF160YQ*cze3ODUwOTM5MDIkbzUkZzEkdDE3ODUwOTYzOTQkajU5JGwwJGgw#/

Video/audio options

TVW video guide <https://tvw.org/video-voters-guide/>

- Video, ASL, transcript
- Candidates for US Supreme Court

Seattle Channel video guide <https://seattlechannel.org/elections>

- Video with captioning
- Candidates for county assessor, county council, municipal court

Candidate questionnaire responses

From the The Arc of Washington and the Community Advocacy Coalition for Developmental Disabilities <https://arcwa.org/advocacy/2026-elections/>

Non-partisan election guide

KUOW What to Watch (no subscription required): <https://www.kuow.org/elections/2026-07-24/what-to-watch-in-washington-states-2026-primary-election>

MAKE YOUR CHOICES

You will need a pen, any color. Remember to sign and date the ballot!

Need support or accessible options?

Contact a Vote Center. They have Accessible Voting Units and can provide other support. <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/elections/how-to-vote/ballots/return-my-ballot/vote-centers>

- With Accessible Voting Units, your ballot appears on a monitor. You select choices by touching the screen or using a tool. You can use headphones to listen to the words and instruction on your ballot
- You can also use online ballot marking – designed for voters who are blind or have low vision. <https://wa.omniballot.us/sites/53033/site/app/home>

If you need language support, you can get King County voter information and ballots in 7 languages. Chinese, English, Korean, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Vietnamese

- To change your language preference:
<https://cd.kingcounty.gov/en/dept/elections/how-to-vote/register-to-vote/change-language-preference>

Other options:

- Accessible Voting Events <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/elections/how-to-vote/ballots/accessible-voting-options> - trained staff and accessible voting units
- Other resources for voters with disabilities:
<https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/voters/voter-eligibility-resources/voters-disabilities>

Lose or did not get your ballot?

You can get a replacement ballot or envelope.

<https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/elections/how-to-vote/ballots/replacing-a-ballot-or-envelope>

RETURN THE BALLOT

Mail, drop box, or in-person?

You can mail in your ballots; put them in a ballot box; or vote at a Vote Center if you need assistance or access to an accessible voting unit

- Mail – Must be postmarked by Election Day. US Postal Service recommends mailing it 1 week before Election Day. No stamp needed
- Drop boxes – Drop off by 8 pm Election Day.
 - Nearby locations are listed on your ballot.
 - Look up locations: [kce.wiki/DropBox](https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/elections/how-to-vote/ballots/return-my-ballot/vote-centers)
- Vote Centers – Hours and days vary; check locations.

<https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/elections/how-to-vote/ballots/return-my-ballot/vote-centers>

You can book a 10-minute appointment at the Renton Vote Center,
https://outlook.office365.com/book/Renton_VC@KC1.onmicrosoft.com/?ismsaljsauthenabed

REGISTER, LEARN, MAKE CHOICES, RETURN THE BALLOT 😊

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