

# 2013 Annual Report



## King County Elections

Accessible | Accurate | Accountable

# Our mission

*With integrity and a commitment to innovation, we provide all citizens the opportunity to participate in and protect the democratic process.*

*Adopted October 20, 2013*

[www.kingcounty.gov/elections](http://www.kingcounty.gov/elections)  
(206) 296-VOTE (8683)

On Cover:  
Candidate filing  
Voter returning ballot at drop box

Above:  
Quality Assurance staff reviewing  
statistics with Director Huff



## From the director

A reliable standard in election administration is that each election in a four year term will have had a unique distinguishing dynamic. 2013 did not disappoint in that regard. The year ended with the administration of five elections: two special elections, the primary and general elections and a recall election for the city of Pacific. The recall election, the anomaly, offered an educational first for many Elections staff members.

Additionally, like each of the two years before, 2013 culminated with every ballot accounted for, contributing to a total of 18 consecutive elections conducted by KCE with 100 percent accountability. Given the millions of ballots returned to the Elections department during this time, this is an outstanding achievement unsurpassed in the field of elections.

In addition to producing this exceptional level of accountability, the department continued to become more efficient by maintaining our application of agile workforce and lean workplace initiatives. All King County Elections staff have been trained and involved in lean reviews of election work processes and are encouraged, as an ongoing practice, to look for and suggest potential efficiencies.

King County has now experienced five years of voting by mail, a milestone that marks a complete cycle of elections. The lessons learned from this timespan, combined with an off-year opportunity to envision the future, made 2013 the ideal year to embark on the development of a five-year strategic plan.

The entire department staff engaged in strategic planning activities to guide our work going forward and ensure that our efforts are focused on the goals that voters, stakeholders, and staff prioritize. To that end, the achievements mentioned in this report are organized around the updated goals that were developed through this strategic planning process.

The commitment made to voters in 2007 that this agency would be dedicated to pursuing continuous improvement has been upheld. I am very pleased to present this 2013 annual report, recognizing another year of outstanding service and improvements that the Elections Department has delivered to the citizens of King County.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sherril Huff".

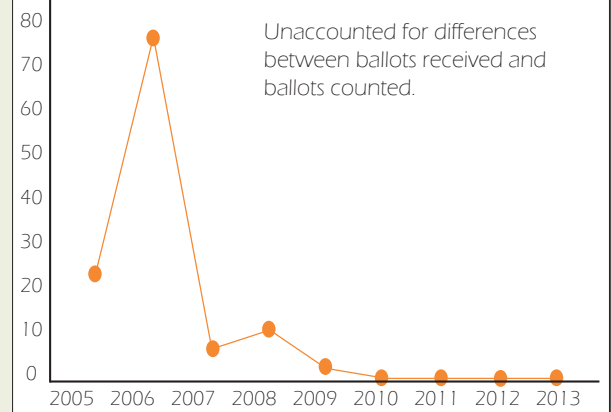
**Sherril Huff, Director of Elections**

# Annual voter participation

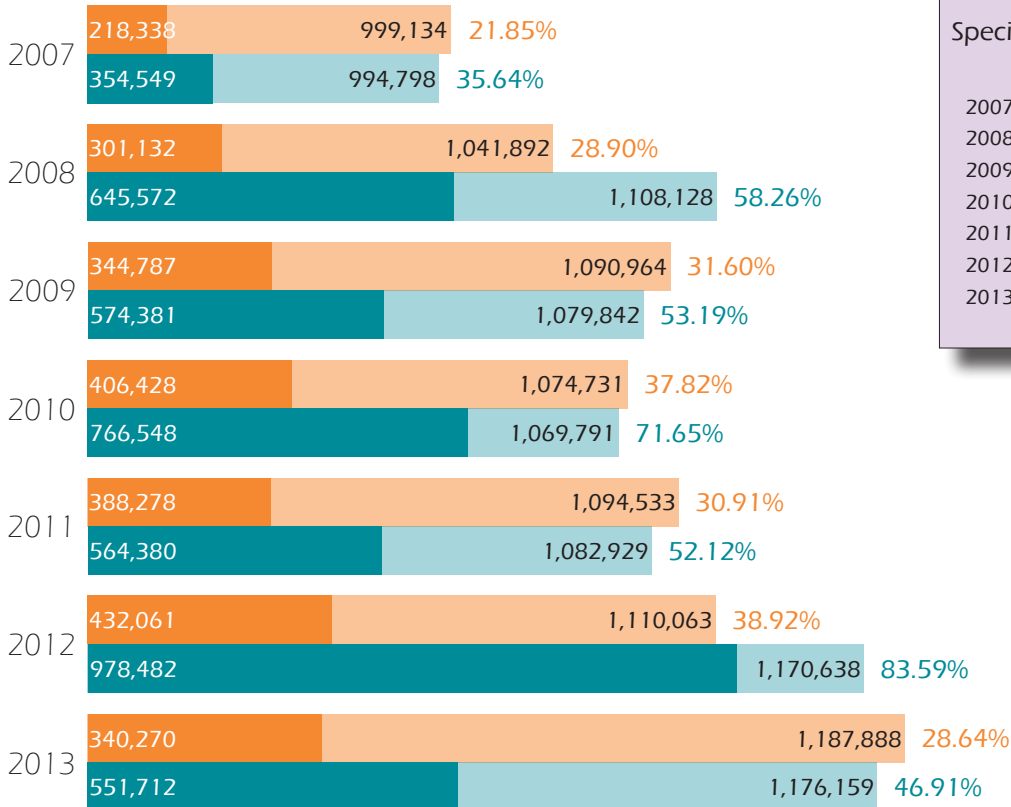
(Total ballots returned in all elections)

- Accessible voting centers (includes provisionals) or polling locations
- Alternate formats (email, fax, etc.)
- Ballot drop box location
- Mail
- Returned too late

## Discrepancy rates



## Active registered voters and turnout

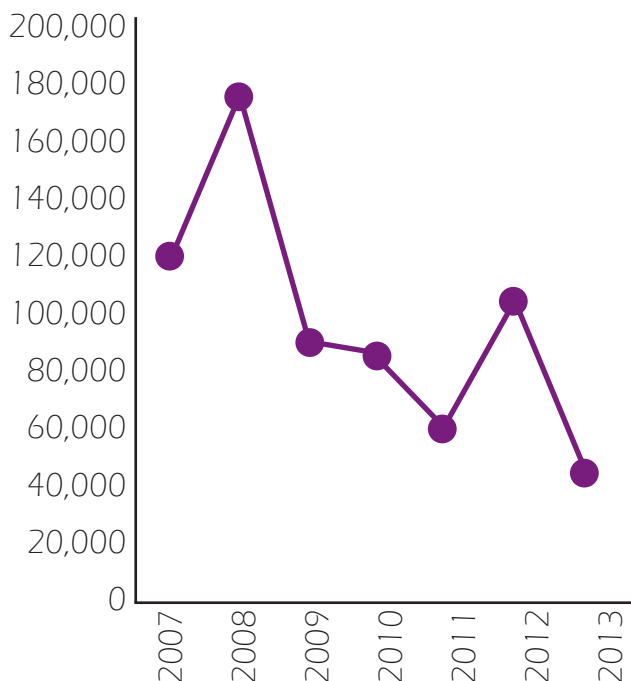


### Special elections (aggregate totals)

	Active registered voters	Voters credited	Turnout
2007	915,644	309,126	33.76%
2008	1,255,428	368,894	29.38%
2009	1,191,254	275,372	23.12%
2010	1,093,606	405,917	37.12%
2011	228,891	93,387	40.80%
2012	423,447	138,038	32.60%
2013	520,056	164,555	31.64%

- General election credited
- General election registered
- Primary election credited
- Primary election registered

## Temporary staff hours



## Historical election costs

	Elections	Voters' Pamphlet	Total	
2009	Specials	\$2,192,299	\$132,374	\$2,324,673
	Primary	\$4,118,444	\$218,364	\$4,336,808
	General	\$5,625,641	\$239,755	\$5,865,396
	Total	\$11,936,384	\$590,493	\$12,526,876
2010	Specials	\$3,563,004	\$148,980	\$3,711,983
	Primary	\$3,984,150	\$244,963	\$4,229,113
	General	\$5,006,021	\$187,799	\$5,193,820
	Total	\$12,553,175	\$581,742	\$13,134,917
2011	Specials	\$435,361	\$13,095	\$448,456
	Primary	\$3,930,258	\$212,958	\$4,143,216
	General	\$6,729,795	\$314,117	\$7,043,911
	Total	\$11,095,414	\$540,169	\$11,635,583
2012	Specials	\$1,035,304	\$27,210	\$1,062,513
	Primary	\$5,145,417	\$331,156	\$5,476,573
	General	\$6,927,178	\$182,009	\$7,109,188
	Total	\$13,107,900	\$540,374	\$13,648,274
2013	Specials	\$1,191,355	\$84,886	\$1,276,241
	Primary	\$4,972,162	\$244,311	\$5,216,473
	General	\$8,282,233	\$390,296	\$8,672,529
	Total	\$14,445,750	\$719,493	\$15,165,243

# 2013 Achievements

## Justice and Safety

Provide fair and accessible voting opportunities for all citizens.

- Prepared a department-wide Continuity of Operations Plan to ensure elections could still be administered in case of a disaster.
- Promoted the use of the online ballot marking program as a more convenient way to obtain a replacement ballot or to cast a private ballot without visiting an Accessible Voting Center.
- Contacted more overseas and service voters to educate them about the online ballot marking program. In the 2013 general election, 4,150 voters accessed their ballot using the online ballot marking program.
- Produced a video that enables all viewers to take a virtual tour of Elections. The video can be accessed online, on KCTV and while taking a self-guided tour of our operations using a smart phone.
- Partnered with the Department of Juvenile and Detention to provide ballots to eligible incarcerated voters.

Ensuring all citizens who are eligible to vote have the opportunity to do so is key to fulfilling our mission. Maintaining vigilance to identify and remove barriers to voting, partnering with other agencies, and using technology creatively as well as providing the necessary tools are all ways that KCE works to advance this goal.



KCTV staff shooting the self-guided video tour

Ballot Opening staff

Ballots returned from ballot drop boxes

Voting is an important part of building communities and realizing their future vision. The Elections Department participates in a variety of events that help connect communities to the voting process. Elections staff also generously embrace opportunities to support communities through the county's charitable campaign and families in need fundraising.

## 2 Health and Human Potential

Support individuals and communities to influence their present and shape their future.

- Conducted census data analyses that identified geographical clusters for potential outreach and civic education. This helps encourage broader voter awareness of voting opportunities and how to exercise their voting rights.
- Attended 22 outreach events such as Tet celebration, Naturalization ceremonies, and cultural fairs and events to encourage voter registration.
- Initiated a new voter registration campaign in partnership with National Voter Registration Day and community partners, resulting in more than 1,000 new voter registrations during the month's campaign.
- Raised more than \$18,000 to help various causes through the Employee Giving Campaign and held the department's largest-ever food drive. In addition to being recognized as the "most improved King County agency" in terms of contributions for the second year in a row, the Elections Department designated ambassador was selected as the best in that role in the county. In addition, the department "adopted" two families, providing gifts and assistance for the holidays.



National Voter Registration Day poster

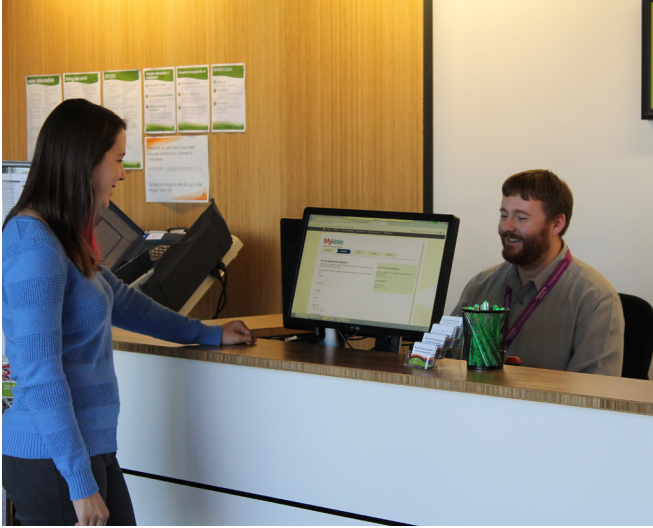
Employee giving campaign

Outreach event

National Voter Registration Day  
September 24th

 King County  
Elections  
206-296-VOTE (8683)





All of King County is dedicated to reducing our environmental impacts and the Elections Department has been vigilant in seeking ways to do our part. With a strong commitment to offering as many services as possible online, we are reducing our use of paper and decreasing the need for people to travel to our offices. In conjunction with Lean business initiatives, KCE has also identified opportunities to eliminate or re-engineer processes to reduce the use of paper resources.

## 3 Environmental Sustainability

Safeguard and enhance the environment by minimizing our operational environmental footprint.

- Increased number of new King County voters using electronic registration methods (Department of Licensing and online voter registration), by 6% between 2011 and 2013.
- Received over 152,000 electronic registrations via the Department of Licensing and online voter registration, resulting in about 53,000 new registrations and 99,000 updates to existing registrations.
- Increased electronic registrations received from the Department of Licensing and Secretary of State's online voter registration by more than 60% in 2013 compared to 2011.
- Eliminated the need to print sample ballots for the AVC and offer voters a selection available electronically, eliminating nine reams of paper for each election.
- Produced six short training videos to eliminate the need for printed materials and are easy to update.
- Expanded our use of electronic media (web and social media) to economically communicate with voters and department employees.



## 4 Service Excellence

Deliver effective services that are responsive to community needs.

Citizen surveys and stakeholder interviews are some of the tools we use to assess the services we provide to all we serve, and we're happy to note that we continue to receive high ratings! In fact, as a department we have received some of the highest ratings in the county.

Delivering excellent service, however, is only sustained by continuing to seek ways to improve all that we do. This year, among other advances, we improved candidate filing, offered voters more information, and enhanced methods that connect our employees to other county employees and the resources they rely on.

Ballot Drop Van staff

- In addition to our regular practice of adjusting daily work schedules to accommodate work flow, we extended production hours during the general election to provide two results postings a day throughout the week of election day.
- Expanded ballot drop-off locations by 192%.
- Increased access for overseas and military voters to the online ballot marking program through a five-year grant to King County and a dozen other counties in Washington, in partnership with the Federal Voter Assistance Program (FVAP). Voters can get their ballot electronically and submit it back via email, fax, or US mail.
- Improved the online candidate filing program. More than 540 candidates filed during the candidate filing period with only 32 submitting paper forms. Using the online program reduces errors because a candidate's submitted information automatically matches their voter record.
- Developed a convenient online voters' pamphlet submission application. Of the 461 candidates choosing to submit a statement for the pamphlet, 419 submitted the statement using the new application.
- Partnered with Snohomish and Kitsap Counties to coordinate regional voter messaging and leverage additional reach and cost savings with our "Informed" voter education campaign. Developed new posters and ads featuring celebrity spokespersons that were distributed by KC Elections and partners to help promote key messages.
- Expanded formats of elections results information so that users could view results in more convenient ways.
- The Elections mobile site (launched in November 2012) continues to attract users and had almost 150,000 page views during the 2013 primary and more than 400,000 page views during the 2013 general election for a total of 1.2 million visits.
- Formed a SharePoint Governance and Implementation Team to begin the roll out of SharePoint (an online content and communication tool) to our department. In implementing SharePoint, some of our goals include expanding collaboration within our department, increasing organizational knowledge and information, and reducing the time it takes employees to produce, store, and find documents.

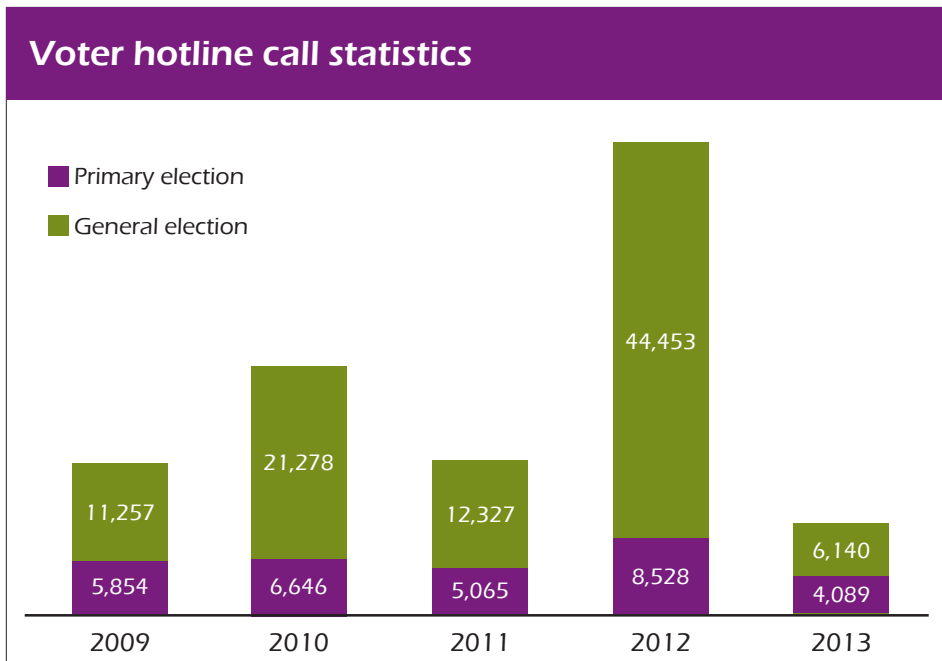


# 5 Fiscal Stewardship

Exercise sound financial management to address our future operational needs.

- Cost savings and speeding up counting of ballots was achieved through improvements in signature verification. As a result, signatures requiring a second review were reduced by 35% and the second review is now 16% more efficient.
- Reduced elections cost billing timeline from six months to two, improving the response time for districts that must reimburse us for delivering elections.
- Instituted improvements that yielded a 28% reduction in time spent opening and inspecting ballots.
- Outsourced secured ballot transport, saving more than 400 annual staff hours that can be directed to other needs.

Conducting elections with a critical eye on the costs of our operations is as important as ensuring that every ballot is kept private and accounted for. The fiscal responsibility of elections is a commitment to taxpayers and other government agencies that resources are used and tracked responsibly.



Top 3 voter hotline requests:

1. I need to update my voter registration.
2. I need a replacement ballot.
3. I have a question about voter registration.



Signature Verification staff

Observers for the recall election

Candidate filing workshop

Visitor touring elections

Rat City Roller Girls ad for the Informed Voter Education Campaign



Voters not only determine the outcome of elections, they also determine much about the way elections happen—the actual turnout, how quickly results are reported, and how much time is ultimately spent reissuing ballots, correcting signature problems and entering their voter information into our systems. Educating voters how to fill out their ballots properly, encouraging them to return them quickly, and even reminding them to update their addresses and signatures all contribute to our ability to keep election costs down.

## Public Engagement

Provide comprehensive public engagement to inform, educate and involve people and communities.

- Continued to build on our successful “Informed Voter” education campaign, recruiting new area celebrities to appear in ads including Connie Thompson, Mark James and Joyce Taylor, and the Rat City Roller Girls. The campaign achieved about 15 million contacts in 2013 delivering key voter education messages that helped create operational efficiencies. Signature problems and late ballots are on the decline.
- Conducted Elections’ first Facebook ad campaign, reaching more than 38,000 voting-age adults in King County during the 2013 general election with educational messages about proper voting techniques.
- Developed youth area of our website targeting new and future voters, featuring basic information about voting, kid-friendly content, and resources for teachers.
- Acquired telescoping advertising features via Comcast partnership to readily connect voters via one click to online “how to videos” and voter registration information.
- Collaborated with U.S. Department of Homeland Security, King County Library Systems, and other government agencies to register 450 new citizens to vote at naturalization ceremonies.
- In addition to conducting annual candidate filing workshops, trainings were offered for city clerks and district administrators, as well as campaigns and observers. Elections staff also provided trainings for Citizen Election Oversight Committee members to educate them on topics they have specifically requested.

## Quality Workforce

Develop and empower our most valuable asset, our employees.

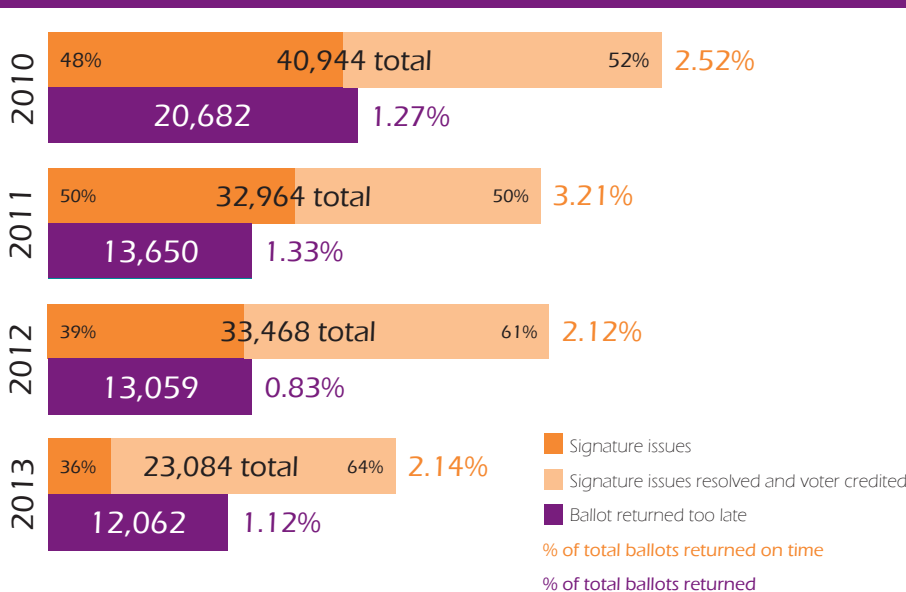
- Supported staff-led development and testing of new solutions to reduce effort and time while maintaining quality of ballot processing. For example, Elections continued to reduce the need for manual processes by creating and using the hands-free application for the Envelope Review process.
- Trained all staff on the quality improvement tool Rapid Office Kaizen (ROK).
- Shared workload among lead staff to increase staff knowledge and reduce the need for short-term temporary employees.
- Engaged all department employees in exercises to identify department values and brainstorm strategies for advancing our department's mission.
- Involved all departmental work groups in intranet assessment to develop greater functionality and value via the department's intranet site.
- Offered five Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) awareness workshops, attended by 76 Elections employees. Employment orientation for new short-term election employees also contains an ESJ component.
- Capitalized on the SeaTac location for the 2013 Washington State Elections Conference and sent 38 employees to receive additional training and the opportunity to exchange ideas with their professional peers from around the state.

As a service industry, the elections department can only succeed if the people who work here are successful. Attracting and retaining a skilled staff, involving them in our continuous improvement as an agency that takes pride in its work, and providing ongoing training and opportunities to advance is important to the current and future success of our organization.

Exit interviews are conducted with all temporary staff and the information is used for quality improvement.

KCE is committed to ongoing education and training that supports King County's Equity and Social Justice Initiatives as well as those we specifically pursue in the advancement of our mission.

### Signature issues and ballots returned too late



# What's Ahead?

In 2013, the Elections Department developed a five-year strategic plan to guide our work through 2018. Staff and stakeholders alike envision a future that includes greater use of technology, online voting, and a more engaged public through civic education.



Advancement of King County and Elections Department goals requires continued innovation, collaboration, and concerted effort by the entire Elections staff. Some of the priority projects to be launched in 2014 include:

- Develop a five-year capital improvement plan for technology.
- Conduct an updated voter survey to ensure voter needs and opinions connect with all that we do.
- Increase voter self-service and subscription service options on the website.
- Conduct a full assessment of barriers to voting for those aging, with disabilities, and other social factors, and the related solutions and opportunities to minimize the impact.
- Provide an assessment and safety evaluation of the programs and systems that staff and voters must navigate at the Elections Department.
- Develop, manage and track training plans to ensure that staff meets the department's dynamic skills requirements.