

# Memo

To: Commission  
From: Rene LeBeau  
Date: June 2, 2017  
Re: Signature issues

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## **Executive Summary**

The Democracy Voucher program is required to verify the signature on each voucher before the value of that voucher can be redeemed by a candidate (SMC 2.04.630 (h)). The program uses two methods for verifying signatures:

1. If the voucher holder is a registered voter, the voucher is delivered to King County Elections for signature verification against the voter registration record.
2. If the voucher holder is an opt-in participant, SEEC staff compare the signature on the voucher against the signature on the application.

The initiative as passed by the voters does not allow for an alternative to the signature.

The Democracy Voucher Program staff are seeking a solution that facilitates voucher redemption for vouchers belonging to Seattle residents who are unable to sign their voucher due to mobility issues.

## **Washington State's Ballot Signature Alternatives**

If vote-by-mail voters in Washington State are unable to make their signature, they have a few options. The first is to update their voter registration with a mark that has been witnessed by two people. There are no restrictions on who can witness and those witnesses are not validated. From then on, the voter need only make the mark for the ballot to count. The second option serves voters who do not have the mark as part of their voter registration record. These voters would make a mark on the ballot envelope that is witnessed by two people. Again, there are no restrictions on or validation of the witnesses.

If a voter makes a mark on a ballot but does not have a mark in their voter registration record, the election official sends a letter to the voter asking them to sign a new ballot declaration and have it witnessed by two (WAC 434-250-120 (1)(b)).

## **Democracy Voucher Program Alternatives – Proposed**

Option 1. Notary – The SEEC staff will accept as valid, a voucher that has been returned and notarized whether the voucher is marked, signed, or unsigned.

Option 2. Notary on Site – The SEEC will have a notary on site to validate vouchers for holders who are unable to make a signature or to sign and will accept those vouchers as valid.

Option 3. Notary on Demand – The SEEC recognizes that for some Seattle residents, access to a notary may be cost prohibitive and mobility may be limited. The SEEC will establish agreements with and pay for notary on demand service that can be scheduled by the voucher holder.

Option 4. Witnessing – If a voucher holder informs SEEC they are unable to make a signature, the SEEC will issue a letter to the holder asking them to make a mark and have it witnessed.

Question 4.1 – How many witnesses are required?

Question 4.2 – Will there be any restrictions on or validation of the witness? Such as, must be a registered voter or opt-in participant and the witness signature must be verified by King County Elections or SEEC; or signature must be from a representative of verifiable civic, community, or service organization.

Question 4.3 – If the voucher holder is completely unable to make a mark, will the witness solution(s) still be valid?

## **Rulemaking – Proposed**

The commission creates a rule after selects from the proposed options, edits of the proposed, or creates new options.