

King County Elections

From: Bruskland, Anne
Sent: Saturday, November 04, 2006 12:36 PM
To: Downing, William
Cc: Satterberg, Dan
Subject: ballots

Judge Downing,

I apologize for the delay in responding. As you can imagine, it is very busy in elections this time of year.

I am sorry to hear your son was forwarded a second ballot. Our system does allow for us to reissue ballots if it is lost or damaged. Our records do indicate that your son was issued a ballot via our initial pull and a second one was reissued on 10/12/06. I believe the ballot was inadvertently reissued at that time when we updated his signature (which occurred the same date). As long as your son has received one ballot to vote, he should be fine. You do not need to forward the second ballot as long as you can confirm that he received the first ballot.

I did look into your inquiry at the bottom of Mr. Satterberg's e-mail related to your son's September ballot. As Mr. Satterberg states below, we do compare signatures on the ballots returned with the signature we have on file to help prevent voter fraud. Your son was included in this process.

Your son's ballot was recorded as being received on 9/21/06. The vast majority of ballots are returned to us on or after election date. Given this, it takes time to process the ballots, challenge as necessary, create, stuff and send notices to impacted voters whose signature is challenged. In the September, processing time for these tasks took 3 business days (1 to process ballot, 1 to create letter, 1 for mail house to distribute). I was not personally involved in the generation and distribution process for the September election, but given the feedback I received from you and other voters, I worked closely with staff in the Absentee Ballot Operation Section (MBOS) to come up with ways to expedite this for future elections. We have taken measures to reduce the timeframe for this process beginning with this election. Now ballots processed and challenged for signature one business day by MBOS staff are printed, first class postage applied and put in the mail the very next day by my staff. We are hoping this will improve the notice time for a large number of voters impacted by this law.

The signature we had on file for your son was from 1982. As you can imagine, signatures can change quite a bit in that timeframe. On 10/12/06 (as noted above), it appears your son's record was updated with a new signature. The new signature does appear to me to be significantly different from the original signature. Unfortunately, we did not receive the signature update in time for the September election, and his ballot remained challenged.

If I can be of further assistance, or you do not feel my email is responsive to the concerns raised in your below e-mail, please let me know.

Anne Bruskland
Acting Assistant Superintendent of Voter Services
King County Elections

From: Satterberg, Dan
Sent: Friday, October 27, 2006 11:12 AM
To: Bruskland, Anne
Cc: Downing, William
Subject: FW: ballots

3/13/2007

Judge,
I will ask Anne Bruskland of the Elections Department to look into your questions and respond to your concerns.
Anne, please let me know what you find out as well.

Thanks,
Dan

From: Downing, William
Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2006 11:31 AM
To: Satterberg, Dan
Subject: RE: ballots

Dan,

I know you aren't Sam's personal election monitor but I have to raise another question with you.

You'll recall that he spent about \$50 to try to get his primary election ballot to count (and we still don't know if it did). Earlier this week, his absentee ballot for the general election arrived at our home in the mail. My wife immediately took it to the Post Office and spent \$20 to rush it to Sam in Uruguay. Two days later, another ballot arrived in the mail with an indication on the envelope that it may supersede the earlier one. What's going on? Do we need to spend another \$20 because of an Elections error? Was there something important left off the first one? If he returns the first one, will it count?

Thanks,
Bill

From: Satterberg, Dan
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2006 8:42 AM
To: Downing, William; Ferguson, Bob
Subject: RE: ballots

Judge Downing,

I will look into this for Sam. The security against voter fraud in the mail ballot process is the signature verification process which, as you well know from your days as a prosecutor, a subjective process that is more art than science. The elections workers compare thousands of signatures a day, comparing the autograph on the ballot with the one scanned to the electronic file from the original voter registration card. If they spot a mis-comparison, they go over it with their supervisor. If those two people agree, they set the ballot aside and contact the voter.

I don't know about you, but I'm pretty sure my signature has changed/deteriorated since I registered to vote in 1978. I vote at the polls so have not had this happen yet.

In the Primary, we have only 10 days from the date of the election to certify the results, yet mail ballots postmarked by election day continue to come in from around the globe for the next week and must be processed. Processing includes the attempt to verify the signature, and, if possible, give the person the chance to "cure" what the department thinks is out of order.

Note that the 3 ways to cure a signature mis-compare are:

1. come in person to the elections office (tough if you are in South America)
2. Sign the affidavit AND return it with a copy of your drivers' license or other state ID
3. Sign the affidavit and have two witnesses attest to your signature.

The are WACs, not a goofy local rule developed by the Canvass Board.

3/13/2007

We certify the election this afternoon (other than the nail-biter race for NE DC judge runner-up, which is heading for a manual recount). It sounds like the notice to Sam was sent too late to give him any realistic chance to cure his vote. We can make sure this is cleared up before the General Election.

BTW, Councilmember Ferguson, having already served "hard time" on the Canvassing Board for an election cycle is no longer on the Board. Larry Gossett is serving in the Primary and Julia Patterson is slated to cover the General. After 7 years of squinting at ink-smearred ballots, sloppy signatures, and faint postmarks, I have some insight as to why the idea of the rotating CB duty appealed to the Council.

I will ask that Sam's documents be set aside for review, and happy to share this real-life lesson in civics with him.
Best Regards,
Dan

From: Downing, William
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2006 2:12 PM
To: Ferguson, Bob; Satterberg, Dan
Subject: ballots

Bob & Dan,

Although I don't know where it's headed, I thought that both of would have some interest in this foolish and seemingly unnecessary little drama that is currently playing out. Sam Downing, as you know, is off living in Montevideo, Uruguay for the year. Knowing that even while in a different hemisphere he keeps up with King County politics better than most of us, we made sure he got his absentee ballot in time to have it count in the recent primaries. Determined to keep his status as a "perfect voter" intact, he, of course, cast his votes and returned it.

Our afternoon mail yesterday brought us a letter from King County Elections saying that Sam's ballot (mailed from Uruguay) would not be counted because of some person or computer's perception that his signatures didn't match. In order to get his vote to count, he would have to bring in his affidavit within the next two days. After several phone calls and emails, Sam is now spending many pesos to FedEx his sworn and witnessed affidavit from Montevideo to Seattle.

I don't know if it will make it in time or if this will even be satisfactory. I do know that this is either an interesting story about Sam or else an indication of something goofy with the system -- or maybe it's both.

Bill