

Submitted by: Assembly Member
Petersen, Assembly Chair LaFrance and
Assembly Vice Chair Constant
Prepared by: Municipal Clerk's Office
Reviewed by: Assembly Counsel
For reading: October 25, 2022

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
AO No. 2022-98

1 **AN OMNIBUS ORDINANCE OF THE ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY**
2 **AMENDING AND UPDATING ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL CODE TITLE 28,**
3 **ELECTIONS.**
4

5
6 **WHEREAS**, the Municipal Clerk's Office, with the assistance of Assembly Counsel,
7 the Anchorage Election Commission, and the Assembly Ethics and Elections
8 Committee, conducts a regular review of the election code, Anchorage Municipal
9 Code Title 28, *Elections*, each year; and

10
11 **WHEREAS**, following the 2022 Regular Election and 2022 Special Election, the
12 Municipal Clerk's Office drafted proposed updates to provisions of the Elections Code
13 to streamline administration, improve efficiency, and increase voter accessibility; and

14
15 **WHEREAS**, the Assembly Ethics and Elections Committee reviewed this resolution at
16 their meeting on September 28, 2022, and the Election Commission reviewed and
17 recommended approval at their meeting on October 7, 2022; now, therefore,

18
19 **THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY ORDAINS:**
20

21 **Section 1.** Anchorage Municipal Code section 28.10.020 is hereby amended to
22 read as follows:
23

24 **28.10.020 - Powers and duties of municipal clerk.**
25

- 26 A. The municipal clerk supervises the election administrator. The election
27 administrator shall prepare for, conduct, and supervise all municipal
28 elections, and shall determine whether candidates for municipal office
29 are qualified, in accordance with the Charter and this title.
30
31 B. The municipal clerk may gather information which may be reported for
32 investigation by law enforcement about suspected or alleged election
33 offenses under federal, state or local law, including in this Title, chapter
34 28.200, and section 8.30.180 of this code.
35
36 C. Pursuant to Charter § 11.02(a) and notwithstanding any other provision
37 of this code, the election administrator shall be responsible for the
38 overall administration of municipal elections, including, but not limited
39 to: application of election related information systems, election related
40 systems standards and procedures, acquisitions of election related
41 computer equipment, and related products and services. The election

1 administrator shall receive municipal resources and support from
 2 executive branch departments in accordance with section 3.20.070G.

3
 4 (CAC 2.68.020; AO No. 85-75; AO No. 2020-131(S) , § 1, 1-14-21)

5
 6 **Section 2.** Anchorage Municipal Code section 28.10.040 is hereby amended to
 7 read as follows (*the remainder of the section is not affected and therefore not set out*):

8
 9 **28.10.040 Definitions**

10
 11 The following words, terms, and phrases, when used in this title, shall have the
 12 meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly
 13 indicates a different meaning:

14
 15 *** *** ***

16 Signature means a person's name regularly written by that person in a
 17 distinctive way as a form of identification. [INCLUDES ANY MARK INTENDED
 18 AS A SIGNATURE OR SUBSCRIPTION AND AUTHORIZED BY STATE
 19 LAW, INCLUDING CONTROLLING COURT DECISIONS.]

20
 21 *** *** ***

22 Valid signature means a signature that has been compared with one or more
 23 signatures in the voter's voter registration file or on the voter's government-
 24 issued identification and determined to be by the same writer, through
 25 evaluation by an election official trained to perform this function using the
 26 standards set forth in this title.

27
 28 (GAAB 7.05.010; AO No. 85-75; AO No. 90-81; AO No. 91-166; AO No. 2002-
 29 179(S), § 1, 1-7-03; AO No. 2004-176, § 1, 6-1-05; AO No. 2013-130(S-1), § 2,
 30 1-14-14; AO No. 2016-10(S), § 1, 2-9-16; AO No. 2017-29(S) , § 1, 6-1-17; AO
 31 No. 2018-4(S) , § 1, eff. retroactively 12-1-17; AO No. 2020-5(S) , § 1, 2-11-20;
 32 AO No. 2020-131(S) , § 2, 1-14-21; AO No. 2021-110(S) , § 1, 12-28-21)

33
 34 **Section 3.** Anchorage Municipal Code section 28.20.015 is hereby amended to
 35 read as follows (*the remainder of the section is not affected and therefore not set out*):

36
 37 **28.20.015 – Time for passage of ballot propositions.**

38
 39 A. For placement of a ballot proposition on a regular or special election,
 40 the ballot proposition must be introduced at least 84 days prior to the
 41 election and set for public hearing at the next regularly scheduled
 42 assembly meeting.

43
 44 B. The assembly shall take [FINAL] action, [INCLUDING
 45 RECONSIDERATION] on all ordinances and resolutions containing
 46 ballot propositions or other matters relating to or affecting a regular
 47 election not later than 70 days prior to such election. However, in the
 48 event of a veto or reconsideration, the assembly shall have until 60
 49 days prior to the election for the purposes of a veto override or
 50 reconsideration vote.

1 *** *** ***
 2 (AO No. 94-240, § 1, 1-10-95; AO No. 2008-17, § 1, 2-12-08; AO No. 2016-
 3 10(S), § 2, 2-9-16 ; AO No. 2019-104 , § 1, 9-10-19)
 4

5 **Section 4.** Anchorage Municipal Code section 28.20.040 is hereby amended to
 6 read as follows (*the remainder of the section is not affected and therefore not set out*):
 7

8 **28.20.040 – Notice of election, including notice of polling locations or**
 9 **vote centers, and notice of bonded indebtedness.**

- 10
 11 A. The municipal clerk shall give at least two notices of each election.
 12 1. The first notice shall be given:
 13 a. At least 51 [58] days before a regular election.
 14 b. At least 30 days before a special election.
 15 c. At least 15 days before a runoff election.
 16

17 *** *** ***
 18 (GAAB 7.05.050.A, B; CAC 2.68.080; AO No. 83-84(S); AO No. 85-75; AO No.
 19 91-50; AO No. 96-159(S), § 2, 1-14-97; AO No. 97-135, § 1, 12-16-97; AO No.
 20 2000-167, § 1, 1-9-01; AO No. 2013-130(S-1), § 3, 1-14-14; AO No. 2017-
 21 29(S) , § 5, 6-1-17; AO No. 2018-4(S) , § 2, eff. retroactively 12-1-17; AO No.
 22 2019-104 , § 6, 9-10-19; AO No. 2020-131(S) , § 5, 1-14-21)
 23

24 **Section 5.** Anchorage Municipal Code section 28.50.220 is hereby amended to
 25 read as follows (*the remainder of the section is not affected and therefore not set out*):
 26

27 **28.50.220 - Video viewing of election processes at designated return**
 28 **location.**

29
 30 A. For purposes of this section, [FROM THE TIME ELECTION
 31 PROCESSES FOR] a regular or special municipal election process
 32 begins with [, INCLUDING FROM] the delivery and acceptance of
 33 unmarked ballot stock to the designated return location, and continues
 34 until nine (9) days after certification of the election, including a runoff
 35 election, or of election recount results.[,]
 36

37 B. [T]he municipal clerk will use best efforts to provide for livestreaming
 38 of the designated return location continuously 24 hours per day, seven
 39 (7) days per week, during regular or special elections. The livestream
 40 will be displayed on an internet location that is published on the
 41 municipal elections web pages.
 42

43 C. Failure to satisfy the requirements of this section shall not create an
 44 independent cause of action.
 45

46 (AO No. 2021-110(S) , § 6, 12-28-21)
 47

48 **Section 6.** Anchorage Municipal Code section 28.50.300 is hereby amended to
 49 read as follows (*the remainder of the section is not affected and therefore not set out*):
 50

51 **28.50.300 – Appointment and privileges of observers.**

A. A candidate or organization must register their observers with the municipal clerk for each election, except as specifically noted in this section.

*** **

2. In the event of a recount under section 28.90.025D, [29.90.025D.], an affected write-in candidate may register observers, if the write-in candidate meets the requirements of paragraph A.1. in this section.

*** **

(AO No. 2013-130(S-1), § 4, 1-14-14; AO No. 2017-29(S) , § 27, 6-1-17; AO No. 2020-5(S) , § 2, 2-11-20; AO No. 2020-131(S) , § 7, 1-14-21; AO No. 2021-110(S) , § 7, 12-28-21)

Section 7. Anchorage Municipal Code section 28.70.030 is hereby amended to read as follows (*the remainder of the section is not affected and therefore not set out*):

28.70.030 – Ballot return envelope review standards: Regular.

A. Ballots that shall or shall not be counted based on ballot return envelope review.

1. A vote by mail ballot shall not be counted if:

*** **

e. The ballot return envelope, although postmarked on or before election day, is not received before the opening of the public session of canvass., [OR, IF RECEIVED FROM A MUOCAVA VOTER, BEFORE NOON ON THE DAY OF CERTIFICATION OF THE ELECTION];

*** **

2. A vote by mail ballot shall be counted if:

a. The voter declaration is signed with a valid signature or, if the voter is unable to sign the voter's name, the voter marked the signature line and one other person has properly witnessed the voter's mark. [;] For purposes of this section, a mark may be an "x" or other letter, line, or symbol verified by witness signature.

b. If signed by the voter, the voter's signature has been verified pursuant to subsection C. on or before the close of the public session of canvas; and

c. The ballot is received in one of the following ways:

i. The ballot return envelope is postmarked no later than the day of the election or the USPS or mail distributor (e.g. UPS, FedEx) can verify receipt of the envelope on or before election day, and received not later than the opening of the public

session of canvass [OR, IF RECEIVED FROM A MUOCAVA VOTER, NOT LATER THAN NOON ON THE DAY OF CERTIFICATION OF THE ELECTION].

*** *** ***

C. *Valid signature.* The signature on the ballot declaration must be compared with the signature(s) in the voter's voter registration file using the standards in this subsection. The municipal clerk may designate in writing election officials to perform this function. All personnel assigned to the duty of signature verification shall subscribe to an oath administered by the municipal clerk regarding the discharge of his or her duties. Personnel shall be trained in the signature verification process prior to actually comparing any signatures. Training shall include techniques used to identify matches and forgeries.

*** *** ***

5. For signature lines marked, but not signed by a voter, the same attributes applicable to a voter's signature, above, may also be applied to a witness's signature, if challenged. If the witness does not have a signature in the state voter registration database, the municipality may rely on other signatures reasonably known to the municipality to be the witness's. For purposes of this section, a mark may be an "x" or other letter, line, or symbol verified by witness signature.

*** *** ***

E. *Multiple and replacement ballots.* Consistent with subsection 28.50.140B., the first valid ballot received is counted. Subsequently received ballots from the same voter are not counted. Subsequent ballot envelopes received from a voter who has already voted shall be marked "rejected," segregated from approved ballot envelopes, remain unopened, and forwarded to the election commission for adjudication. The voter shall be notified in accordance with subsection 28.85.010G [28.85.010D.] by letter mailed to their mailing address and, if applicable, temporary mailing address. The municipal clerk may provide the voter's information and supporting information to law enforcement under section 28.200.120.

(GAAB 7.05.180; CAC 2.68.502; AO No. 80-101; AO No. 83-84(S); AO No. 85-75; AO No. 94-65, § 1, 4-12-94; AO No. 99-113, § 4, 8-10-99; AO No. 2001-43, § 5, 2-27-01; AO No. 2004-176, § 9, 6-1-05; AO No. 2013-130(S-1), § 7, 1-14-14; AO No. 2017-29(S) , § 35, 6-1-17; AO No. 2018-4(S) , § 17, eff. retroactively 12-1-17; AO No. 2020-5(S) , § 4, 2-11-20; AO No. 2020-131(S) , § 9, 1-14-21; AO No. 2021-110(S) , § 9, 12-28-21)

Section 8. Anchorage Municipal Code section 28.80.050 is hereby amended to read as follows (*the remainder of the section is not affected and therefore not set out*):

28.80.050 - Rules for counting votes.

A. Reserved.

B. Ballot a[A]djudication [OF VOTES] shall use the following rules:

*** *** ***

5. If a voter has filled in more than one oval when voting for c[C]andidates and answers to proposition questions but has marked with a strikethrough or "X" or slash across one [THE] oval [AND] or name or answer, or both, the ballot shall be treated as indicating the voter's intent to not vote for the candidate or answer so stricken:

Race
 ~~Doe, John~~
 Smith, Mary Valid vote for Mary Smith

Proposition 1
 Yes Valid vote "yes" on Prop 1.
 ~~No~~

Race
 ~~Doe, John~~
 Smith, Mary Valid vote for Mary Smith

Proposition 1
 Yes Valid vote "yes" on Prop 1.
 ~~No~~

[NOTE: the current code has the first two examples in the image above, the last two examples are newly added by this ordinance.]

*** *** ***

(GAAB 7.05.160—7.05.170; CAC 2.68.260; AO No. 85-75; AO No. 2001-43, § 4, 2-27-01; AO No. 2002-180, §§ 3—5, 3-24-03; AO No. 2013-130(S-1), § 6, 1-14-14; AO No. 2016-12, § 3, 1-26-16; AO No. 2017-29(S), § 40, 6-1-17; AO No. 2018-4(S), § 18, eff. retroactively 12-1-17; AO No. 2020-5(S), § 5, 2-11-20; AO No. 2020-131(S), § 10, 1-14-21; AO No. 2021-110(S), § 13, 12-28-21)

Section 9. This ordinance shall be effective immediately upon passage and approval by the Assembly.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Assembly this _____ day of _____, 2022.

Chair

ATTEST:

Municipal Clerk



**MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
ASSEMBLY MEMORANDUM**

No. AM 617-2022

Meeting Date: October 25, 2022

1 **From: Assembly Member Pete Petersen**

2
3 **Subject: AN OMNIBUS ORDINANCE OF THE ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL**
4 **ASSEMBLY AMENDING AND UPDATING ANCHORAGE**
5 **MUNICIPAL CODE TITLE 28, ELECTIONS.**
6

7
8 Amendments updating the Elections Code, Title 28, include the following:
9

- 10 • **Anchorage Municipal Code 28.10.020 Powers and duties of municipal**
11 **clerk.**
12

13 This section clarifies that the Election Administrator manages elections under the
14 direction of the Municipal Clerk.
15

- 16 • **AMC 28.10.040 Definitions – Clarification between “signature” and**
17 **“mark”**
18

19 Under current code, signature is defined to include “any mark intended as a
20 signature,” and “mark” is not defined. The intermixing of signature and mark in this
21 definition has been confusing. Updating this definition is intended to provide a
22 clearer standard.
23

24 Under the municipal vote by mail system, all signatures are verified (authenticated)
25 by comparison to various state or municipal databases containing other instances
26 of a voter’s signatures. In contrast, marks may or may not be verifiable by
27 comparison to a state database. For example, the temporary inability to sign the
28 voter’s signature due to illness or injury – broken arm or surgery - would not be
29 captured in the database of past signatures. However, the database may reflect a
30 voter’s deteriorating signature over time due to sickness or age. Similarly, voters
31 who regularly use what might be considered a mark as their signature are also
32 included in the database – for example, a voter who is able to sign but who regularly
33 signs with one letter or symbol or other combination.
34

35 Signature verification includes election workers trained, many over a number of
36 years, in forensic document examination by professional forensic document
37 examiners, when comparing voter signatures to the databases. (See AMC
38 subsection 28.70.030C.)
39

40 In our Municipal system, if a voter is **unable to sign**, the voter’s mark may be
41 counted if it is witnessed. The Municipal system **requires a witness signature only**
42 **if the voter is unable to sign** the voter’s signature **and makes a mark**. The
43 requirement for the inability to sign to allow the use a mark is stated both in municipal
44 code and on the ballot envelope.
45

1 In sum, signatures are verified through database comparison including when a voter
2 regularly signs with one letter or symbol or other combination. In contrast, marks
3 require witness verification. A signature cannot be defined as, nor treated as, a mark
4 which requires only a witness signature – a signature must be verified.

5
6 The current definition for signature is deleted with the following amendment:

7
8 Signature means a person’s name regularly written by that person in a
9 distinctive way as a form of identification.

10
11 A definition of “mark” is not set forth in the general definitions section of Title 28 and
12 is not recommended here because “mark” is used throughout the code in many
13 contexts, such as its use as a verb – to mark a ballot. Instead, “mark” is defined in
14 the two subsections addressing the inability to sign as follows:

15
16 For purposes of this section, a mark may be an “x” or other letter, line, or
17 symbol verified by witness signature.

18
19 • **AMC 28.20.015 – Time for passage of ballot propositions.**

20
21 The current code provides that the assembly must take final action, including
22 reconsideration, on all ordinances and resolutions not later than 70 days prior to the
23 election. To illustrate, for this election cycle, the date of January 24 is 70 days before
24 the election on April 4. The problem is that if the ballot ordinance is introduced on
25 January 10 and set for hearing on January 24, this timeline cannot account for
26 additional public meetings, if necessary, including a reconsideration vote, veto and
27 veto override.

28
29 The timeframes for passage of ballot propositions were set up when MOA was
30 required to obtain DOJ Preclearance under the Voting Rights Act on ballot
31 propositions. This requirement no longer applies, and the Election Team was able
32 to adjust the deadline to allow time for a veto override or reconsideration vote.

33
34 The following change is proposed:

35
36 A. For placement of a ballot proposition on a regular or special
37 election, the ballot proposition must be introduced at least 84 days
38 prior to the election and set for public hearing at the next regularly
39 scheduled assembly meeting.

40
41 B[A]. The assembly shall take [FINAL] action, [INCLUDING
42 RECONSIDERATION] on all ordinances and resolutions
43 containing ballot propositions or other matters relating to or
44 affecting a regular election not later than 70 days prior to such
45 election. However, in the event of a veto or reconsideration, the
46 assembly shall have until 60 days prior to the election for the
47 purposes of a veto override or reconsideration vote.

48

1 • **AMC 28.20.040 – Notice of election, including notice of polling locations**
2 **or vote centers, and notice of bonded indebtedness.**
3

4 This is a companion change to the deadlines in the timeline in AMC 28.20.015
5 above. The new recommendation for AMC 28.20.040, Notice of election, requires
6 the first notice of election to be given 51 days before a regular election:
7

- 8 A. The municipal clerk shall give at least two notices of each election.
9 1. The first notice shall be given:
10 a. At least 51 [58] days before a regular election.
11 b. At least 30 days before a special election.
12 c. At least 15 days before a runoff election.
13

14 • **AMC 28.50.220 – Video viewing of election process at designated**
15 **return location**
16

17 The code is amended to (1) define the beginning of the “election process” for the
18 purpose of video livestreaming to be the delivery of the unmarked ballot stock to
19 the designated return location, and (2) insert the standard of “best efforts” for the
20 clerk to provide livestreaming. The proposed change is as follows:
21

22 A. [FROM THE TIME ELECTION PROCESSES FOR] A[A] regular or special
23 municipal election begins[, INCLUDING FROM] with the delivery of
24 unmarked ballot stock, and continues until nine (9) days after certification of
25 the election or of election recount results.[,]
26

27 B. T[T]he municipal clerk will use best efforts to provide for livestreaming of
28 the designated return location continuously 24 hours per day, seven (7) days
29 per week. The livestream will be displayed on an internet location that is
30 published on the municipal elections web pages.
31

32 C. Failure to satisfy the requirements of this section shall not create an
33 independent cause of action.
34

35 • **AMC 28.70.030 - Ballot return envelope review standards.**
36

37 The deadline for receipt of a ballot for counting a Military Uniformed and Overseas
38 Citizens Absentee Voter (MUOCAVa) is changed in two places in section AMC
39 28.70.030 to match the deadline for all other mailed ballot envelopes. Even though
40 the deadlines are the same, the Public Session of Canvass date has been moved
41 approximately one week later, making this additional extension unnecessary. This
42 change allows the Election Commission to meet only once for the Public Session of
43 Canvass instead of twice. As a practical matter no MUOCAVa ballots were received
44 between the public session of canvass and certification in the 2022 Regular and
45 Special Elections.
46

47 Following is an example of that change:
48

A. Ballots that shall or shall not be counted based on ballot return envelope review.

1. A vote by mail ballot shall not be counted if:

*** *** ***

e. The ballot return envelope, although postmarked on or before election day, is not received before the opening of the public session of canvass, [OR, IF RECEIVED FROM A MUOCAVA VOTER, BEFORE NOON ON THE DAY OF CERTIFICATION OF THE ELECTION];

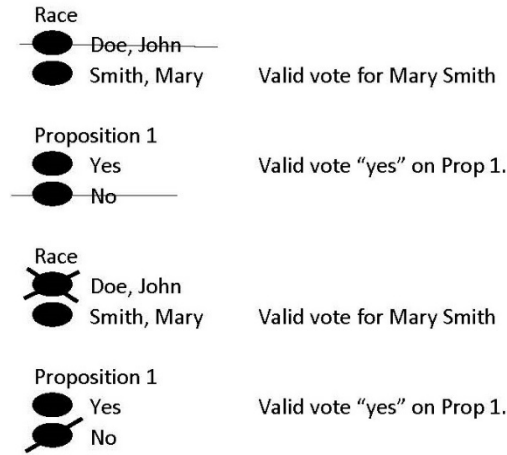
• **AMC 28.80.050 - Rules for Counting Votes**

During the 2022 Regular Municipal Election, many observers and members of the Election Commission interpreted the third and fourth marks in the image below as the voter’s intent to not vote for the candidate or answer – these two new marks would now be codified. This was the most common challenge to adjudication of the counting of votes. The proposed change is as follows:

B. Ballot a[A]djudication [OF VOTES] shall use the following rules:

*** *** ***

5. If a voter has filled in more than one oval when voting for c[C]andidates and answers to proposition questions but has marked with a strikethrough or “X” or slash across the oval [AND] or name or answer, or both, the ballot shall be treated as indicating the voter's intent to not vote for the candidate or answer so stricken:



[Note: Current code includes the first and second examples in the image above; the third and fourth examples are newly added to code by this ordinance.]

• **Citation Corrections**

Two citation references in AMC Section 28.50.300 and AMC 28.70.030E. are

1 corrected. There are no substantive changes to these provisions made by these
2 corrections.

3
4 A revised section by section summary of the proposed code changes is provided in
5 the attached "crosswalk" document.

6
7 There are no economic effects associated with this ordinance and so a summary of
8 economic effects is not provided.

9
10 We respectfully request support for this ordinance.

11
12 Prepared by: Municipal Clerk's Office

13
14 Respectfully submitted: Pete Petersen
15 Assembly Member, District 5 (East Anchorage)

	Code Section	Title	Change	Notes
Section 1				
1.	28.10.020	Powers and duties of municipal clerk	Clarifies the Election Administrator manages elections	This clarifies that the Election Administrator runs elections under the direction of the Municipal Clerk.
Section 2				
2.	28.10.040	Definitions	Amends the definition of “signature”	This clarifies the definition of “signature” so that it is no longer circular. The word “mark” is used in many contexts throughout Title 28 so we are adding the definition of “mark” in necessary sections later in the ordinance.
Section 3				
3.	28.20.015	Time for passage of ballot propositions.	Allows time for a veto override or reconsideration vote	The timeframes for passage of ballot propositions were set up when MOA was required to obtain DOJ Preclearance under the Voter Rights Act on ballot propositions. This requirement no longer applies, and we were able to extend the deadline to allow time for a veto override or reconsideration vote.
Section 4				
4.	28.20.040	Notice of election, including notice of polling locations or vote centers, and notice of bonded indebtedness	Requires the first notice of election be given 51 days prior to a regular election	This is a companion to the amendment in section 3; it delays the first notice of election by one week to allow time for a veto override or reconsideration vote.
Section 5				
5.	28.50.220	Video viewing of election processes at designated return location.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines the election process timeline • sets the standard for the clerk to provide livestreaming 	More clearly defines the timeline for when election processes are taking place for the purposes of livestreaming and sets the standard of best efforts for the clerk to use when providing livestreaming.
Section 6				
6.	28.50.3002.	Appointment privileges of observers.	Simple typo correction	Typo correction in the citation of where recount can be found in the code.

	Code Section	Title	Change	Notes
Section 7				
7.	28.70.030A.1.e. & 28.70.030A.2.c.i	Ballot return envelope review standards; Regular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows the Election Commission to meet only once instead of twice 	This change makes the deadline for receipt of MUOCAVA ballots the same as all other mailed ballot envelopes. Voters have been given an extension by moving the Public Session of Canvass meeting to the third week of April instead of the second making this addition extension no longer necessary. This allows the Election Commission to meet only once instead of twice. As a practical matter, no MUOCAVA ballots were received between the Public Session of Canvass and certification in the two 2022 elections. The provision to count MUOCAVA ballots until noon on day of certification was enacted January 2022.
8.	28.70.030A.2.a &28.70.030A.C.5	Ballot return envelope review standards; Regular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduces and expands the definition of "mark" 	Introduces and expands the definition of "mark" when used by a voter who is unable to sign.
9.	28.70.030E	Ballot return envelope review standards; Regular	Code citation correction	Correctly cites the provisions for cure letter requirements.
Section 8				
10.	28.80.050	Rules for counting votes	Codifying the Election Commission's interpretation of voter intent.	Codifying what was commonly challenged by observers to adjudication of votes; these challenges were granted by the Election Commission.