



Vacancy Appointment FAQ

What is the purpose of the Legislative Vacancy Appointment process?

The legislative vacancy appointment process occurs when a State Legislator vacates office. Its purpose is to create the list of three nominees for the party to fill the vacated seat.

What are the steps of the process?

Steps are determined both by state law and Party Rules. The Party Rules governing this process can be found on the Washington Democrats website [here](#).

1. The Party must call a meeting of the Precinct Committee Officers within 30 days from the time a legislator declares a date certain that they will have vacated the office, and the meeting must have been conducted within 45 days.
2. At this meeting the Precinct Committee Officers will select the method of balloting to select the nominees.
3. The Precinct Committee Officers will nominate individuals for the vacant position.
4. Candidates for the position will be allowed five minutes each to provide speeches to all Precinct Committee Officers participating at the meeting.
5. Precinct Committee Officers will vote (depending on the form of balloting) to determine **their top three choices** for the appointment to the position.
6. The requisite Central Committee (either County in single county LDs, or State in LDs that contain multiple Counties) will ratify those three choices.
7. Those choices are transmitted to the County Council or Council's for consideration.
8. The County Council(s) select their top choice from the three provided choices submitted by the Party.

Who calls and administers the meeting?

The Call to Meeting is issued either by the County or State Democratic Party Chair. If the Legislative District where the vacancy occurs is wholly contained within a single county, then the County Chair will call the meeting, but if the Legislative District where the vacancy occurs is split between two or more counties, the State Party Chair calls the meeting.

Is this meeting in-person or virtual?

This meeting is primarily in-person, but will utilize virtual components for check-in, voting, and will have a Zoom link to allow individuals to follow along with speeches.



While individuals will be able to check-in and cast their ballots while not physically in the meeting space, only those who are physically in the meeting space, by default, will have the ability to make motions or speak.

I want to seek the appointment. What do I need to do?

Candidates only become candidates when they are officially nominated by a Precinct Committee Officer who is eligible to vote at the meeting. Beyond being nominated by a Precinct Committee Officer the only requirement is that you are able to hold the position should you be appointed by the County Council(s).

I'm a Precinct Committee Officer and want to be nominated. Can I nominate myself?

Absolutely. Precinct Committee Officers may nominate themselves.

How do we vote?

Precinct Committee Officers will cast their ballots virtually using a secured Google Form. This form will be provided to them during the meeting itself, as well as posted in chat in the meeting client.

In order to vote, each Precinct Committee Officer will be issued a unique identification code that they will enter into each ballot. This code will secure the ballot so that any votes cast with an invalid code are automatically rejected.

We're selecting three individuals. How does this affect the ballots?

At the beginning of the meeting, Precinct Committee Officers will select between three methods of balloting.

The first option for balloting will have all three seats voted on **individually**. First the first rank-choice individual will be voted on, with balloting until a single individual receives a majority of votes cast. If no candidate receives a majority on the first ballot, the top two vote-getters will run-off. This process is then repeated for position two, and position three, removing those candidates already nominated from contention.

The second option for balloting will have all three seats voted on **simultaneously**. In this form of balloting all candidates are voted on at one time, and then only the top three candidates are retained. Then there will be a second ballot with those top three candidates, where Precinct Committee Officers will rank order them. The first-ranked candidate must receive a majority. If



the first-ranked candidate does not receive a majority on the second ballot, then a run-off between the top two vote-getters will occur.

The third option for balloting will have PCOs selecting using **Ranked Choice Voting (RCV)**. When voting PCOs will rank order their preference of all candidates, and the candidate with the least first choice votes will be eliminated and have their votes redistributed. This is continue until only a single candidate remains. The second and third candidates will be those individuals whose votes were redistributed latest in the rank ordering process.

Are these votes secret?

These votes are in your statutory capacity as a duly elected Precinct Committee Officer, and as such are signed ballots and **not** secret.

What happens if there's a tie?

In the event of a tie in an vote where three or more individuals are in contention, an additional ballot will be issued to break that tie.

In the event of a tie in a vote where only two individuals remain in contention, that tie will be broken by lot, except when voting method three (RCV) is being used, in which case the prior rounds of ranking will be returned to, and the candidate to receive a majority *between the two remaining candidates* of votes in the earliest round of redistribution will be elected. In the event that this is not determinative then it will be decided by lot.

What happens if one of the individuals nominated to fill the vacancy *creates* a vacancy in another seat?

In the event that, for instance, a State Senate seat had a State House member as one of the nominees to fill the vacancy, then the above procedures would be repeated immediately upon the conclusion of the Senate filling portion of the meeting. This is to ensure a replacement would be immediately available should the House seat become subsequently vacant.

How long does this process usually take on the day of the meeting?

The meeting can range in time, but at the shortest, has lasted around an hour. No meeting of this variety administered by the State Democratic Party has taken longer than three hours.



After the meeting, how long until we know our new Senator or Representative?

After the individual resigning has vacated the office, the County Council(s) have 60 days to finalize the appointment. If 60 days have elapsed and the County Council(s) have not finalized the appointment, the top three choices will be passed to the Governor for final decision.

I have a disability that prevents me from attending this meeting in-person, what do I do?

Reach out to PartyAffairs@WA-Democrats.org to arrange an accommodation for your participation.

I am unable to attend the meeting in-person because of other obligations, what can I do?

Under the newly revised *Procedures for the Nomination of Candidates for Filling Vacancies in Single or Multiple County Legislative Districts*, individuals may request an inclusion accommodation in the event they cannot attend the meeting for non-medical reasons. These inclusion accommodations have already been included within the meeting notice by allowing for a Zoom option to join the in-person meeting. Attendees should feel free to utilize this join option, and will be empowered to vote during the meeting if they utilize it.

Attendees should note that those attending using this inclusion accommodation will **not be able to make motions or speak** during the meeting but may follow along with speeches and vote regularly. Individuals attending in this way will still be required to “check-in” virtually for this meeting in the same way as other attendees.