

## **THE BEST WAY TO MARK A BALLOT**

**By Alene Lindstrom** 10 years' experience as an election observer

**\*\* Follow directions:** use black or blue ink or #2 pencil lead.

**\*\*** If your ballot gets ripped/torn, too wrinkly, or has stray marks/ food stains/ grease/oils, etc., ***inside the "readable areas" of a ballot's oval***, the ballot will require duplication.

**\*\*** Goopy inks and glitter can cause misreads and require duplication. Mark your ballot away from art/craft projects.

**\*\*** Inconsistent markings (for example -- filling in ovals, AND using "X" marks, OR "check" marks *on the same page* will cause ballot to be duplicated. Inconsistent marks can cause some votes to NOT COUNT *when inconsistency is on the same page*. Who knows this stuff? Very few -- mostly election workers and observers, but not many out of 330,000+ potential county voters.

**\*\*** Signature mismatch is when your signature on the ballot's envelope does not match what the election office has on file for your registration signature. If this happens, *the voter will need to sign the form sent to them by the election office and return it to them before the final date of certification...OR, their vote will not count.*

As discussed on the October 21st Right Perspective radio show, emphasis was on a goal to REDUCE the number of TOTAL duplications. "Clean" ballots that do not need duplication are set aside for counting/tabulating beginning the day before election day. It is ideal when no one sees these ballots prior to then. But duplicated ballots are seen (and heard by observers as an employee team reads a ballot's information back to each other onto a new blank ballot so the machines can "read" them.) It reveals a slice of **voting trends**. This is not wise because voting trends should not be identified UNTIL a ballot is actually counted by the tabulating machine. Not before.

**\*\*** If a voter makes an error in marking a ballot or changes their mind, call and ask the Election Office for a new ballot, 509-477-2320. They will mail you a "clean" ballot but be aware of getting it back to Elections **BEFORE** 8:00 pm on Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>.

**\*\*** Ballot drops at the libraries or at the election office itself are recommended to place your ballots in as the mail can have problems of their own. Ever had mail get lost?

**\*\* Late ballots** are those received AFTER 8:00 pm on ELECTION DAY, or, POSTMARKED AFTER THIS TIME AND DATE. *Late ballots are not opened or counted.* Ensure you check the last mail pickup time at the Post Office box you use because a last pick up of 5:30 pm will make your ballot late it (will NOT count) if your ballot is put in that PO Box after its last pickup time.

**What is "duplication" of a ballot?** It's the process of taking a ballot considered to be unreadable by the tabulating machines according to election office managers. It is completely remade onto a blank new ballot and considered the "official ballot" while the original ballot is never viewed again. Duplication processing exists because of RCWs and the "voter intent principle" of Washington State's mail-in only voting system. Duplication results in a lot of extra ballot handling and processing over two weeks prior to election day,