

§ 24.2-612 State Board’s Ballot Standards and Verification Procedures

The State Board of Elections (SBE) acknowledges its Code-obligated ballot verification requirements as specified in § [24.2-612](#). The most critical role for SBE is to ensure ballot development presents the voter with the proper offices, issues and candidates in an election. Election contest issues may arise without this accomplished.

SBE further acknowledges that voting methods (paper ballot, optical scan and Direct Record Electronic [DRE] machines) present ballot content in different ways. Paper, optical scan and DRE voting methods have established ballot layouts which have developed throughout the years. This document does not replace those established layouts. Moreover, it attempts to present the Code requirements for ballot preparation.

With that in mind, what follows are SBE’s verification points:

Ballot Header: Present on the top of the ballot or within the DRE programming. The “Commonwealth of Virginia” and “Official Ballot” may appear on two lines or one. When it appears on one line the information is separated by a comma. The size of the text may vary but it can never be less than 12 pt. font. The use of bold text is recommended as it draws the voter’s attention, but is not required. In all Primary Elections except Presidential Primaries, the “Election Title” must include the Political Party Name before the words “Primary Election” (§ [24.2-529](#)). The “Election Title” in a Presidential Primary is “Republican/Democratic Party Presidential Primary”.

Commonwealth of Virginia Official Ballot County, City, Or Town Name Election Title Tuesday, Date of Election	Commonwealth of Virginia Official Ballot County, City, Or Town Name “Party Name” Primary Election Tuesday, Date of Election
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Voting Instruction, (Optical Scan Ballots ONLY): Must present the voter with clear instructions on how to mark their ballot properly. Sizes of the text may vary but never be less than 12 pt. font. The use of bold text is recommended as it draws the voter’s attention, but is not required.

Office Header: This header varies depending upon whether it’s a General or Special Election and the type of office elected. The line containing either (“Vote for only one) or (Vote for not more than ____”) must not be less than 10 pt. font (§ [24.2 613](#)). All other content should not be less than 12 pt. font. The use of bold text is recommended as it draws the voter’s attention; but bold text is not required. Text within the header can be centered or left justified. Below are several Office Header examples:

GENERAL OFFICE HEADER	SPECIAL OFFICE HEADER	SPECIAL OFFICE HEADER (Without Member and District)
Member House of Delegates 99th District (Vote for only one)	Member Senate of Virginia 9th District For unexpired term to end December 31, 2015 (Vote for only one)	CLERK OF COURT For unexpired term to end December 31, 2015 (Vote for only one)

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Placement of Offices and Issues on the Ballot: The placement of offices and issues involved in an election must conform to the following logic: General Election before Special Election; Statewide before Regional; Regional before Local; Locality-wide before District; and District before Town.

Statewide Offices	
BALLOT PLACEMENT	OFFICE/ISSUE TITLE
1	President
2	Member United States Senate
3	Member House of Representatives
4	Governor
5	Lieutenant Governor
6	Attorney General
Statewide Issues, if applicable	
7	Proposed Constitutional Amendment (statewide)
8	Proposed Bond Referendum (statewide)
Regional Offices	
9	Member Senate of Virginia
10	Member House of Delegates
Regional Issues, if applicable	
11	Regional Referendum
Locality-wide Offices	
12	Clerk of Court
13	Commonwealth's Attorney
14	Sheriff
15	Commissioner of Revenue
16	Treasurer
17	Chairman Board of Supervisors
	County Board
	Mayor, City
18	Member Board of Supervisors At Large
	Member City Council At Large
19	Chairman School Board
20	Member School Board At Large
Locality-wide Issues, if applicable	
21	Bond Issues
22	Referendum
District Offices	
23	Member Board of Supervisors
	Member City Council Super District
	Member City Council Election

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24	Member School Board Super District
25	Member School Board
26	Soil and Water Conservation Director
District Issues, if applicable	
27	Referendum
Town Offices	
28	Mayor
29	Member Town Council At Large
30	Member Town Council
31	Recorder
32	Treasurer
Town Issues, if applicable	
33	Referendum

Candidate Names: A candidate's ballot name must follow the State Board's policy as stated on the back of each Certificate of Candidate Qualification (SBE-501).

Titles: **NO** titles [Rev., Dr., Mr., Mrs., etc.] are to be used, either before or following the candidate's name.

A woman **must use** her given first name, not her husband's, and without a "Mrs." in front of a name.

EXAMPLE: Mary L. Jones **not** Mrs. John W. Jones.

Criteria: First name or initial or familiar form of first name (see example below)
 Middle name or initial or familiar form of middle name
 Nickname should be other than form of first or middle name and must appear within quotation marks
 Last name
 Suffix, if one: Sr. is optional. All other suffixes must be used since they appear on a person's birth certificate and are part of the person's legal name.

Examples: The candidate's full legal name is **Thomas Wendell Smyth III**. The following options are available:

- Tom W. Smyth III (Tom is a familiar, commonly used, form of Thomas)
- T. Wendell Smyth III
- Thomas W. Smyth III
- Thomas Wendell Smyth III
- Thomas W. "Tom" Smyth III
- T. W. "Tom" Smyth III
- T. W. "Spanky" Smyth III
- T. W. Smyth III

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Initials for **both** the first and middle names may be used **only** when the initials **are also** the nickname **or** if the Department of Elections (ELECT) determines initials must be used in order for some form of the candidate's full legal name to fit on the ballot.

Length: The entire name to appear on the ballot **must not exceed** 25 spaces, including any punctuation and spaces between names. If the candidate's name exceeds 25 spaces, contact ELECT staff to make appropriate accommodations to meet the criteria established by the Board.

Candidate Order: Primary ballot order will be determined by the time of filing with the political party chair (§ [24.2-529](#)). Simultaneous primary filings will be determined by a drawing conducted by SBE for statewide and General Assembly offices and by the local electoral board for all local offices. Party ID is not present in a Primary Election.

The political party ballot order in a General or Special Election will be determined by drawings conducted by SBE (§ [24.2-613](#)). Independent candidates always appear last and are in alphabetical order by last name. Party identification is only present in federal, statewide, and General Assembly elections (§ 24.2-613). The Party ID's for the political parties, recognized political parties and Independents are as follows: Democrat (D), Republican (R), Libertarian (L), Green (G), Independent Green (IG), Constitution (C), and Independent (I) (§ 24.2-613). The party ID follows after the candidates name with a space, then a dash, another space and then the abbreviation of the party, i.e., **Gregory J. Davis - L**.

Candidate names printed on paper and optical scan ballots must not be less than 12 pt. font. Candidate names **printed** on AVC Advantage DRE ballots must not be less than 14 pt. font. (§ [24.2-640](#)).

Presidential Ballot Exception: A presidential ballot must present the candidates in the following manner (§ [24.2-614](#)). Sizes of the text may vary but never be less than 12 pt. font. The use of bold text is recommended as it draws the voter's attention but is not required.

President and Vice President (Vote for only one)
_____ Party Electors for Harry Potter , President Princess Leia , Vice President
_____ Party Electors for Lois Lane , President Clark Kent , Vice President
Write-In

Write-In line(s): The words "Write-In" must reflect the number of seats to be elected (i.e., "Vote for not more than **three**") should have **3** write-in blocks after the last candidate's name or enough space to accommodate three write in candidate names. Write-in voting is not permitted in a Primary Election (§ [24.2-529](#)).

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Question Header: Sizes of the text may vary but never less than 12 pt. font. The use of bold text is recommended as it draws the voter's attention but is not required.

Question Text: Sizes of the text may vary but never be less than 12 pt. font. Statewide and regional content must appear on the ballot as it appears in the legislation passed by the General Assembly. Local content must appear on the ballot as it appears in the Circuit Court's Writ. "Yes" and "No" appear in their own individual blocks after the text of the question.

Proposed Constitutional Amendments Question 1	Food and Beverage Tax
Shall Section 6 of Article X of the Constitution of Virginia ...?	Should the County be authorized to levy a tax on food and beverages sold...?
Yes	Yes
No	No

Verification Procedures for Localities that Contracts Ballot Preparation to a Ballot Printer or Voting Equipment Vendor:

- Request delivery of ballot proof(s) from local printer or voting equipment vendor after receiving certification of candidate information from ELECT (§ 24.2-612);
- The general registrar and the Secretary of Electoral Board must review the ballot(s) to ensure the standards are met (the Secretary may formally designate another Board member or deputy/assistant registrar to review in their place);
- If necessary, return ballot(s) to local printer or voting equipment vendor for correction and review corrected proof to ensure error is corrected;
- The general registrar and/or Secretary of Electoral Board must send* the final proof of the ballot stating that they have proofed the ballot, believe it to be correct and have met the standards of the State Board; and
 - Upon receipt, ELECT will verify that the ballot matches the standards set forth in this document.
 - After receipt of ELECT verification, the locality may proceed with ballot production.
 - ELECT staff will **NOT** review ballots for correct spelling of candidate names or office titles.

Verification Procedures for Localities that Prepare their Own Ballot(s):

- Create ballot proof(s) after receiving certification of candidate information from ELECT (§ 24.2-612);
- If general registrar creates the ballot(s), the general registrar and Secretary of the Electoral Board must review the ballot(s) to ensure the standards are met (the Secretary may formally designate another Board member or Deputy/Assistant Registrar to review in their place);
- If necessary, correct errors and review; and
- The general registrar and Secretary of Electoral Board must send* the final proof of the ballot to ELECT stating that they have proofed the ballot and believe it to be correct and have met the standards of the State Board
 - Upon receipt, ELECT will verify that the ballot matches the standards set forth in this document.
 - After receipt of ELECT verification, the locality may proceed with ballot production.
 - ELECT staff will **NOT** review ballots for correct spelling of candidate names or office titles.

*Submission of the ballots to ELECT with EB signature is not required. Records of approval must be kept internally.