

Memo

To: Commissioners
From: Wayne Barnett
Date: April 27, 2011
Re: Voters' pamphlet deadlines

In light of the focus in recent years on preparing the voters' pamphlet in time to mail it to overseas voters, the deadlines in the Commission's voters' pamphlet rules are no longer reliable. We have waived the deadlines pursuant to Rule 1.7 in every election in recent memory.

I would propose tying the deadline for submitting statements not to the election, but to the close of the filing period for candidates, and the statutory deadlines for placing ballot measures before the voters.

I have also heard from King County Elections that Seattle is the only jurisdiction in the County that gives candidates an opportunity to submit new statements for the General election after the votes in the Primary have been tallied. This entails additional formatting and translation work at the County, for which the City bears financial responsibility.

On the one hand, allowing candidates to revise their statements gives them an opportunity to tailor their statements to address the concerns they have heard from voters over the course of the summer campaign. Challengers, especially, may be in a better position to write a statement that resonates with voters after two months of campaigning than they were at the campaign's outset. And there is no guarantee that the City's economy, budget, or infrastructure debates will look the same in late August as they looked at the start of June.

On the other hand, if the voters' pamphlet is viewed solely as an opportunity for candidates to introduce themselves to voters, then there is little reason to permit candidates to change their statements in August. There is also the concern that primary motivation for changing one's statement is the opportunity to contrast one's views with those of one's General election opponent.

I look forward to a discussion of whether the Commission wishes to continue giving candidates the opportunity to change their statements.