

Write-In Candidate Procedures

Oregon voters have the option of not voting for any of the candidates for office who are printed on the ballot, but instead writing in a name of a candidate for each office. **All write-in votes for each office on the ballot are tallied together with a lump sum recorded unless:**

1. No names of candidates are printed on the ballot for the office; or
2. If the total number of write-in votes for candidates equals or exceeds the total number of votes for any candidate for the same nomination or office.

In these two circumstances, the county clerk tallies all write-in votes cast for the office to show the total number of votes for each write-in candidate.

Also of note is that ORS 254.505 provides in part, "County board clerks shall disregard misspelling or abbreviations of the names of candidates if it can be ascertained from the ballot for whom the vote was intended." This does not allow for counting write-in names consisting of initials, as an initial can stand for any number of names. An abbreviation is a shortened form of a written word or phrase used in place of the whole. *For example*, Joseph Walton has publicly announced he is running a write-in campaign (he did not file to be on the printed ballot in time). No candidate filed to be on the ballot for the office and so all write-in votes must be tallied. Counting boards, when tallying write-in votes for this office, will count the abbreviated name Joe Walton towards Joseph Walton, since Joe is a common abbreviation of Joseph. However, they may not count a write-in name of J Walton towards the count for Joseph Walton, because this initial "J" could stand for any number of names beginning with a J, such as Jane, Jim or Jessica.

The above excerpt is from the Oregon Secretary of State's *ELECTION LAW SUMMARY*, updated January, 2012.