

2025 Presentation to Council



Stacy Henthorn
Whatcom County Auditor



Auditor's Office Core Services

➤ Administration

- Division support and oversight
- Contract & grant management
- Annual report
- Accounts payable and accounts receivable

➤ Recording

- Document recording
- Marriage licenses
- Preserve and protect historically significant permanent archival documents
- Help customers search recorded documents
- Register and reserve new plat and condominium names
- Register process servers

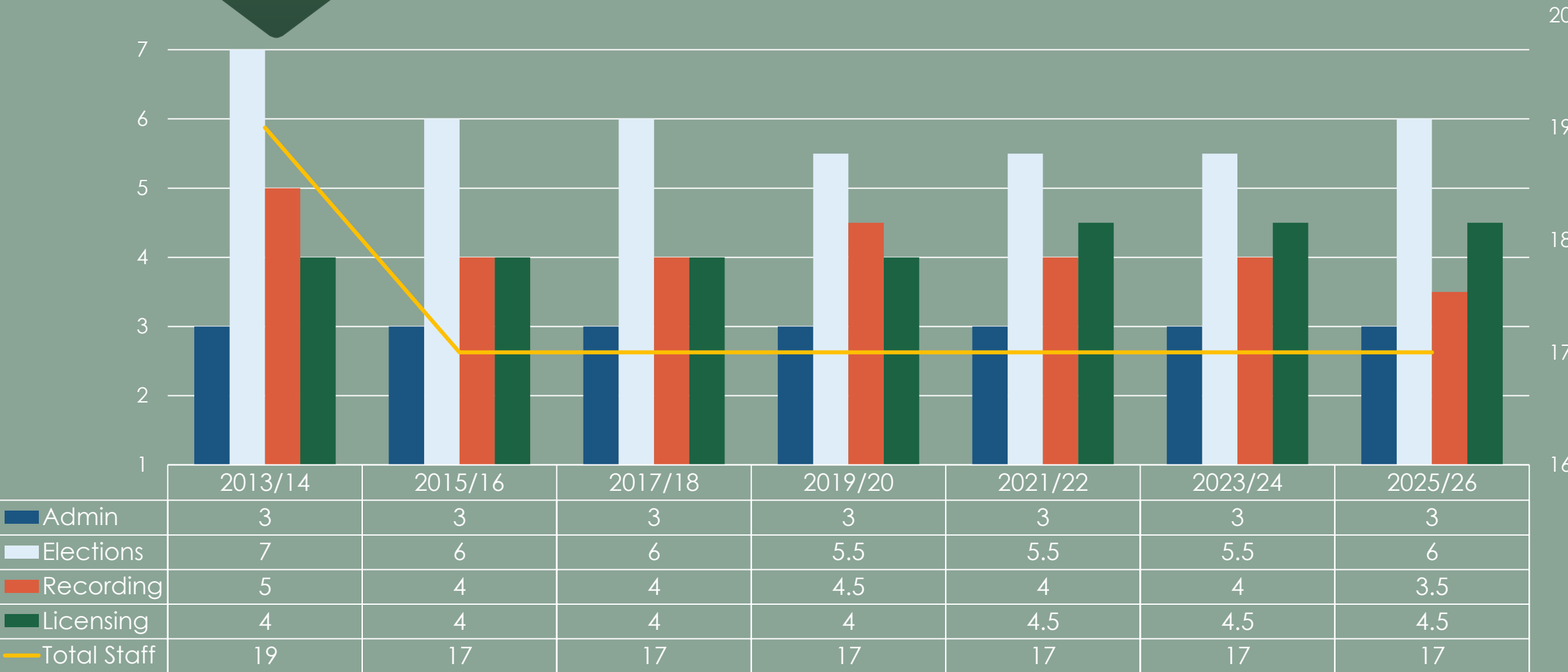
➤ Elections

- Administer federal, state, and county elections
- Local voters' pamphlet
- Voter registration and outreach

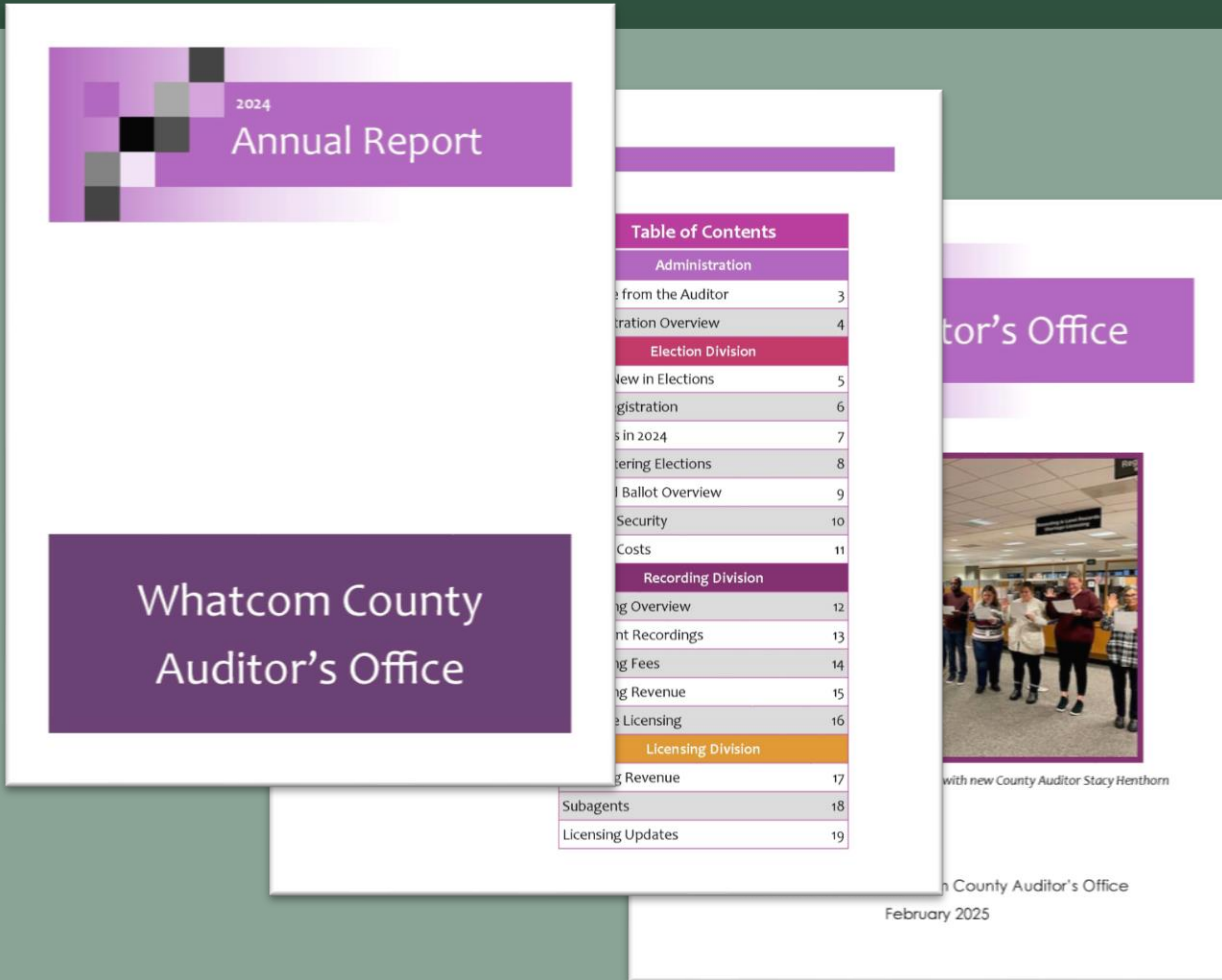
➤ Licensing

- Title and license vehicles and vessels in partnership with the Washington State Department of Licensing
- Inventory control
- Train, oversee, and audit six licensing subagents
- Issue Disability Placards
- Collect tax on behalf of the Department of Revenue

Full Time Staff by Division



Annual Report



- Published yearly by the Auditor's office
- Annual Reports from 2016 to present available on our website
- Highlights changes and accomplishments in all divisions

Important Dates in 2025

April 22 Special Election

Candidate Filing Week
May 5 through May 9

114 offices open, with
149 candidates filed at
the end of filing week!

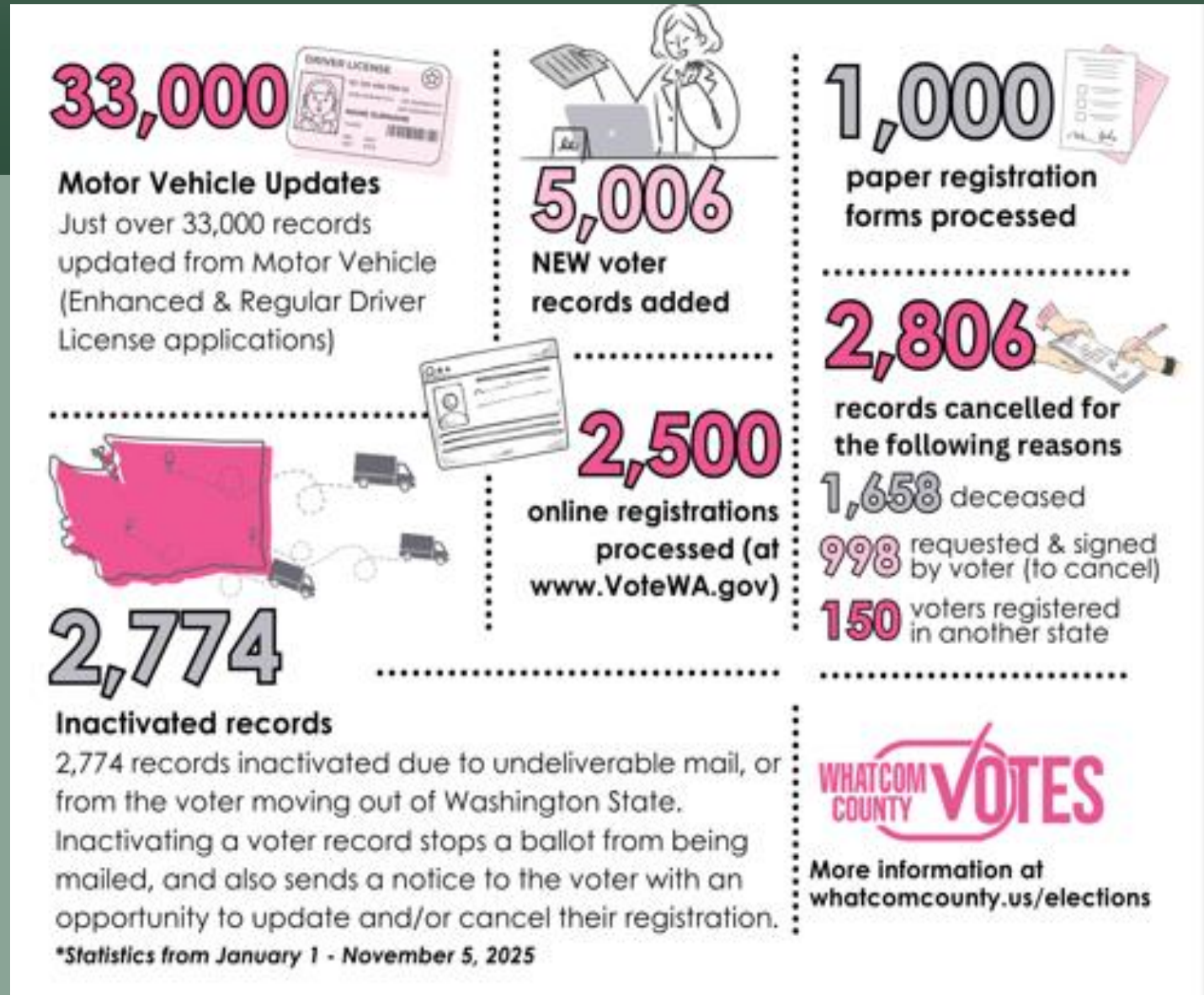
August 5 Primary & Special Election

November 4 General & Special Election

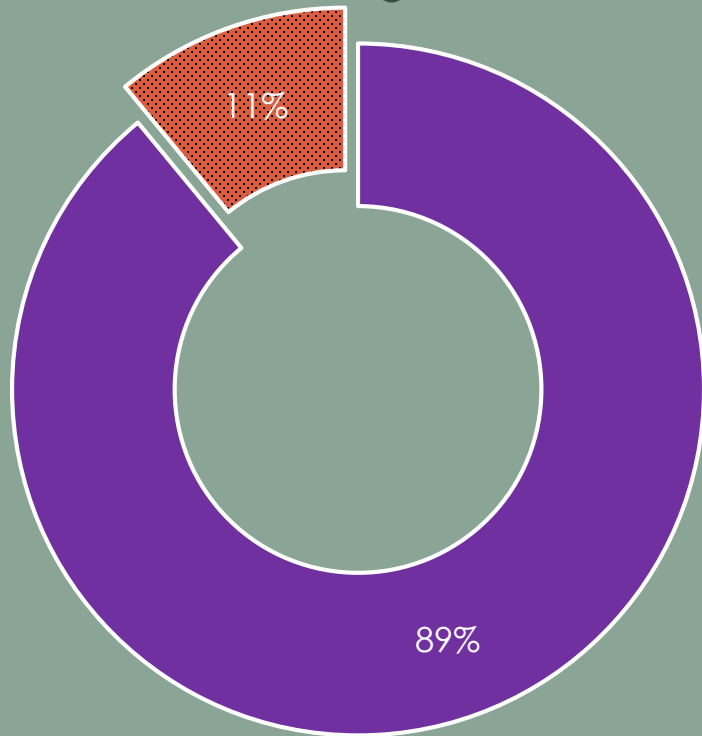
Election Administration

Voter Registration Database

- ✓ Register citizens to vote in Washington State
- ✓ Update and maintain the voter registration database
- ✓ Promote voter education



Voter Registration Statistics in 2025



- Voter Registration Updates
- New Voter Registrations

46,500

- Voter Registration Updates

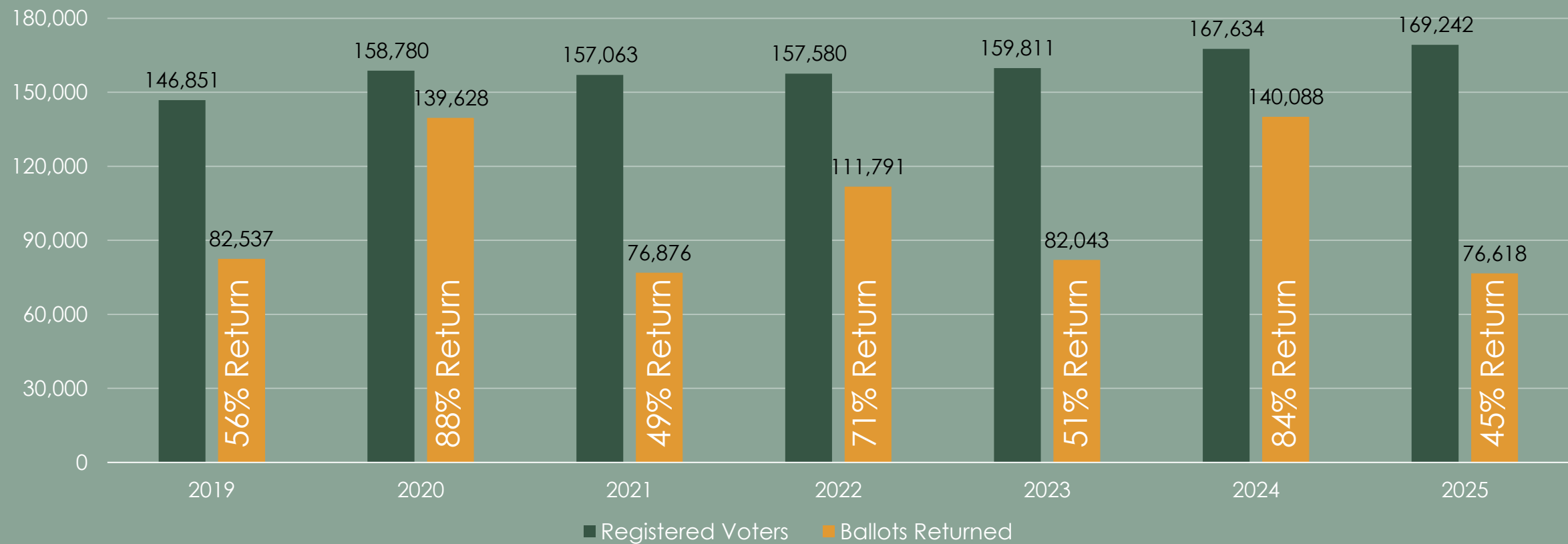
5,006

- New Voter Registrations

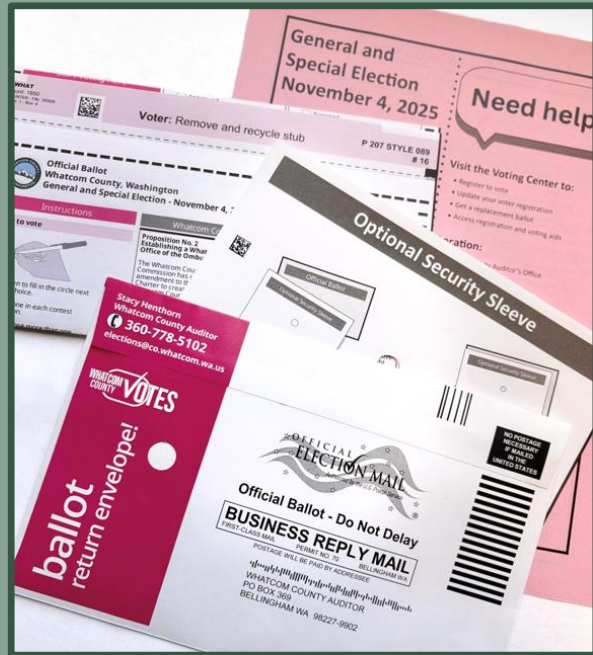
**169,350 Registered Voters
in Whatcom County!**

General Election Turnout

Number of Registered Voters Compared to the Number of Ballots Returned



General Election Cost Comparison



November General Election Cost Analysis

	Election Cost	Registered Voters	Number of Ballots Cast	Cost per Registered Voter	Cost per Ballot Cast
2024	\$647,902	167,790	139,080	\$3.87	\$4.67
2023	\$665,749	159,811	82,043	\$4.16	\$8.11
2022	\$532,094	157,580	111,791	\$3.38	\$4.76
2021	\$618,858	157,063	76,876	\$3.94	\$8.05
2020	\$527,704	158,780	139,628	\$3.32	\$3.78
2019	\$430,451	146,851	82,537	\$2.93	\$5.22
2018	\$407,002	143,265	110,504	\$2.84	\$3.68
2017	\$503,000	138,688	63,626	\$3.63	\$7.91
2016	\$505,413	138,962	114,920	\$3.64	\$4.40
2015	\$424,543	129,345	61,136	\$3.28	\$6.94
2014	\$399,789	127,280	76,123	\$3.14	\$5.25

Voter Outreach

Continue to hold tours in the Election Center to provide detailed explanation of the steps involved in ballot processing (right).



How do we know your vote is counted?

We test.

For the upcoming November 4 General and Special Election, there will be a Logic & Accuracy test on October 7 at 10:00 am. The test ensures the tabulation system will correctly count the votes cast for all candidates and questions appearing on the ballot, and that the reporting system will display the results.



Want to know more? Become an observer!

Whatcom County Auditor's Office - Election Division
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 103
Bellingham, WA 98225
(360) 778-5102 | elections@co.whatcom.wa.us
www.whatcomcounty.us/3747/Observer-Resources



It's Election Day



Vote, Sign & Return your Ballot
to an Official Ballot Drop Box by 8:00 pm sharp or by mail,
postmarked by November 4, 2025.

Opportunity to observe a
HAND COUNT



November 6, 2025 at 10:00 am

Created social media posts to run before, during, and after the election to inform voters

Recording

- ✓ Record documents submitted in person, by mail, and electronically
 - Deeds, mortgages, easements, DD-214's, and more
 - Maps - Surveys, Plats, Short Plats, Lot Line Adjustments, Condominiums
- ✓ Maintain historic document database back to 1853
 - Index current and historic documents to make them searchable
 - Documents available online back to 1920
 - Digitize historic documents, indexes, and fee books
- ✓ Assist customers with research both digitally and on microfilm
- ✓ Process marriage applications and issue marriage licenses

Property Recording Alert Service (PRAS)

- ❖ New free service to the public launched in September 2025
- ❖ PRAS provides automated email alerts when documents are recorded with the user's monitored name(s) and/or Assessor Parcel Number(s)

[Home](#) › [Your Government](#) › [Departments](#) › [Auditor](#) › [Recording](#) › Property Recording Alert Service (PRAS)

Property Recording Alert Service (PRAS)

The Whatcom County Auditor's Office is excited to announce the launch of the Property Recording Alert Service (PRAS). This free service is designed to enhance the monitoring of recording activity related to land records, offering residents greater transparency and insight into their property records.

PRAS provides automated email alerts to property owners when new documents are recorded under monitored names or 16-digit Assessor Parcel Numbers. Each alert includes a direct link to view the recorded document, making it easier than ever to stay informed.

Key features of PRAS:

- **Email notifications:** Receive alerts when documents are recorded and indexed with your monitored information.
- **Enhanced monitoring:** Improved tracking of names ensures greater accuracy in record monitoring.
- **Comprehensive data:** Users benefit from more detailed and concise data in each notification.

Sign up for PRAS here: <https://recording.whatcomcounty.us/PropertyRecordingAlertService>

Getting Started Helpful Hints - Gather the information you want to monitor:

- **Individual Names** - Enter at least a last name to monitor and it is recommended to monitor both last name and first name. You can monitor name variations and include middle names or initials as additional monitored names. The search fields are exact name matches.
Example Property Owner Name: Jonathan Anthony Doe
Examples of Name Variations to Monitor: Jonathan Anthony Doe, Jonathan Doe, John Doe, Jonathan A Doe, John A Doe, John Anthony Doe, J A Doe
- **Business Names** - Enter the name you want to monitor exactly as it will appear on the document. The search field is an exact name match.
- **16-digit Assessor Parcel Number** - This number is located on your deed, property tax statement, or on the Assessor's Website here: <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/177/Assessor>

Property Recording Alert System (PRAS)

You have requested to be notified of documents recorded in the Whatcom County Auditor's Office. The link to the recorded document(s) are listed below:

You are monitoring the name: **SMITH**

Document Number	2025-1200328
Recording Date	12/3/2025
Name Matched	SMITH, GUY D

If you no longer wish to receive these alerts, or you wish to modify the information you are monitoring, please log into your account [here](#).

Whatcom County Auditor - Recording Division
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 103
Bellingham WA 98225
phone: 360-778-5100, option 2
email: recording@co.whatcom.wa.us
web: www.whatcomcounty.us/auditor



PRAS Email contains monitored names and a link to view the document(s)

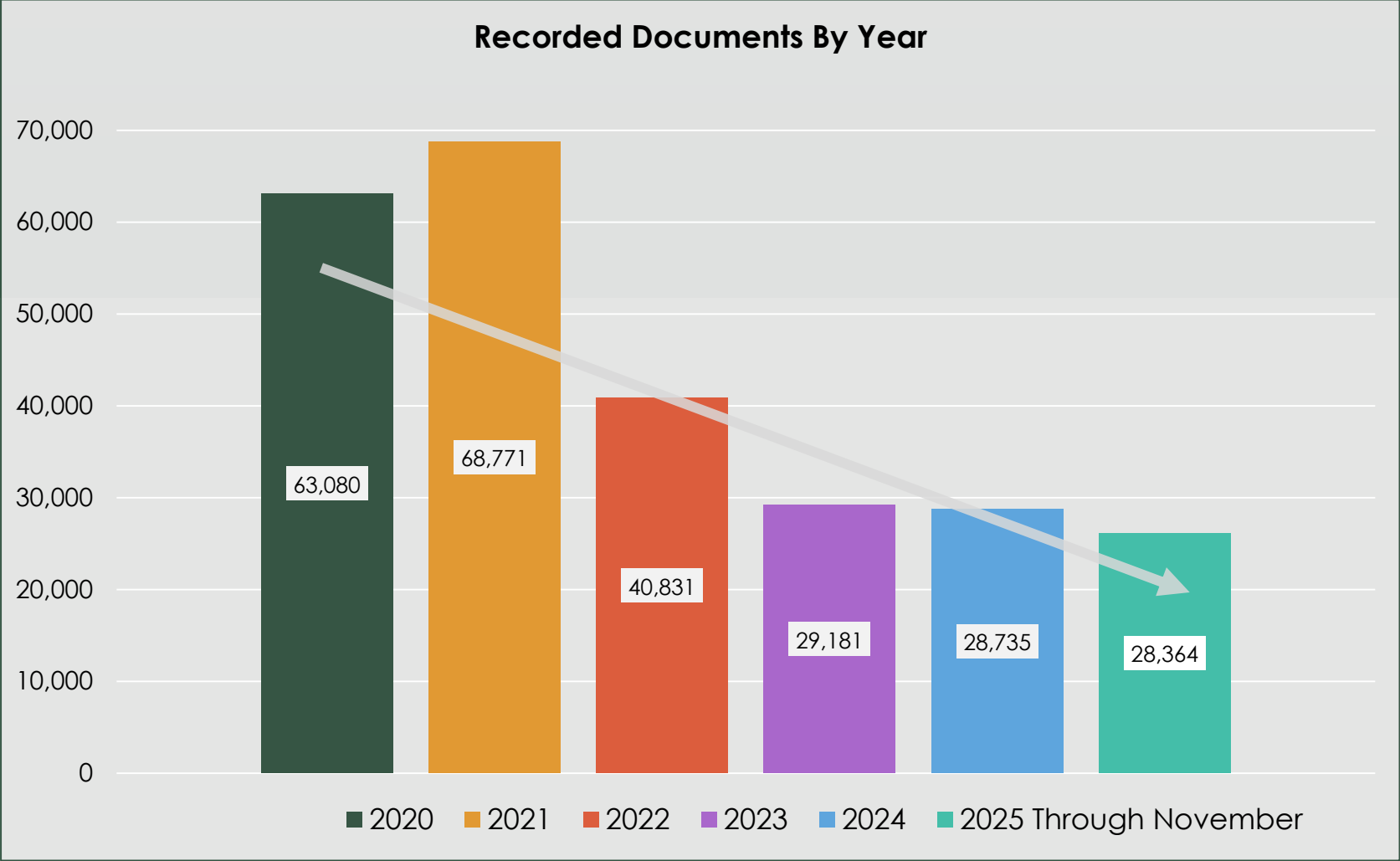
A link in the email opens the Digital Research Room to view the recorded document

The screenshot shows the "Digital Research Room" interface for Whatcom County, Washington. The header includes the county logo and name. The main content area displays "Document Details" for Auditor File Number 2025-1200328, recorded on 12/03/2025 at 09:17:02 AM. The document type is "Reconveyance" and the return to is "PNF-RECONVEYANCE, 200 HAWTHORNE AVE SE STE A-12, SALEM, OR 97301". A "View Image" button with a PDF icon is visible. Below the details, the "Parties" section lists the Grantor as "CHICAGO TITLE INSURANCE" and the Grantee as "SMITH, GUY D". The "Legal Descriptions" section is empty. A section titled "The following documents are referenced in this document" shows a reference to document 2019-1001083, a "Deed of Trust Recorded" on 10/8/2019 at 2:58:00 PM. At the bottom, a message states "There are no documents that have reference to this document" with "No References to display". Navigation buttons for "Back" and "New Search" are at the top and bottom right.

Recording Transactions

	2015	2020	2025 (through 11/30/25)
POA	757	545	275
LIEN	387	160	140
CPAG	169	141	113
JDGT	82	80	56

	Standard Recording Fee on January 1st
2015	\$72.00
2019	\$99.00
2020	\$103.50
2022	\$203.50
2024	\$303.50



The number of documents recorded is affected by home prices and mortgage rates.

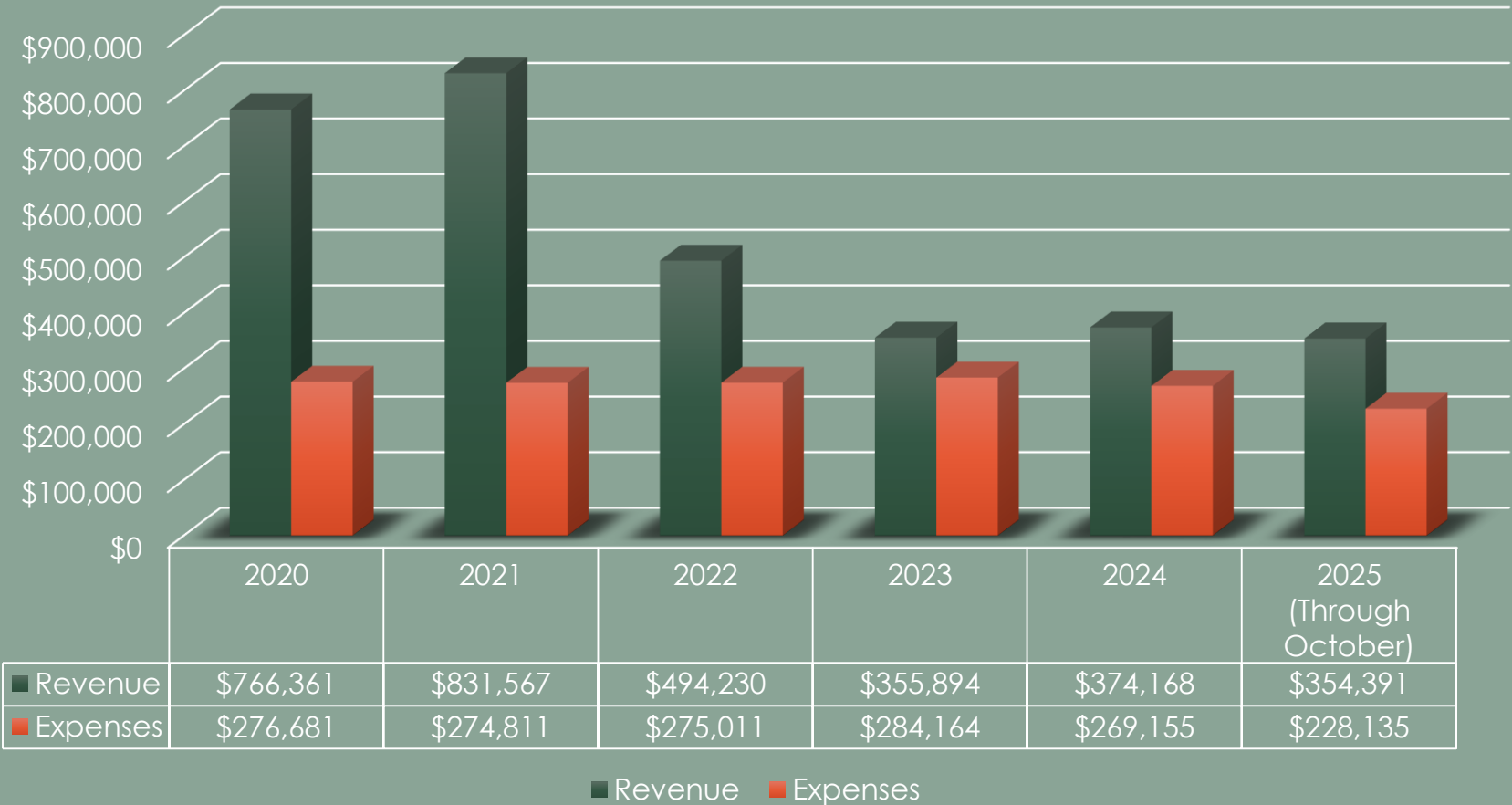
With higher home prices and higher interest rates, fewer people are refinancing or buying homes leading to fewer documents recorded overall.

Recording Revenue

Recording revenue comes from recording fees, copy and certified copy fees, subscription fees, and other minor fees.

In 2024, \$374,168 was collected for the General Fund.

2020 - 2025 Revenue and Expenses



Recording Fee Distribution

Recording fees support a variety of services and programs, at both the county level and state level.

Recording Fees Collected in 2024

- ❖ Total collected for Affordable and Homeless Housing \$6,159,576
 - \$1,236,463 for Whatcom County
 - \$4,923,113 for Washington State
- ❖ Total collected for Operations and Maintenance \$335,582
- ❖ Total Collected for Archives and Preservation \$171,574



Archives and Preservation	
Preservation Fund	\$2.00
For preservation of historical county documents.	
State Archives Fund	\$2.00
For archives and records management training, funding grant programs, and constructing a new regional archives facility.	
Commissioner's Preservation Fund	\$1.00
For local historical document preservation and programs.	
State Library-Archives Fund	\$6.00
To operate and maintain the state archives, state library, and capital museum.	
Affordable Housing	
Homeless Housing Assistance Fund	\$46.67
To fund local homeless housing services, programs, and grants in the county, cities and towns.	
Covenant Homeownership Fund	\$99.00
To reduce racial disparities in homeownership in the state by providing down payment and closing cost assistance.	
State Home Security Fund	\$99.00
Provides grants statewide for partial rental assistance, homeless shelters, youth shelters, and transitional housing.	
Low-Income Housing Assistance Fund	\$8.24
To provide affordable housing for very low-income households and emergency shelters in the county.	
State Landlord Mitigation Fund	\$3.29
To reimburse landlords for certain improvements, damages, unpaid rent and unpaid utilities across the state.	
State Affordable Housing Fund	\$23.97
To fund statewide low-income housing subsidy programs.	
Growth Management Planning Fund	\$2.50
To manage high density residential growth and environmental impacts in Washington state.	
Administration and Recording	
Recording Operations and Maintenance	\$4.83
For modernizing and improving the Recording Division's recording and indexing system.	
General Fund	\$5.00
For county administration and operations.	

Marriage Licensing

Marriage License Revenue to G.F.

2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 (Through Nov)
\$11,152	\$11,080	\$11,216	\$11,568	\$12,240

Core Services

- ✓ Issue, record and index marriage records
- ✓ Provide certified copies of marriage licenses
- ✓ Provide access to marriage records in Whatcom County dating back to 1854

Where does the marriage license fee go?

Auditor Fees	\$ 8.00
Prevention of Child Abuse	\$ 5.00
Displaced Homemaker	\$10.00
Certified Copy	\$ 3.00
Family Court	\$ 8.00
Family Services	\$15.00
Historical Preservation	\$ 1.00
Facility Surcharge	\$ 1.00
Grant/Attorney Gen	\$ 1.00
Historical Program	\$ 1.00
Document Preservation	\$ 2.00
Auditor O & M	\$ 2.00
State Library Operations	\$ 3.00
State Library-Archives Building	\$ 2.00
Domestic Violence Co-Responder	\$100.00
Total Application Fee	\$162.00

Substitute House Bill 1498

Effective July 27, 2025

This new law created a domestic violence co-responder program that Washington cities and counties can utilize when law enforcement responds to domestic violence calls.

The Auditor's Office has collected \$50,100 for this fund between July 27, 2025 and November 30, 2025.

Licensing Transactions 2020 - 2025

Yearly Transactions by Licensing Location						
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 (Through November)
Whatcom County Auditor	53,718	40,969	40,712	37,272	36,016	27,503
Valley Drug Licensing	20,743	20,170	20,030	20,834	22,091	21,005
Lynden Food Pavilion Licensing	34,085	32,700	32,980	32,332	33,591	30,958
Blaine IGA Licensing	18,056	16,881	17,649	17,912	17,739	15,804
Northwest Licensing	64,156	60,014	49,862	48,272	48,464	41,418
Auto Licensing of Ferndale	47,170	49,225	52,098	53,158	55,380	50,371
Auto Licensing of Bellingham	73,371	83,953	83,231	84,987	90,541	78,637
Total	311,299	303,912	296,562	294,767	303,822	265,696

Renewal Notices Changes

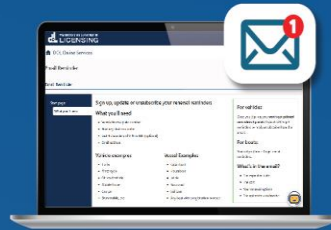
NEW OFFICIAL VEHICLE RENEWAL NOTICES



No more letters! You may receive a postcard or email.



You'll get your next tab reminder by email or postcard.



Don't want a postcard?
Sign up for email reminders!



Department of Licensing changed the format of renewal notices due to budget cuts.

Customers with an email address in the system now receive an electronic renewal notice and everyone else now receive a postcard reminder.

DOL and county auditors are monitoring the renewal rate with the change in notices.

Licensing Revenue 2021 - 2025

Increase of GF
dollars in 2026
of \$386,500



Licensing filing fees are set by RCW 46.17.005. Filing fee increasing 1/1/2026.

Currently - the auditor's office retains **\$4.50** for each registration and **\$5.50** for each title issued at a licensing office.

Starting January 2026 – the auditor's office will retain **\$6.00** for each registration and **\$6.50** for each title issued at a licensing office.

	Revenue from Auditor's Office	Revenue from Subagents	Quarterly Payments from DOL	Total Revenue to General Fund
2021	\$175,298	\$1,398,448	\$143,375	\$1,717,121
2022	\$175,587	\$1,293,812	\$145,504	\$1,614,903
2023	\$159,721	\$1,289,909	\$128,019	\$1,577,649
2024	\$155,994	\$1,342,926	\$136,045	\$1,634,965
2025 (Through Oct)	\$315,849	\$803,037	\$106,777 (received 3 of 4 quarterly payments)	\$1,225,663

\$0.50 of each filing fee is remitted to DOL and quarterly disbursed back to all counties equally to support licensing services provided by auditor's offices

Questions?

