

Washington State Elections Glossary

English - Spanish

Background Information

The Voting Rights Act requires certain jurisdictions to provide elections materials in other languages. As of 2017, in Washington State, Adams, Franklin and Yakima counties and the Office of the Secretary of State have to provide election information in Spanish. In the past, each jurisdiction translated its own material using their own glossaries and in most cases the translations were consistent between the counties. However, there were significant discrepancies between the counties in several key terms, for example, the word ballot was translated in three different ways.

As more counties have to translate election information into Spanish, the staff members of Yakima & Franklin counties, in conjunction with the Office of the Secretary of State, decided to create an Elections Glossary to be used by bilingual staff, contract translators, elections administrators and the public. King County Elections will also participate in this effort due to a local ordinance that resulted in adding Spanish as one of their additional languages.

Benefits of using the Election Glossary

The main purpose of the glossary is to establish consistency in all the different political jurisdictions of the state and from one election to another, in order to avoid language issues.

- o Create consistency throughout the counties and the state, election to election and year to year.
- o Counties won't have to create their own glossary.
- o Election administrators will have the confidence that the translation of key terminology has been translated by bilingual elections staff proficient in English and Spanish.
- o Translators not trained in elections will be able to translate election terminology accurately
- o Election administrators will be able to review the work done by contract translators, even if they don't speak Spanish.
- o It will help avoid voter confusion. For example, if neighboring counties are translating key words differently, or if a voter moves from one county to another.
- o Counties can easily share translated materials, help review materials, work together to solve tough translation questions making the process more efficient and effective.

Overall, the Election Glossary will help counties present and communicate elections information in Spanish accurately and clearly, and therefore the results will be better informed voters casting an educated ballot, as well as enfranchising more voters in our communities.

Development process for the Elections Glossary

Currently (as of April 2017), the glossary has more than 1,500 key elections terms. The glossary was originally developed by bilingual staff of Yakima, Franklin and OSOS, over 6 months. The process was very time consuming, but many interesting discussions were brought up about linguistics, culture and elections.

The first consideration was our target language. The glossary is translated into Spanish using Mexican terminology, since most of the Spanish speaking citizens in our state are from Mexico or of Mexican decent.

We then compiled different glossaries: U.S. Election Assistance Commission Glossary of Key Terminology 2007, Yakima County Glossary, Franklin County Glossary and L.A. County Glossary.

We revised each term and translated it using references from: Diccionario de la Real Academia Española, Instituto Federal Electoral de la Dirección Ejecutiva de Capacitación Electoral y Educación Cívica de México, Wordreference.com, Fundéu, Diccionario Panhispánico de Dudas de la Real Academia Española, Academia Norteamérica de la Lengua Española, and our own knowledge of the language and experience with translations.

How to use the Elections Glossary

The glossary is divided into five columns so it's compatible with the translation memory software Wordfast. The first column is the source language (English) and the second column is the target language (Spanish). The third column explains in more detail the translation and it also states if the translated term is required. The forth column differentiates the type of word, for example if it is an adjective, noun or verb. The subject of the fifth column is under discussion.

Gender

For the Spanish words that are determined by gender, the words are written in the masculine but an "a" has been added when applicable.

Capitalization

Capitalization of words in English and in Spanish is different as reflected in the glossary. For example, in Spanish you capitalize words after a period and for proper nouns, and you don't capitalize months, days and proper adjectives.

Accents

Accents in Spanish are very important and can change the meaning a word. Accents are included in the glossary when necessary.

Comments

Language is always evolving, and we need to make sure our glossary is constantly changing to reflect our society as well as our elections processes. Comments and suggestions are encouraged in an effort to improve the quality of our Elections Glossary.

Please contact elections@sos.wa.gov for comments or more information.