



Polling Place Basics

Mutual cooperation and respect for responsibilities = successful elections!

Poll Workers

There are several poll worker positions at polling places: judge of elections, majority inspector, minority inspector, clerks, and interpreters if your polling place has been designated a Section 203 polling place under the Voting Rights Act requiring that information be in English, Spanish and/or Chinese. The judge of elections, majority inspector, and minority inspectors are elected positions. Clerks and interpreters are appointed. The judge of elections is responsible for knowing the rules and ensuring the polling place operates smoothly and according to the law. The other poll workers do not make rules, they facilitate the voting process. The job of all of the poll workers is to operate the polling place in accordance with the law.

Poll workers verify the voter is on the list for that polling location, sign them in, provide them with a ballot (in those precincts where there are paper ballots), and direct them to the voting booth. They can only ask voters for ID when the poll book indicates that ID is required (see below for Voter ID requirements.)

The Judge of elections makes all decisions related to challenges to voter eligibility, provisional ballots, and other questions that arise in the polling place. (see Poll watcher for more detail on challenges to voter eligibility)

Voters

Voter Assistance:

[Voters](#) are allowed to have a helper to fill out the ballot if they want one. They need to have a [voter assist form](#) on file. There will be copies at the polling place to hand out to those needing assistance.

If a voter has difficulty using the materials provided to make ballot selections, review, or cast a ballot, they should let a poll worker know and ask for the help needed. Accessibility is the law.

Under federal law, voters who have difficulty reading or writing English may receive in-person assistance at the polls from the person of their choice. This person cannot be the voter's employer, an agent of the voter's employer, or an agent or officer of the voter's union.

If voters need to update their mailing address or personal information they can fill out the **affirmation form** noting the correct changes.

Voters are allowed to:

- Wear partisan clothing (poll workers are not).
- Voters are allowed to take a “selfie” *but are not allowed to photograph other people!* Please be courteous and fast if you decide to take a picture. Outside the polling place is best!!

Voter Identification:

Voter ID can only be requested from first time voters in that district (new voters or people at a new address). Otherwise, ID is **not** required. Valid forms of ID include both photo and non-photo including any government issued ID, a student ID or an employee ID, US passport or US Armed Forces ID. Any government non-photo ID that is issued, a utility bill with complete name and address, firearms permit, voter registration card, bank statement or paycheck.

Correct Polling location:

If a voter is not on the list, they should check their polling location. A poll worker should advise the person that they would be better off casting a vote at their correct polling location, to ensure their vote is cast in every race. **HOWEVER**, every person has the right to a provisional ballot. If a voter indicates they would prefer to cast a ballot at the present location or they will not vote if they are unable to vote at the current location, provide them with a provisional ballot.

Provisional Ballots:

Voters **are** entitled to a provisional ballot, even if they aren't in the poll book. **Do not deny** anyone the chance to vote. Let them vote with a provisional ballot –the elections office will determine their eligibility.

Surrendering a mail in ballot:

- Voters may bring their mail in or absentee ballots and surrender them to the polling place in exchange for a ballot to vote at the polling place. They must have all parts of the ballot, and the ballots must be surrendered.
- If they have requested a mail in or absentee ballot and do not have it to surrender, they must vote by a provisional ballot. **Again, people are always** allowed to vote by provisional ballot.

Voter rights:

- If the polls close while you're still in line, stay in line – you have the right to vote.
- If you make a mistake on your ballot, ask for a new one.
- If the machines are down at your polling place, ask for a paper ballot.
- If there are problems at your polling place-interference, intimidation, you can report it.

Voter Interference/Intimidation:

Voters are entitled to vote, free from interference inside and outside of the polling place. **It's illegal** to intimidate voters and a federal crime to “intimidate, threaten, [or] coerce ... any other person for the purpose of interfering with the right of [that] other person to vote or to vote as he may choose.” This includes harassment targeting non-English speakers and voters of color.

Examples of voter intimidation include, but are not limited to:

- Photographing or videotaping voters
- Disseminating false or misleading election information to voters
- Blocking the entrance to a polling place
- Confronting, hovering, or directly speaking to or questioning voters
- Any threatening behavior
- Asking voters for documentation

Spreading false information about voter requirements is prohibited.

- You do not need to speak English to vote, in any state.
- You do not need to pass a test to vote, in any state.
- Some states do not require voters to present photo identification.

[Report problems or intimidation to your local election officials.](#) Their offices are open on Election Day.



Poll Watchers

One certified [poll watcher](#) from a candidate or party is allowed inside the polling place but **cannot interfere with any part of the voting process**. They must have a certified approval letter with a raised seal from the county. The Judge of Elections must ask to see their certification letter before allowing them to stay inside the polling place. There should be a designated place for poll watchers.

They are allowed to check the poll books. Only one poll watcher may be present in the polling place at one time for each candidate at primaries or for each candidate, party, or political body during general, municipal or special elections.

Only when voters are not present in the polling place either voting or waiting to vote, the Judge of Elections shall allow poll watchers to inspect the voting checklist and the numbered lists of voters maintained by the County Board of Elections. Poll watchers may not mark upon or alter any official election records.

Watchers may make good faith challenges to an elector's identity, continued residence in the election district, or qualifications as an eligible voter. Poll watchers should direct good faith challenges directly to the Judge of Elections. The Judge of Elections has the obligation to determine if the challenge is based on actual evidence and whether there is a good faith basis to believe that the person is not or may not be a qualified elector. Challenges cannot be based on race, national origin, appearance, surname, language, religion or other characteristics not relevant to the qualifications to vote. The Judge of Elections must not permit routine or frivolous challenges that are not supported by a stated good faith basis and evidence that a person is or may not be eligible.

The elected officers of the precinct (Judge of Elections, Majority and Minority Inspectors) have the responsibility of determining the qualifications of the person presenting themselves to vote. In the event of disagreement, the Judge of Elections decides.

Voters may not be refused a ballot unless the election officers of the precinct are satisfied that the challenger has proven the voter's ineligibility on proper grounds and with sufficient evidence.

Poll watchers are also NOT allowed to engage in electioneering while inside the polling place or within 10 feet of the entrance to the polling place. Though watchers are representatives of candidates or political parties and political bodies, they are not entitled to electioneer on behalf of their candidate, political party, or political body while inside the polling place. Electioneering includes soliciting votes, posting or displaying written or printed campaign materials, and handing out pamphlets or other campaign paraphernalia.

After the voting is complete, poll watchers may remain in the polling place, but outside the enclosed space where ballots are being counted and voting machines are being canvassed.

Outside the polling place

Anyone handing out literature regarding candidates has to stay 10 feet away outside the polling entrance.

If you run into any problems or have questions on Election Day, call the Election Protection Hotline:

- English: 1-866-OUR-VOTE / 1-866-687-8683
- Spanish: 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA / 1-888-839-8682
- Arabic: 1-844-YALLA-US / 1-844-925-5287

- For Bengali, Cantonese, Hindi, Urdu, Korean, Mandarin, Tagalog, or Vietnamese:
1-888-274-8683

[Check your polling place here:](#)



Thank you for exercising your right to vote and making your voice heard. Together, we can make democracy work for everyone,