



# 5 TIPS

## for Educating Poll Watchers

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission has collaborated with local election officials to develop a series of helpful tips for election management. This series provides tips and suggests best practices to help you run efficient and effective elections.

By educating poll watchers and explaining your statutory and administrative processes, you increase the community's confidence in the integrity of your elections.



### 1 Begin Education Activities Early

Frequently review and update voter education material on your webpage for information that will be helpful to watchers.

Create a link to FAQ's on:

- Voter registration information and registration deadlines.
- Requirements for voter registration.
- State laws or rules on voter identification.
- Identification documents needed by voters.
- Absentee and early voting, vote centers and Election Day information.

### REMEMBER

Individuals watching the polls can be:

- Members of advocacy groups.
- Members of political parties.
- Candidate representatives.
- Election protection organizations that may represent non-partisan groups.
- International observers.
- Exit polling groups.
- Academics.

- Information on required credentials, distances required to stand away from poll workers or voters and, if watchers have a special location at the polls.
- Requirements for watchers assigned to a specific polling place or roving watchers.
- Any prohibitions on direct interaction with voters.

### REMEMBER

Make voting and election information available with a variety of tools including mobile friendly apps, minority language translations, and adaptive technology for the blind and hearing impaired.



Tip 1 continued

**Quick Clicks**

<http://www.in.gov/sos/elections/3953.htm>

<http://www.rockvillemd.gov/index.aspx?nid=971>

<http://www.votePINellas.com/?id=16>

<http://morriselections.org/candidates/challengers.asp>

<http://www.taylorelections.com/?id=73>

**2 Establish and Maintain Contact with Your Stakeholders**

Advise local political parties of your intent to make all aspects of your voter education program and poll worker training available to polling place watchers.

Reach out to candidates, poll watchers, election protection organizations and, if permitted in your jurisdiction, international observers, and provide:

- Names and addresses of all polling sites.
- Precinct and district maps.
- Poll official training dates.
- Voting system demonstration videos.
- Military and overseas ballot law information.
- Data on registration and turnout in previous elections.
- State laws or regulations on the use of video recorders or cellphones in the polling place.

- Brochures in candidate packets on how to request a recount, contesting an election and information on post-election audits.
- State laws on permitted and prohibited activities at the polls (which should also be provided to local law enforcement officials).
- Dates for conducting pre-election voting system certification and testing.

**REMEMBER** 

Explain the laws used to assist special situation voters, such as:

- Voters eligible for assistance at the polls and who may assist them.
- Assistive technology available at the polls for blind, hearing impaired or voters with other disabilities.
- The role of minority language translators at the polls.
- State laws or regulations on poll workers assisting voters.

**3 Must-Have Documents for Poll Watchers**

Contact candidates, election protection representatives and international observers well in advance of your training sessions and communicate the importance of their attendance. Provide the following:

- All poll worker training manuals and documents used at voting sites.

- Policies on the use of recording devices or cellphones in the polls.
- Brochures on the qualification and counting of provisional and absentee ballots.
- Copies of your state's voter intent laws or rules.
- Explanation of the procedures used for impoundment of ballots.
- Procedures used when documents or memory cards are inadvertently locked in a ballot box and must be retrieved.
- Central contact numbers for information on early voting, absentee vote counting and Election Day inquiries.
- Copies of state laws on recounts, contests and post-election audits.
- A copy of your disaster contingency plan, along with a list of emergency relocation polling sites.
- Procedures and costs for obtaining voter data.
- The rights and responsibilities of polling place monitors.
- Chain of custody procedures for ballots.

**Quick Clicks**

[http://www.ocvote.com/election-library/read/election Observation Handbook/index.html](http://www.ocvote.com/election-library/read/election%20Observation%20Handbook/index.html)

<http://www.ocvote.com/poll-worker-insights/october-december-2012/polling-place-observers>

<http://vote.sonoma-county.org/content.aspx?sid=1009&id=1188>

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## Tips to Help Poll Watchers

Contact your poll watching groups and request that one individual be the point of contact between your office and the organization. Designate a knowledgeable staff member to address questions from poll watchers during the day. Request and provide after hours telephone numbers.

In addition:

- If required collect the names and organizations permitted in the polls prior to the election, and provide these to poll workers and troubleshooters.
- Create an area in your office where poll watchers or candidates may observe activities, including delivery of returns from polls.
- Designate one knowledgeable person as a liaison with poll watchers for activities in your office after polls close.
- Permit poll watchers to observe voter lookup procedures used by staff, while protecting essential voter privacy data.
- Clearly explain the statutes and rules on qualification of absentee ballots and when challenges are permitted.
- Distribute a list of local law enforcement on call.
- Provide troubleshooters and local law enforcement with statutes and regulations on electronic recording devices in the polling places.
- Prepare a list of outstanding provisional ballots by precinct or vote center.

- Explain vote aggregation activities to poll watchers and what they are permitted to observe.
- Provide a copy of your state's Help America Vote Act Administrative Complaint procedure.

### REMEMBER



Provide the same information to election staff, poll workers, troubleshooters, local law enforcement, media, poll watchers and their candidates or representatives.

### Quick Clicks

<http://vote.minneapolismn.gov/judges/rules>

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## What to Do After the Election

Provide the following to poll watchers, representatives of organizations, candidates and political parties:

- Copies of applicable statutes and regulations for canvassing.
- Brochures on qualification and counting of provisional ballots, along with your state's voter intent law.
- Copies of your state recount laws.
- Chain of custody for ballots and security plans.
- Ballot reconciliation procedures for polling places, absentee voting or vote centers.
- Identification badges for every person permitted within the location where activities take place.

### REMEMBER



Prior to undertaking any activities:

- Inspect all viewing angles at the physical location to ensure voter privacy.
- Determine the need for audio or video recording devices used by your office.
- Prepare workflow diagrams and checklists including provisional ballot qualification and counting, staff canvassing activities and post-election audits of voting systems.
- Include diagrams for recounts.

- Guidelines or rules on poll watcher conduct that may not be covered by state regulation.
- Procedures for ballot duplication and hand tallying.
- A sign-in/out roster to document the presence of all individuals during post-election activities.
- A daily schedule including the time tasks will begin and end.
- A daily orientation and duplicate documents for poll watchers who may not be present for activities over several days.

### REMEMBER



Give advance notification of post-election activities to the following:

- Voting equipment vendors who may need to be present.
- Information technology staff.
- Law enforcement officials.
- Your jurisdiction's legal counsel.
- Building maintenance staff.
- Required judicial representatives.

