

Your Role and Responsibilities as a Poll Worker

Goal

The goal of this training is to provide you with some understanding of your role as a poll worker on Election Day. There are many procedures and rules that must be understood in order to do this job and this training will focus on how you can provide the most appropriate and effective service to voters in your community.

Overview

Thank you for your service and congratulations on your appointment! Being a poll worker is a difficult job, but we know you are up to the challenge. There are many procedures to understand and the rules for elections in Wisconsin are always changing, which makes your role even more difficult. We appreciate your dedication to serving voters and facilitating the democratic process here in Wisconsin. Here is some basic information about your position:

- Sworn election official who takes oath of office for a two-year term (except High School student election inspectors).
- As a poll worker you are required to receive training before serving in support of your first election.
- As a poll worker you are entitled to be compensated for your work and your employer is required to allow you leave on Election Day to work as a poll worker.
- You may be appointed from a party list but your job is to ensure voting goes smoothly on Election Day and all eligible voters can cast a ballot.

Your job is to facilitate democratic process, and not to act in the interest of a specific party when doing the following:

- The polling place must be set up to process voters by 7:00 am on Election Day.
- You should be ready to process voters when they arrive at the polling place.
- You can use cell phones, read books, crosswords, etc. when there is down time in the polling place, but you should use good judgement when doing so.

No electioneering at the polling place, which is defined as any activity intended to influence voter's ballot choices.

- Attire – no politically-themed attire or materials/clothing/buttons supporting a candidate, political party or ballot initiative.
- Conversation – no conversations about ballot candidates, political platforms of candidates, incumbency information or opinions on ballot initiatives such as referenda.

- Other political conversations: Avoid other political topics of conversation that could violate electioneering rules and make voters uncomfortable.
- Literature: polling places should not have any literature (signs, flyers, posters, newspapers, etc.) that could potentially influence voter's ballot choices. Those materials should be removed or covered up during voting hours.

Assistance to voters is appropriate and welcome in many situations.

- Assistance can be provided during all aspects of the voting process including helping a voter move around the polling place.
- All voters are eligible to use the accessible voting equipment and poll workers should make that option known to voters.
- All poll workers should be familiar with all voting equipment used at the polling place, including the accessible voting equipment.
- All voters are eligible to receive assistance, either from a poll worker or from anyone of their choosing (provided it is not their boss or labor union representative).
- Voter Registration – You can help with explaining and filling out the form to assist the voter.
- State Name and Address – If a voter cannot state their name and address at the poll book, a poll worker or assistant may state the name and address on the voter's behalf.
- Poll Book Signature – A voter may be exempted if voter cannot sign the poll book due to disability. A voter can sign using an 'X' if that is their regular signature or mark.
- Voting – A voter can be assisted with filling out the ballot or using the accessible voting equipment. The assistor must fill out the section on the ballot for assistor information to have that information recorded on the poll list.
- Poll workers may assist voters with placing a ballot in box or machine.
- Curbside voting is required to be offered at each Wisconsin polling place regardless of the presence and availability of accessible voting equipment

Treat all voters with respect and courtesy!

- Don't presume anything about a voter's eligibility or abilities based on their appearance.
- Many voters have disabilities that are not apparent at a quick glance.
- Others may appear to have certain/limited abilities but are able to participate independently or with limited assistance if required accessible voting equipment is available and proper assistance is provided.

- Flexibility is key when communicating with voters of varying abilities. Ask a voter about their needs and how they prefer to communicate!
- Use people first language. Use phrases like 'voter who uses a wheelchair' and 'voter with a hearing impediment'.
- The ability to understand the voting process and instructions in English is not required of voters. Many U.S. citizens speak a language other than English as their primary language. These voters are allowed to have an assistant interpret for them as they navigate the polling place and vote.
- Avoid commentary to voters or other election officials about voter's names, appearance, perceived qualifications, or perceived abilities.
- All voters should be treated the same and are subject to the same set of rules, even friends, family and neighbors.

The polling place should be welcoming to voters and observers, and the focus should be on the orderly processing of voters throughout Election Day.

- Observers are allowed in the polling place but must behave in accordance with the rules and should not cause a disturbance.
- Observers should remain in the observation area and should not interact with voters, unless the voter requests their assistance.
- Observers who cause a disturbance may be removed at the request of poll workers, particularly the Chief Inspector, if they are unwilling to leave when asked.

Polling place set up and management increases the ability for voters to participate without unnecessary assistance.

- The voting area should be set up to allow for good voter flow.
- Accessibility is essential, including good lighting in the voting area and on pathways both inside and outside the building.
- Use a checklist to ensure all standards being met and to review the polling place before the polls open to ensure space set up for good voter flow.
- Make sure all voting equipment is set up and functioning when polls open. Poll workers should be familiar with the equipment and able to answer voter questions about how they work.
- Periodically review the polling place to make sure nothing has changed during the day or any political literature is not available.
- Ensure that supplies such as pencil, paper, signature guides and page magnifiers are available for each election.

Documentation is important.

- Use the Inspector's Statement to document any incidents that occur on election day, especially incidents such as ballot jams on the voting machine that may impact the vote totals at the end of the night.
- These notes will help you reconcile at the end of the night and help the various Boards of Canvassers to recreate the events of Election Day when certifying election results.
- Actions such as using the override function on the voting equipment, remaining a ballot and asking an observer to leave the polling place are great examples of things that should be recorded on the log.
- When in doubt, write it down!