

INFORMATION ON POLLWATCHERS IN CHICAGO

The following provides general information on pollwatchers - observers in the polling place on election day. Qualifications and Responsibilities

A pollwatcher is a representative of a candidate, political party, civic organization or proposition who is legally in the polling place to observe the conduct of the election. All pollwatchers must be registered voters in Cook County.

A pollwatcher must surrender a signed credential to the judges of election upon entering a polling place. After a credential has been surrendered to the judges, a pollwatcher may enter and leave at will, without presenting an additional credential.

Precinct Captains, "checkers" (workers who check the poll list to determine who has voted), "watchers" (pollwatchers) and candidates must have a credential in order to remain in the polling place.

Number of Pollwatchers

In a primary election, pollwatchers permitted in each precinct, at a given time, are:

- Two (2) pollwatchers per candidate. If a candidate has two pollwatchers, one must be a registered voter in the ward in which he or she is pollwatching.
- One (1) pollwatcher per political party.
- One (1) pollwatcher per qualified civic organization
- One (1) pollwatcher for proponents and opponents to a proposition.

In a general election, pollwatchers permitted in each precinct, at a given time, are:

- Two (2) pollwatchers per candidate. If a candidate has two pollwatchers, one must be a registered voter in the ward in which he or she is pollwatching.
- Two (2) pollwatchers per political party. If a political party has two pollwatchers, one must be a registered voter in the ward in which he or she is pollwatching.
- One (1) pollwatcher per qualified civic organization
- One (1) pollwatcher for proponents and opponents to a proposition.

If, in the opinion of the judges, the polling place becomes too crowded with pollwatchers to permit the orderly conduct of the election, the judges may limit the number of pollwatchers in an objective manner.

A Pollwatcher Has The Right to:

1. Observe the conduct of the election in the precinct polling place, which includes the right to:
 - Hear and see the instructions given to each voter on the demonstration unit.
 - Visually compare the signature in the signature book with the signature on the voter's application for ballot. This includes standing behind the judges while the comparison is made.
 - Observe the judge make the proper marking in the signature book to indicate the voter has voted.

- Challenge any voter if he/she believes the voter is not qualified to vote in the precinct. The challenge is directed to the judges, not the voter, and the judges will determine whether the challenge is valid.
- Observe the judge initial and issue each ballot card and envelope.
- Observe the judge deposit the voted ballot in the ballot box.
- Inspect vacant voting stations to ensure the unit has not been tampered with or damaged.
- Observe the canvass of the vote. This includes observing the judges process ballot cards and envelopes, remove the ballot cards from the envelopes and feed official ballot cards into the PBC.
- Obtain a PBC "TOTALS" tape at the conclusion of the evening. At least four (4) PBC "TOTALS" tapes must be made available for pollwatchers.

2. Call ELECTION CENTRAL, 312-269-7870, if he/she believes the judges are not carrying out their duties properly.

A Pollwatcher May Not:

1. Remain in the polling place without surrendering a credential to the judges.
2. Instruct voters inside the polling place or within 100 feet to the door to the room serving as the polling place.
3. Electioneer inside the polling place.
4. Leaf through spindled applications for ballot, signature book or other official election materials.
5. Observe a voter receiving lawful assistance at a voting unit.
6. Touch or handle any election materials.
7. Be disorderly or disruptive of the voting process.
8. Continue protesting to the judges after the judges have ruled on a protest made by the pollwatcher.

Pollwatchers in the Office of the Board of Election Commissioners

In-person absentee voting is scheduled prior to each election in the office of the Board of Election Commissioners. Each candidate, political party and qualified civic organization is permitted one pollwatcher in the absentee voting area at any given time. Absentee ballots which are received by the Board before 7:00 p.m. on election day, but cannot be delivered to the precinct before the polls close, are counted in the Board's office. Pollwatchers are permitted to observe these counting procedures. For information on pollwatchers in the office of the Board, contact the Election Support Division, 312-269-7865.

Nursing Home Voting

Absentee voting in nursing homes is scheduled by the Board on the Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday prior to the election.

Pollwatchers during nursing home voting must meet the same requirements as pollwatchers on election day, but also must obtain a specially designated "Nursing Home" credential. The number of pollwatchers at a given time is the same as in the precinct polling place on election day.

Once a pollwatcher has surrendered a valid credential to the election judges, the pollwatcher may leave and reenter the nursing home during voting unless the action disrupts the conduct of voting.

A pollwatcher is allowed to be present in the nursing home during the conduct of voting and until its completion. A pollwatcher may accompany the judges into the voting area, but may not observe the ballot being marked or the ballot after marking nor may they listen to a voter direct the marking of the ballot.

When non-ambulatory voting (room-to-room) is occurring, the pollwatcher must remain outside the door of the room. The door must remain open to ensure the integrity of the election.

If the number of pollwatchers crowds the voting area and interferes with the conduct of the voting, the judges may reduce the pollwatchers to a reasonable number by drawing lots.

Watchers During Area Registration Days

Each candidate, established political party and qualified civic organization is entitled to one watcher at each registration site on Area Registration Days. Watchers are permitted to see the names and addresses of newly registered voters at the location and may copy the information as the registration is taken, if it does not interfere with the registration process.

How to File a Complaint with the Board of Election Commissioners

All persons including voters, pollwatchers and judges of election, have the right to file a complaint with the Board of Election Commissioners.

A complaint may be filed over the telephone, in writing or in person. On election day, all complaints will be directed to the Board's Election Central, 312-269-7870. At other times, the Board's Investigation Department will receive all complaints at any time when the Board's office is open to the public. The person filing a complaint has the right to discuss the complaint with the Legal and/or the Investigation Departments of the Board and to receive a written response regarding the outcome of the complaint (if a mailing address is provided at the time the complaint is filed).