

GUIDE FOR

POLL WATCHERS

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

MUNICIPAL CLERK'S OFFICE

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INTRODUCTION

The Municipal Clerk's Office has developed this handbook to familiarize poll watchers with relevant election laws and to define the responsibilities and limitations of a poll watcher.

The integrity of elections is a concern of all citizens. Although you as a poll watcher may represent a particular candidate, political party, or civic organization, your principal interest is in the conduct of a fair and honest election. This handbook is an overview intended to help you understand your basic responsibilities.

Before assuming your duties as a poll watcher, review this handbook to gain an understanding of the polling place activities. The right to vote is a cornerstone of our democracy. It should be the objective of the election officials and poll watchers together to protect this right of the voter.

If you have any questions regarding the election process, please contact the municipal clerk's office.

BECOMING A POLL WATCHER

Appointment

One or more persons may be appointed as a poll watcher for each polling location. Poll watchers are appointed by:

- A candidate.
- An organization or organized group that sponsor or oppose an initiative, referendum or recall.

Distribution of Poll Watcher Badges

Poll watchers will be required to present written proof showing they are an authorized poll watcher when reporting to a polling location. In addition, while at the polling location, poll watchers must identify that they are a poll watcher by wearing an identification badge with their name.

Candidates and groups sponsoring or opposing an initiative, referendum or recall may obtain poll watcher badges from the Municipal Clerk prior to election day. The poll watcher badge is used as the identification badge that the person writes his or her name and identifies them as a poll watcher on one side and on the other side, once completed and signed by the authorized person representing the candidate or organization, serves as the written proof.

Poll Watcher Training

The candidates and groups sponsoring or opposing a ballot measure are responsible for the training of all poll watchers under their authority on the proper conduct of poll watchers according to these guidelines and are responsible for the conduct of poll watchers.

Identification of Poll Watchers

To be valid, the poll watcher identification badge must indicate:

- The name of the poll watcher, listed on the front of the badge.
- The title “poll watcher”, listed on the front of the badge.
- The date of the election on the back of the badge.*
- The name of the candidate or organization the poll watcher is representing.*
- The signature of the authorized appointing person.*

Front of Badge:

<p style="text-align: center;">Poll Watcher</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">(Print Name Here)</p>

Back of Badge:

<p style="text-align: center;">20__ Election</p> <p>Name of recognized organization or organized group or candidate's name:</p> <hr/> <p>Election Date: _____</p> <p>Signature: _____ (Representative or Organization or Organized Group Representative or Candidate)</p>
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* = This information is listed on the back of the poll watcher identification badge. This cannot be exhibited to voters as this is electioneering. This side is only to be viewed by the election officials when arriving.

Without the proper identification badge, the poll watcher will be asked to leave the polling location.

PERSONS AUTHORIZED IN THE POLLING PLACE

Election Officials

In each precinct, election officials are appointed to conduct the election. One of the officials is appointed chairperson and is primarily responsible for the administration of the election in the precinct.

All election officials have equal authority. They conduct the election, administer the voting procedures, determine voter qualifications, and maintain the decorum of the polling place. By majority decision, the election officials determine the action required on any questions that arise during the election that cannot otherwise be answered by the precinct troubleshooter or the municipal clerk's office.

All persons present in the polling place or within 200 feet of any entrance to the polling place must obey the lawful orders of the election officials. **Only election officials may handle election supplies and materials.**

Poll Watchers

There can be only one poll watcher representing each organized group or candidate in the polling location at a time. Poll watchers must have proper identification. **Poll watchers have no duties in the conduct of the election.**

Candidates may serve as poll watchers; however, they must have proper poll watcher credentials to remain in the polling place.

Others

Other persons allowed to remain in the polling place are:

- Voters while voting.
- Municipal Clerk's Office representatives.
- Municipal Attorney's Office representatives.

PRIVILEGES AND CONDUCT OF POLL WATCHERS

Privileges and Conduct of Poll Watchers

Poll watchers shall produce their identification badges upon the request of the election officials and shall have their identification badges visible and attached to their person at all times. The election officials must ensure that the poll watcher has a complete view of the election process. The poll watcher may not sit in the area behind the election table where election officials are working or in between election officials handling precinct registers, and must remain a distance away from the voting machines and voting booths to ensure the privacy of the ballots. The poll watcher may be in close enough proximity to hear and record the name of a person who is voting.

It is important for each poll watcher to realize that election officials are honest, diligent citizens trying to do an important job that requires long hours of hard work. A poll watcher should establish a cooperative relationship with election officials to best facilitate the election process. A negative attitude by the poll watcher may create unnecessary stress.

Only one poll watcher for each party, candidate, or group may be present in the polling place at a time.

Poll Watcher Interference

Poll watchers shall not interfere with the election process and may not handle any election supplies or materials, including the precinct registers.

Poll watchers may not campaign or try to persuade voters to vote a certain way inside the polling location or within 200 feet of any entrance to the polling location.

A poll watcher who creates a public disturbance may be removed from the polling location.

THE POLL WATCHER'S ROLE

Before the Polls Open

Poll watchers may observe the set-up procedures and check that the ballot box is empty before the polls open. They may closely observe the election officials as official ballots are prepared for distribution.

During Voting Hours

Poll watchers may observe the general conduct of the election throughout the day.

When a voter enters the polling location, an election official will ask for their name and a piece of identification. **The ID requirement may be waived if an election official personally knows the voter, except when "Must Show ID" is printed in the signature block above the voter's name in the precinct register, and in this case the voter must present identification.**

If a voter does not have identification and is not personally known by an election official, the voter must vote a questioned ballot.

Before issuing ballots, the election official will ask voters to sign their name on the precinct register. Voters having difficulty signing their name may make a mark or an "X" in the signature space.

Poll watchers may not closely observe the signatures appearing on the precinct register. However, the poll watcher may sit close enough to hear the election official say the voter's name.

Campaigning

Campaigning is an act that is meant to persuade voters to vote in a particular way. **It is against the law for campaigning to take place within 200 feet of any entrance to a polling location.**

Campaigning includes the following:

- Discussion of an issue or candidate.
- Displaying a large campaign sign or vehicle bumper sticker.
- Wearing campaign buttons, pins, etc.
- Displaying marked sample ballots or election pamphlets.

A voter may bring along, for personal use, notes and reminders such as a premarked sample ballot or an official election pamphlet. A voter may take these items into a polling booth. Materials left behind should be disposed of immediately.

It is the duty of the election officials to prohibit campaigning. The election officials may not discuss any political party, candidate or issue while on duty. The election officials may not inform a voter or anyone else that a person is a candidate for a specific race.

Poll watchers may not campaign while on duty at a polling location as a poll watcher. Any type of campaigning observed by the poll watcher should be reported immediately to the election officials or the municipal clerk.

After Polls Close

Poll watchers may remain in the polling location until all procedures are completed.

In precincts where the optical scan or touch screen voting unit is used, the poll watcher may request the election officials to print an additional copy of the results tape for the poll watcher.

Observing Ballot Counting

In those precincts where hand marked ballots are used and the ballots are counted at the polling location, a poll watcher may observe the counting of the ballots.

PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO VOTERS

Providing Assistance

Voters who have difficulty because of a disability, who do not speak English, or who cannot read or write, may receive assistance when voting. This help may be provided by the election officials, or anyone who is NOT a candidate for office, the voter's employer, agent of the employer, or from the voter's union. (Section 208, Voting Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. 1973aa-6)

If a person other than an election official assists the voter, the person must take a verbal oath not to divulge how the voter voted.

The person providing assistance may accompany the voter into the voting booth.

The person providing assistance may read the ballot to the voter and may mark the voter's ballot. The person may complete any form for the voter except that the person **CANNOT SIGN** forms requiring the voter's signature.

Election officials may also assist a voter in inserting the ballot into the accu-vote scanner, even though this may temporarily expose how the voter voted.

Voter Instructions

It may be necessary for an election official to explain to the voter, in full view of everyone in the polling place, how to properly cast a ballot. To the extent possible, instructions to the voter are given by posting informative and pictorial signs in the polling place and in each voting booth.

Any instructions necessary should be given before the voter enters the voting booth.

QUESTIONING VOTER ELIGIBILITY

Questioning a Person's Right to Vote

A poll watcher may question a person attempting to vote if the poll watcher has good reason to suspect that the person is not qualified under Anchorage Municipal Code Title 28.

All questions regarding a person's voting qualifications must be made in writing stating the reason why the person has been questioned.

Reasons for questioning a voter under Anchorage Municipal Code Title 28:

- Voter is not a citizen of the United States.
- Voter is not 18 years of age or older.
- The voter is not a resident of Anchorage and of the district in which the person seeks to vote at least 30 days before election day.
- Voter is registered to vote in another jurisdiction.

Poll Watcher's Complaint

When a poll watcher observes an administrative error or irregularity by an election official, the poll watcher should courteously call it to the election official's attention. If the election official fails to correct the error or refuse to follow legal procedures, then the poll watcher should contact the Municipal Clerk's Office. Election officials may be removed from the polling location for misbehavior or neglect of duty.

Poll watchers should submit their complaint to the Municipal Clerk's Office in writing using the Poll Watcher's Complaint Form at the end of this handbook.

POLL WATCHER'S COMPLAINT FORM

Name of Poll Watcher _____

Representative of Party _____

Candidate _____

Organized Group _____

Voting Location: Precinct _____ Precinct Name _____

Nature of Complaint:

Disposition of complaint (if unresolved by election board):

Referred to Municipal Clerk

Referred to Municipal Attorney's Office

Name(s) of election officials:

Name, address, and phone number of witness (if any):

Name

Address

Phone Number

Poll Watcher's Signature