

Election Procedures

Please make sure you have a clipboard with paper or a note book, if you have a cell phone - bring it, possibly a camera. Write down the phone numbers of the local Board of Elections, phone number of the candidate or party you are poll watching for and the number of the NY lawyer's group that will do voter protection work (we will send you that number before election day.) Have a list/schedule of other poll watchers with their phone numbers. Try to stay until your replacement has arrived, but leave if you must.

Be friendly and non-confrontational. We are there to help, not hinder or cause trouble.

Before Election Day

Election Inspectors are recommended by the two major parties (D/R) and appointed by the Board of Elections. Four are assigned to each election district, two from each party. The four inspectors in each district elect a **chairman**, who is in charge of issues relating to the polling site and supplies.

***What to watch for or report:** Are you a registered Democrat or Republican and were turned down as election inspector for reasons other than that you applied too late for this year? Let us know the details.*

Before the polls open: Site Preparation

Normally the Election Inspectors arrive a half-hour before the polls open to get the site and the machines ready. Poll watchers are permitted to observe this procedure beginning 15 minutes before the polls are scheduled to be open, and are entitled to watch the unlocking of the voting machines.

***What to watch for or report:** you didn't get access 15 minutes before the polls opened **or** the polls didn't open on time*

Site must be readied: Supplies should be checked and the inventory in the election case or bag reviewed:

- The proper poll roster should have been provided by the BOE
- There should be an adequate number of
- Affidavit ballots and envelopes
- 'Notice to Voter' forms (for voters whose poll cards are missing)
- Emergency ballots
- Pencils for use by voters for write in votes

***What to watch for or report:** find out how many of these paper ballots are on hand and how many are used during the day.*

- Place machines to ensure access for disabled voters, while still maintaining appropriate distance from inspector & watchers tables. They need to have a 3' aisle for access
- When machine is not in use, the front of the machine should be visible to inspectors and poll watchers
- Ensure proper traffic flow and space for a line to form
- Sample ballot should be in waiting area for voter review

***What to watch for or report:** How many disabled vote during the day*

Unlock and verify that any emergency or other ballot boxes are empty, and allow any poll watchers to also verify this before the boxes are re-locked

- A US flag should be hung at entrance to mark the site
- There should be markers indicating the **100' limit** from the entrance
- No one is allowed to loiter within 100' of the entrance to the polling site, and the chairman or any inspector can direct them to leave
- Similarly, neither poll watchers nor voters should have any visible campaign materials or buttons while at the polling site; if anyone is, they should be asked to put it away.

Make sure you observe these rules. Don't give anybody reason to remove you from the polling place

Before the polls open: Personnel

Inspectors: There must be at least one **Republican** and one **Democrat** inspector on hand before the polls can be opened. If not, notify BOE - a 'civilian' of the appropriate party can be

substituted if someone is missing, but must be properly sworn in
Each inspector should have a name tag

Poll watchers: up to three can be appointed by any party committee with one or more candidates, but only one at a time can be within the guard rail. Each poll watcher must be a qualified voter of the city or county in which the she or he is to serve. Poll watchers are entitled to:

- o Be present at the polls from 15 minutes before opening until the Inspector's Report is signed and the results are called out, after the polls are closed.
- o They should be provided with a table separate from the inspector's table
- o They must bring appropriate certificates, issued by the party they represent, which are presented to the inspectors.
- o The certificates remain with inspectors and are turned in to the BOE when the polls close
- o They are allowed to challenge voters, but are not permitted to otherwise interfere with the election process, the inspectors, or voters
- o If an inspector believes that a poll watcher is disturbing voters or the election process, the BOE should be contacted and a Commissioner should determine how to resolve the problem.

Make sure you have a poll watcher certificate signed by the party or candidate you are watching for with you.

Translators: In any district with a total Hispanic population of 5% or more, there must be a translator assigned to assist voters. The translator must be fluent in written and oral Spanish and English, and must be present the entire time that the polls are open.

What to watch for or report: there is no translator present

Before the polls open: Machine Preparation

Poll watchers are entitled to watch the unlocking of the voting machines.

The following instructions are for Lever machines. Normally, four people would be involved in opening the machine to ready it for voting. Two people, one from each party, will be involved in reading the instructions from the booklet for the machine - one reads aloud and one verifies this is being done correctly. A third person will use the keys to open the machine and the fourth person, from the opposite party, will verify that this is being done correctly.

The opening of the machine should proceed as follows:

- All the Inspectors must check the sealed envelope that comes with the voting machine to see that the information on the outside of that envelope matches:
 1. the election district number and location of polling place
 2. the number on machine's outside seal
 3. the number on the protective counter of the machine
 4. *If any of this information does not match, then no one can use the voting machine until the BOE resolves the situation.*
- If the information all matches, then the front door is unlocked and the machine opened, the curtains installed, and the light plugged in
- The face of the machine should be inspected to ensure the ballot matches the facsimile ballot
- The rear doors of the machine are unlocked and all the numbers on the back of the machine are checked to **ensure they are all at zero**. If there are any numbers registered on the machine, they should be recorded on the canvass sheet and deducted from the totals at night's end.
- The paper roll and sticker should be checked to ensure it is dated and signed. **If there is no sticker or other mark, then a line should be drawn all the way across and two inspectors should sign and date that line.**
- Then rear door(s) should be closed and locked.
- The statement of canvass should be filled out with the protective number, machine number, and public number, and all inspectors sign this.
- The lock on the machine must be turned to the 'up' position to unlock the machine.
 - After the seal is cut and broken, the machine is ready to use.

What to watch for or report: Voting begins even though some of the numbers above do not match

Polls Open: Voting

Poll watchers are entitled to challenge any voter they believe is not properly qualified to vote before that person votes. A challenge can be based on. *(however, this is not why we are poll watching. Unless you see one person vote more than once, don't get involved in this.)*

Signature does not match the one on the registration

Someone using that name already has voted

Challenger believes the person does not live at the registered address

Two inspectors from opposite parties should handle the registration poll register. These jobs can rotate during the day. The procedure is as follows:

- o Voter is asked for name and residence address.
- o The name and address should be repeated to ensure accuracy, and the registration poll record should be located in the printed poll roster.
- o Voters who are listed at a different address but within the same election district may use the machine to vote
- o If the voter is not on the poll roster, check to see if the address is within the district and if not, the voter should be referred to the proper polling site.
- o If the voter is not on the poll roster but the address is within the district, they should be offered an affidavit ballot so they can vote. The BOE will determine later if the vote counts.
- o If the voter wishes to contest the decision that they vote by affidavit ballot, they need to apply to the County Court for a court order to permit them to vote in the standard manner.
- o The voter has to sign the roster within the proper square, and the signature should be compared to the pre-printed one.
- o Any inspector who believes the signatures do not match can challenge the voter. In that case, all the inspectors vote on the challenge. Tie votes are resolved in favor of allowing the voter to cast a ballot.
- o If signatures match, the machine's public counter is entered along with the initials of the person entering it, and the voter is ready to vote.
- o If the voter needs assistance, he or she can so state under oath and may request help from the Election Inspectors. A voter can get such help if the voter cannot read or write, does not speak English, cannot see the ballot, or is physically disabled in a way that prevents them from voting on the equipment provided, included not being able to use the write in procedures. The voter can either bring someone to assist them, or one inspector from each party will enter the booth with the voter and provide assistance. The name and address of both the voter and the person or people providing assistance must be entered in the Challenge Report.

NOTE: *Even if a person has requested an Absentee Ballot, they are entitled to vote if they appear at the polling place. However, the Election Inspectors must report the name, address, and registration number to the BOE so any absentee ballot that was mailed in can be pulled before it is tallied.*

NOTE: *If there is a problem with the machine at any time, the inspectors should call the BOE and voters should vote using emergency ballots until the problem is resolved.*

NOTE: *If the Election Inspectors are unable to maintain order during the election, then the police or sheriff department are required to respond to their request to restore order.*

Closing the Polls

No one is allowed to enter the line to vote after 9:00 PM. At 9:00 PM, this is announced and the polling site doors are closed. One Inspector should go to the end of the line to ensure no one else gets into line. After the last person has voted, everyone who is not entitled to stay after the polls are closed must leave.

Closing the Machine

1. The machine is locked by using the key to turn the lock to the down position.
2. The seal from the election bag is also inserted to prevent further voting.
3. The front of the machine is secured, the light unplugged, curtains unsnapped, and the front doors are folded and locked.
4. The protective number, the seal number, the public number, and the machine number are entered on the statement of canvass.

Canvassing the Vote - poll watchers are entitled to observe the canvass of the vote

1. The back of the machine is unlocked so that the vote counters can be read.
2. The chairman reads the numbers on the counters aloud, with a member of the opposite party observing.
3. One person records the numbers on the canvass sheet with a member of the opposite party checking.
4. Write in votes: If the seal on the paper roll is still visible, no write in votes have been cast. If the seal is not visible, then paper roll votes have been cast and the paper must be removed so they can be registered.
Note that a write in vote does not count if the person whose name was written in appears on the ballot for the same office.
5. After counters have been checked and any write in votes properly recorded, the back doors are locked again.
6. Any paper ballots that were used, except affidavit ballots, are also included in the canvass. Affidavit ballots are never opened and counted at the polling site.

Completing the Paperwork

The results of the canvass are entered on the Statement of Canvass form and any papers used in tallying the votes, including any printed record produced by the voting machine, is attached.

All inspectors must sign the canvass sheet

The Challenge Report is completed. The names, addresses and registration numbers of certain voters must be included in the proper sections of the Challenge Report. These include:

- voters whose name changed since they last voted or registered;
- voters who were challenged;
- voters who were assisted;
- people who provided assistance to voters who needed that assistance; and
- people who voted by affidavit ballot or pursuant to court order

The chairman calls in the results to the BOE.