

# New York

## State Statute(s) on Poll Tapes

### POLL TAPES

§ 9-102. Canvass; general provisions for. 1. As soon as the polls of the election are closed, the inspectors of election thereat shall, in the order set forth herein: (a) place an inspector at the ballot scanner to prevent further voting; (b) reconcile the paper ballots pursuant to section 9-106 of this title; (c) remove surplus ballots, if any, pursuant to section 9-108 of this title; (d) scan the ballots contained in the emergency box or other secure storage container pursuant to section 9-110 of this title; (e) hand count and secure ballots that cannot be scanned pursuant to section 9-110 of this title; (f) initiate the ballot scanner, close the poll mechanism, print the tabulated results tape, and post the results tape or announce its contents or both; (g) remove one of the portable memory devices from the ballot scanner for the purpose of reporting the unofficial tally of election results pursuant to section 9-126 of this title; (h) post or announce the results of any hand counts and sign the return of canvass pursuant to subdivisions 2 and 3 of this section; (i) close, lock and seal the machine; and (j) sign the close of poll certificate, as provided by the board of elections. 2. (a) The inspectors shall canvass the ballot scanner tabulated results by printing the results tape in the presence of the watchers and all other persons who may be lawfully within the polling place, giving full view of the tabulated results tape numbers. An inspector shall, under the scrutiny of an inspector of a different political party, either post the results tape or read and announce in the order of the offices as their titles are arranged on the tabulated results tape, in distinct tones the public office or party position, candidate name, political party and the results as shown on the tabulated results tape and then shall announce the number of write-in votes recorded for each office. The inspectors shall also in the same manner post or announce the results for each ballot proposal. (b) The results on the tabulated results tape shall be entered on or the tabulated results tape (representing the aggregate results of votes cast on the ballot scanner or the results by election district as applicable) shall be affixed to the return of canvass for that ballot scanner or election district pursuant to section 9-120 of this title by an inspector under the scrutiny of an inspector of a different political party, in the space indicated. If any election day paper ballots were hand counted pursuant to this section and subdivision two of section 9-110 of this title, an inspector shall, under the scrutiny of an inspector of a different political party, either post or read and announce the results of such hand count. The tally sheet of any such hand counting shall be signed by the inspectors conducting same and affixed to or recorded on the return of canvass. The return of canvass and tabulated results tape shall be signed by two inspectors of each major political party. (c) The results tape shall include a certificate which the inspectors shall sign, stating the number of voters as shown on the public counter and the number on the protective counter. (d) If the machine is provided with a removable electronic or computerized device which records the total of the votes cast on such machine ( for purposes of this section a "portable memory device"), such device shall be removed from the machine after copies of the results tape, sufficient to meet the requirements of this chapter and the regulations of the board of elections, have been produced. After the portable memory device is removed from the machine, the inspectors shall place such device in the secure envelope or other secure container provided for its return to the board of elections. Such secure container shall be signed by the inspectors upon the securing of the device therein. 3. (a) During the canvass time any candidate or duly accredited watcher who may desire to be present shall be admitted to the polling place. During the proclamation of the result, ample opportunity shall be given to any person lawfully present to compare the results so posted or announced with the sum of the votes appearing on the tabulated results tape and any hand counted election day ballots, if any, and any necessary

corrections shall then and there be made on the return of canvass by the inspectors. Thereafter, the voting machine shall be closed and locked. **The first copy of the results tape for each voting machine should be posted on the wall of the polling place forthwith; provided, however, that if only one copy of such results tape can be printed by any such machine at any election, such copy shall be used in preparation of the returns of canvass required by this title.** (b) Election day paper ballots that have not been scanned shall be canvassed and tallied pursuant to this section and sections 9-108 and 9-110 of this title. (c) At a primary election, the ballots of the parties represented on the board of inspectors shall be canvassed before the ballots of other parties are canvassed. 4. All types of ballots, enclosed in properly sealed envelopes respectively, and properly endorsed shall be filed with the original return of canvass, as provided for in section 9-106 of this title. 5. The inspector or other courier assigned by the board filing the returns shall deliver to the board or officer from whom received, the keys of the voting machine, enclosed in a sealed envelope having indorsed thereon a certificate of the inspectors stating the number of the machine, the election district(s), ward(s) or assembly district(s) where it has been used, the number on the seal and the number on the protective counter. In the city of New York, police officers or peace officers designated by the police commissioner of such city shall provide such delivery of the devices. 6. The room in which such canvass is made shall be clearly lighted, ingress and egress through the main entrance thereto shall be freely permitted, and such canvass shall be made in plain view of those entitled to be present. The ballots shall at all times be kept on top of the table and in plain view of all persons entitled to examine them, until they have been re-packaged and sealed for return to the board of elections as elsewhere provided. If requested by any person entitled to be present the inspectors shall, during the canvass of any ballots, exhibit to him or her the ballot then being canvassed, fully opened and in such a condition that he or she may fully and carefully read and examine it, but no inspector shall allow any ballot to be taken from his or her hand or to be touched by any person but an inspector.

## **CERTIFICATE USUALLY NEEDED**

Because poll tapes are often posted or read in a restricted area "within the guard rail" it is usually necessary to get a certificate to access them. The certificate is from a political party (in the general election) or a candidate or political party (in the primary election).

§ 8-500. Watchers; provision for. 1. At any general, special, town or village election, any party committee, any independent body whose candidates are upon the ballot, and any political committee supporting or opposing a ballot proposal may have for each election district three watchers at any one time, not more than one of whom may be within the guard rail at any one time. Watchers shall be appointed by the chair or other officer of any such party committee, independent body or political committee. 2. At any primary election, any party committee and any candidate on the ballot may have for each election district three watchers at any one time, not more than one of whom may be within the guard rail at any one time. Watchers shall be appointed by the chair or other officer of any such party committee or by any candidate. 3. Watchers may be present at the polling place at least fifteen minutes before the unlocking and examination of any voting machine or ballot box at the opening of the polls, until after the signing of the inspectors' returns and proclamation of the result. 4. The appointment of watchers for any election shall be by a certificate in writing issued by the appointing authority. Such certificate shall be delivered to an inspector at the election district. 5. Each watcher must be a qualified voter of the city or county in which he or she is to serve. No person shall be appointed or act as a watcher who is a candidate for any public office to be voted for by the voters of the election district in the same election in which the watcher is to serve. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed as prohibiting any such candidate from visiting a polling place in such district on an election day while the polls are open.

## COUNTY PRACTICES VARY

Poll tape practices in New York vary by county. If you want to photograph or video the poll tapes, get a certificate and alert the inspector before the tapes are printed that you want to do that. Request that they print an extra copy before they close the machine. If they will not, let them know that you would like to photograph or video the tape.

## NEW YORK CITY

Be aware that some counties have additional restrictions. In New York City there is a prohibition against taking photographs in polling locations, which sometimes prevents the poll tapes from being photographed, even after the close of polls. It is up to the inspector at that location.

In an email to SMART Elections, the New York State Board of Elections said:

Candidates and watchers have a right to attend the canvass. Media representatives or others can be admitted to the canvass with the permission of the local boards of elections. There is nothing in state law that would prohibit taking a photograph of a results tape posted on the wall, but you should check with the local board of elections as to any rules they may have in relation to poll sites and/or canvassing. If you have any additional questions, please let me know. Sincerely yours, J.Conklin Director of Public Information Records Access Officer  
NYS Board of Elections 40 North Pearl Street, 5th Floor Albany, NY 12207-2109 518-474-1953  
John.Conklin@elections.ny.gov

## WESTCHESTER COUNTY

A volunteer speaking with the Westchester Board of Elections sent this email to SMART Elections:

"In Westchester the poll tapes (the printout from each machine at a polling place) are read out orally and immediately put in a sealed bag to be sent to the WBOE, so they cannot be posted at the polling place.

This clerk had never heard of representatives from campaigns, certified or not, being allowed to image the tapes."

Remember: The law says, "The first copy of the results tape for each voting machine should be posted on the wall of the polling place..."