

Poll Watcher

Training Manual



May 2021

Poll Watchers

- An independent or nonpartisan candidate, political party or political body may designate someone to go to a polling place or early voting location and observe. This person is known as a poll watcher.
- A poll watcher may be permitted behind the enclosed space for the purpose of observing the conduct of the election and the counting and recording of votes.
- Candidates on the primary, election, or runoff ballot are ineligible to serve as a poll watcher.
- No person shall be eligible to serve as a poll watcher unless he or she has completed training provided by the political party, political body, or candidate designating the poll watcher.
- The Election Superintendent must furnish a badge to each poll watcher. The poll watcher shall wear the badge at all times while serving as a poll watcher.

Primary

- **Candidate** may submit 1 name per precinct in which his or her name appears on the ballot to the Party Executive Committee 21 days prior to the primary.
- **Party Executive Committee** shall designate, at least 7 days prior to the primary, no more than 2 poll watchers for each precinct.
- At least three days prior to the primary, the Party Executive Committee shall deliver an official poll watcher letter to the elections superintendent of the county or municipality in which the poll watcher is to serve.
- The letter should include:
 - Name of official poll watcher
 - Address of the poll watcher
 - The precinct in which he or she shall serve.
 - Name and date of primary
- Same rules for advance voting in a primary.

Primary Runoff

- **Candidate** may submit 1 name per precinct in which his or her name appears on the ballot to the Party Executive Committee 14 days prior to the primary runoff.
- **Party Executive Committee** shall designate, at least 7 days prior to the primary runoff, no more than 2 poll watchers for each precinct.
- At least three days prior to the primary, the Party Executive Committee shall deliver an official poll watcher letter to the elections superintendent of the county or municipality in which the poll watcher is to serve.
- The letter should include:
 - Name of official poll watcher
 - Address of the poll watcher
 - The precinct in which he or she shall serve.
 - Name and date of primary
- Same rules for advance voting in a primary runoff.

Election or Runoff

- Each **Political Party or Political Body** may designate, at least 7 days prior to the election or runoff, no more than 2 poll watchers in each precinct.
- Each **Independent** candidate may designate 1 poll watcher in each precinct.
- Candidates in a **Nonpartisan** election may designate 1 poll watcher in each precinct.
- At least three days prior to the primary, the Party Executive Committee, Independent candidate, or Nonpartisan candidate shall deliver an official poll watcher letter to the elections superintendent of the county or municipality in which the poll watcher is to serve.
- The letter must include:
 - Name of official poll watcher
 - Address of the poll watcher

- The precinct in which he or she shall serve.
- Name and date of election or runoff
- Same rules for advance voting in an election or runoff.

Statewide Poll Watchers

- Each **Political Party or Political Body**, which body is registered and has nominated a candidate for statewide office may designate, at least 14 days prior to election or runoff, no more than 25 statewide poll watchers.
- Each **Independent** candidate may designate no more than 25 statewide poll watchers.
- Each **Nonpartisan** candidate running in a statewide election may designate no more than 25 statewide poll watchers.
- No more than 2 statewide poll watchers of a political party or body, of an independent candidate, or of a nonpartisan candidate shall be in the same polling place simultaneously.
- Each state-wide poll watcher shall be given a letter signed by the chairperson of the State Election Board. The letter must include:
 - Name of official statewide poll watcher
 - Address of the poll watcher
 - A statement that such poll watcher is a statewide poll watcher.
 - Name and date of election or runoff
- At least three days prior to the primary, a copy of the letter must be delivered to the superintendent of each county in which the poll watcher might serve.
- Same rules for advance voting in an election or runoff.

Tabulation Center

- In counties or municipalities using voting systems or optical scanning voting systems, Poll Watchers can serve in the locations designated by the superintendent within the tabulating center.

- Each **Political Party** may have 2 poll watchers in each primary or election.
- Each **Political Body** may have 2 poll watchers in each election.
- Each **Independent** may have 1 poll watcher in each election.
- Each **Nonpartisan** may have 1 poll watcher in each nonpartisan election.
- Designated locations shall include the check-in area, the computer room, the duplication area, and such other areas as the superintendent may deem necessary to the assurance of fair and honest procedures in the tabulating center.

Poll Watcher Conduct & Prohibitions

The poll watcher should not interfere with or impede the conduct of any election, and the poll manager may make reasonable regulations to avoid such interference.

- Poll Watchers are prohibited from:
 - Talking to voters
 - Checking electors lists
 - Using photographic or other electronic monitoring or recording devices
 - Using cellular telephones
 - Participating in any form of campaigning while they are behind the enclosed space.
- If a poll watcher persists in interfering with the conduct of the election or in violating any of the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 21-2-408 after being duly warned by the poll manager or superintendent, he or she may be removed by such official.
- Any infraction or irregularities observed by poll watchers shall be reported directly to the superintendent, not to the poll manager.

Things to Remember

- The Election Superintendent and the poll officers are the sole authority in the polling place on Election Day. No other person may handle or touch election supplies and

materials. Poll watchers are intended to observe the conduct of the election and their prime concern is the integrity and fairness of the election.

- **Poll watchers are official observers only.**
 - They may observe the conduct of the election before, during and after the polls close. All poll watchers must be approved and listed.
- **Poll watchers must wear their name badge at all times and bring designation letter.**
 - A poll watcher should show their letter designating him or her a poll watcher to the poll manager of the precinct when entering the polling location.
- **Poll watchers may not wear anything advertising a candidacy or advocating for or against an issue.**
 - Electioneering or any kind of campaigning must not take place in the polling place or within 150 feet of the entrance of the polling place during voting hours.