

As a ‘Poll Watcher’ you will be the eyes and ears, for all voters, to ensure that the election you are observing is being carried out properly. Remember that you are not a “cop”. You are a guest at the polling place so remember to conduct yourself as a guest. If you come off as being argumentative, rude, or unfriendly you are not going to get much information and may be asked to leave the area, especially if the polls are in someone’s home.

If you see something that you question, notify an election official or poll worker. Don’t make a scene if they disagree with you. Just write yourself a note and move on.

Remember, the poll workers are either unpaid volunteers or low paid workers who are doing this as a public service. They have been through some training but the quality of that training may be questionable. Most are elderly citizens, though there are more state and local government officials who are hiring High School and College students for the day. These workers may not have the answers to all of your questions. They are also very busy on Election Day and may not have time to answer all of your questions. Pick your times to ask questions or write them down and ask the County Elections Staff the next day.

What is needed before the polls open?

1) *Get familiar with any local or state election laws that cover poll watchers. What can you do and what can't you do.*

Every state has different election laws, some more different than others. It is important to discover what those laws are, especially in how they pertain to you as a Poll Watcher.

2) *Contact your county election office and request to be notified when any Logic & Accuracy tests are accomplished on all voting equipment.*

L&A Testing is supposed to be transparent. Anyone should be able to witness those tests being conducted. Call your local election officials and ask to be added to the list of witnesses for all testing of voting equipment. Let them know you are interested. This should also open the doors to a working relationship with those officials.

What is needed at the polls and what to look for?

1) *Notebook and pen*

Have a means to keep notes. If you see something that you think might be important, write it down and note the time, place and who was involved.

2) *Comfortable shoes*

You may be standing most of the time. Don’t expect the poll workers to provide for your comfort.

3) *Have someone you can partner with if even for a short time.*

This will allow you to take breaks and get something to eat. You can split the time with someone; or, do a majority of the time with only short breaks for the day. Remember that this is a 12 to 14 hour day, at least.

4) *Look for any connections to the voting equipment that might be a connection to the Internet or Network.* Walk around and inspect the machines. Note any connections to anything other than the electrical. Look for something that might be an antenna for wireless. You probably won’t be able to actually touch the machines so do an inspection early, preferably before the polls open.

Be open when doing this so the poll workers don’t suspect you of doing anything untoward with the machines.

5) *Before the polls open how long has the equipment been sitting around? How are the machines sealed, i.e. locks, plastic seals?*

6) *Look for persons with laptops or cell phones in the area. Get names and affiliations of anyone other than Poll Workers who are working in the area.*

Is there someone in the polling place who is not a poll worker? They probably have some ID Badge but it would probably be different from identification worn by poll workers. Attempt to find out who these people are. Get their affiliation. If they are from the election machine vendors, which is a good chance, find out who they are. Watch to see if they spend a lot of time on laptops or cell phones. If they approach the voting machines and do anything, ask what they are doing. You might not get an answer but ask anyway. Note what you see and hear in your notebook.

7) *What testing is conducted on the equipment before the polls open and after the polls close.*

Do they run test functions on the equipment? Try to find out the results of those tests. Be observant, especially if a vendor representative appears to run any code on the machines. Ask and make notes of what is being done and how it is being carried out.

What is needed after the polls close?

1) *Watch for 'chain-of-custody' of ballots and/or storage devices from the machines. Only poll workers should handle any of these; not vendor representatives.*

Remember, the vendor representatives are NOT legally able to handle the storage devices at the end of the day unless under the supervision of an election official. This breaks the chain-of-custody. Question this if it is happening. Who handles the ballots and/or storage devices? How are they being handled? Do they go into a lockable box for transport? Are the storage devices loaded into another machine and sent electronically to the central elections office?

2) *How is the equipment handled when it is being broken down?*

Is the equipment just thrown into boxes for transport? Do you see anything in the polling place that is being dismantled that you didn't see previously? Is any testing done on the voting machines after the polls close?

3) *If you can get to the counting area, how is the count done? Who is in the area? Who has had access to the area besides poll workers? What tests are done on the counting equipment before counting?*

4) *Look for anomalies.*

If anything looks out of place, it probably is out of place. Make notes of these.

Poll Watchers Handbook



Brought to you by:
VerifiedVoting.org