

REMEMBER.....

Pollwatchers are official observers only. They may observe the conduct of the election before, during, and after the polls close. All pollwatchers must present valid credentials upon entering the polling place.

The judges of elections are the sole authority in the polling place on election day.

No person, except a judge, may handle or touch election supplies and materials.

A police officer may be in the polling place to preserve order and carry out lawful directions given by the judges.

Electioneering or any type of campaigning must not take place within the Campaign Free Zone.

The publication *A Guide for Pollwatchers* outlines the necessary qualifications and responsibilities of pollwatchers. The pamphlet, *Preventing Vote Fraud* spells out some telltale signs of possible voting irregularities that should be reported to the election judges and/or election authorities.

Where ballots are counted in the office of the election authority, each political party, candidate, qualified organization of citizens, State nonpartisan civic organizations, or organized proponents or opponents of ballot propositions shall be entitled to have one pollwatcher for each panel of election judges.

Pollwatchers shall be permitted to observe all proceedings and view all reasonably requested records relating to the conduct of the election, provided the secrecy of the ballot is not impinged.

Pollwatchers may be appointed to observe early voting by personal appearance at each permanent and temporary polling place where early voting is conducted.

The primary goal of the State Board of Elections is to help bring about greater understanding and participation in the electoral process.

For more information on election laws and procedures, write or call the State Board of Elections.

State Board of Elections
1020 South Spring Street
Springfield, Illinois 62704
217/782-4141
TDD 217/782-1518

100 West Randolph, Suite 14-100
Chicago, Illinois 60601
312/814-6440
TDD 312/814-6431

Printed by Authority of the State of Illinois

www.elections.il.gov
FY08-5-5000-10-07

ILLINOIS POLLWATCHERS

Their Rights and Limitations



*Illinois law provides for
pollwatchers to be present in the
polling place during an election.
Pollwatchers are intended to
observe the conduct of the
election and their prime concern
is the integrity and fairness of
the election.*

WHAT ARE POLLWATCHERS?

The great majority of election officials are honest and dedicated; however, even the most honest election officials can make mistakes. Pollwatchers sometimes referred to as challengers, checkers or simply watchers, are election observers who aid in ensuring the free and fair conduct of elections. Pollwatchers may be in the polling place before the polls open, during the actual voting hours, and after the polls close.

WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS NECESSARY TO BECOME A POLLWATCHER?

A pollwatcher must be registered to vote in the state of Illinois and must be affiliated with the party or organization he/she is representing.

WHO AUTHORIZES AN INDIVIDUAL TO BECOME A POLLWATCHER?

Pollwatchers may represent established political parties, candidates, qualified organization of citizens, State nonpartisan civic organizations, or organized proponents or opponents of ballot propositions. Each pollwatcher must have credentials issued by the election authority, and these credentials must be presented by the pollwatcher to the election judges immediately upon entering the polling place.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SPECIFIC RIGHTS OF POLLWATCHERS?

- Before the first ballot is cast, pollwatchers may observe that the ballot box is empty;
- Pollwatchers may position themselves near enough to the election judges to examine the applications for ballot;
- Pollwatchers may observe as the judges compare the voter applicant's signature on the application with the signature on the registration records;
- Pollwatchers may watch as the judges initial and distribute the ballots to voter, and as the ballots are deposited into the ballot box after the voter has voted;
- Pollwatchers may challenge a person's right to vote. A reason for the challenge must be stated. (Possible reasons include; the person voted earlier in the day, the person moved, or the person lacks qualifications);
- The judges of election determine whether or not to sustain a challenge;
- Pollwatchers may observe the counting procedures after the polls close.

WHAT SHOULD A POLLWATCHER DO IF HE OBSERVES AN ADMINISTRATIVE ERROR OR SEES AN APPARENT VIOLATION ON THE PART OF ELECTION JUDGES OR VOTERS?

The pollwatcher should politely inform the election judges if he observes an error or an apparent violation. If the error or violation continues, the pollwatcher should record his/her observations, immediately contact the election authority and remain at the polling place until proper authorities arrive. Under no circumstances should a pollwatcher argue with the election judges or interfere with the election process.

IS THERE A LIMIT TO THE NUMBER OF POLLWATCHERS ALLOWED IN A POLLING PLACE?

Yes, the number of pollwatchers allowed in the polling place at any one time is limited by law. A candidate may always appoint two pollwatchers per precinct, while all other organizations may only appoint one pollwatcher per precinct. The only exception to this is that political parties may appoint two pollwatchers per precinct at each General and Consolidated General Election. When over-crowding interferes with the orderly conduct of the election, the judges of election may limit the number of pollwatchers. The election judges may cause the removal of any pollwatcher who is disrupting the election process.

POLLWATCHER CREDENTIALS

Each pollwatcher must surrender his or her credentials to the judges when he or she enters the polling place. If an individual refuses to surrender his or her credentials, or if the credentials are not valid, the individual must leave. All credentials remain in the possession of the judges and are returned to the election authority after the polls close.

In order to be valid, pollwatcher credentials must contain the following information:

1. The real or facsimile signature of the election authority;
2. The real or facsimile signature of the candidate, state or local party chairman, the presiding officer of a civic organization, the chairman of a group of proponents for or opponents to a proposition;
3. The signature and address of the pollwatcher; and
4. A statement that the pollwatcher is registered from the address shown.

NUMBER OF POLLWATCHERS

The number of pollwatchers allowed in the polling place at any given time is limited by law. Individuals acting as pollwatchers may come and go throughout the day as long as they do not interfere with the election process. In addition, pollwatchers may be substituted for during the course of the day as long as the number of pollwatchers in the polling place does not exceed the number allowed by law.

If the polling place becomes overcrowded with pollwatchers and the situation interferes with the conduct of the election, a majority of the judges may decide to limit the number of pollwatchers by drawing lots. However, at least one pollwatcher for candidates, political parties, civic organizations and organized groups of proponents for and opponents to a proposition must be allowed to remain in the polling place.

NUMBER OF POLLWATCHERS ALLOWED IN EACH POLLING PLACE AT ANY GIVEN TIME		
APPOINTING AUTHORITY	PRIMARY ELECTION	GENERAL ELECTION
CANDIDATE	TWO	TWO
POLITICAL PARTY	ONE	TWO
QUALIFIED CIVIC ORGANIZATION	ONE	ONE
PROponents AND OPPONENTS OF A BALLOT PROPOSITION	ONE	ONE

FIGURE 2

RIGHTS OF POLLWATCHERS

All pollwatchers are allowed in the polling place before the polls open, during the day, and after the polls close. They may leave and re-enter the polling place during voting hours unless such continuing action disrupts the conduct of the election.

Before the polls open, pollwatchers may observe the set-up procedures and check that the ballot box is empty. They may closely observe as the judges compare the ballot sheets with the specimen ballots to verify that the names and numbers match.

During the day, pollwatchers have a right to be near the judges so that they may visually examine the voter's application to vote, to compare the signature and address on the application with that on the signature verification record, to watch the judge or voter feed the ballot sheet into the tabulating equipment, and to observe the general conduct of the election. Pollwatchers may also observe as the judges periodically inspect the voting booths to make certain that the booths are clear of campaign literature.

After the polls close, pollwatchers may observe the procedures for counting absentee ballots and the procedures for counting write-in votes. They may remain in the polling place until all other

A pollwatcher may challenge a person's right to vote during voting hours and may challenge an absentee ballot during the processing of the absentee ballots. (See "Challenging a Person's Right to Vote" on page 35 and "Challenging an Absentee Ballot" on page 41.)

LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

In some instances a police officer or deputy sheriff may be officially stationed in the polling place. The officer is present to preserve order and to carry out lawful directions as instructed by the election judges.

OTHER OFFICIALS IN THE POLLING PLACE

Representatives of the State Board of Elections, the election authority, the office of the State's Attorney and the Attorney General's Office, as well as federal, state, or local law enforcement officials who are acting in their official capacities are also entitled to be in the polling place. After displaying official credentials or proper identification, these individuals may observe the conduct of the election. They may station themselves where they can see the information contained on the signature verification records and ballot applications and where they may also observe the voting booths and ballot box/tabulator. These individuals may also remain in the polling place after the polls close to observe the processing of the absentee ballots and the closing procedures.

AUTHORIZED INDIVIDUALS IN THE POLLING PLACE

It is the responsibility of the election judges to permit only the following authorized individuals to remain in the polling place:

1. Election judges assigned to the polling place,
2. Voters while voting,
3. Authorized pollwatchers upon submission of valid credentials,
4. Law enforcement officers acting in their official capacities,
5. Representatives of the election authority,
6. Representatives of the State Board of Elections,
7. Representatives of the offices of the State's Attorney and Attorney General.

Precinct, ward and township committeemen, precinct captains, "checkers" and candidates have no official function in the polling place. To remain in the polling place, these individuals must have valid pollwatcher credentials. Local election officials (municipal clerks, township clerks, etc.) must also have valid pollwatcher credentials in order to remain in the polling place.

POLLWATCHERS

Candidates, political parties, civic organizations and organized groups of proponents for and opponents to a proposition on the ballot may appoint pollwatchers. The role of the pollwatcher is established by law. Pollwatchers may be present to observe the conduct of the election before the polls open, during the day and after the polls close.

POLLWATCHER QUALIFICATIONS

All pollwatchers must be registered voters in the State of Illinois. All pollwatchers must have valid pollwatcher credentials issued by the election authority. Each pollwatcher must have separate pollwatcher credentials for each precinct he or she enters.

CANDIDATE QUALIFICATIONS

The actions of candidates in the polling place are governed by the same privileges and limitations that apply to pollwatchers. All pollwatchers must just be registered voters in the State of Illinois. All candidates must have proper candidate or pollwatcher credentials.