

INTRODUCTION

About this manual

This manual is the primary reference guide for State of Iowa precinct election officials. It has been developed by the Secretary of State's Office for use by county auditors.

The manual begins with overview information, followed by sections that are designed to walk you through your duties in setting up and managing a polling place...to processing voters...to closing down and returning supplies after the polls close. Checklists, diagrams, and flow charts along with other visual aides are included throughout the manual.

We welcome your comments, ideas, or suggestions on ways to continue to improve this manual. Please send your recommendations to your County Auditor.

Standards of Conduct

On Election Day, precinct election officials are representatives of the County Auditor's Office and should be professional, fair, impartial, and equitable to all voters.

- Be courteous and respectful to all people regardless of age, race, sex, disabling condition, or lifestyle.
- Do not engage in partisan or political discussions or offer advice or literature to voters.
- Avoid any action that may influence how a person votes.
- Do not solicit votes for candidates or questions or wear buttons, stickers, jewelry or other clothing of a political nature.
- Although it is a long workday, please minimize conversation as it distracts voters and other PEO's.

Precinct Election Official's oath

As a precinct election official, you take a legally binding oath that you will uphold election laws. At the start of Election Day, all judges recite and sign the following oath:

“I, (name), do solemnly swear or affirm that I will impartially, and to the best of my knowledge and ability, perform the duties of precinct election official of this election, and will studiously endeavor to prevent fraud, deceit, and abuse in conducting the election.”

Preparing For Election Day

- Review this manual before Election Day and bring it with you to the polls.
- Dress comfortably and casually. You may not wear political or campaign-related attire.
- Bring a lunch, snacks, and dinner to your polling place. The Chairperson or Co-Chairpersons will arrange breaks and meal times.
- Remember to vote! If you are working in your own precinct, you may vote on a break during regular voting hours. If you are serving elsewhere, you may vote absentee before Election Day.
- Before leaving home, do a quick inventory of your personal needs and obligations for the entire day:
 - Do you have your reading glasses, medications, or medical supplies?
 - Do you have emergency information that coworkers should be aware of?
 - Have you arranged for the care of your loved ones or pets?
 - Do you have enough gas, or a ride, to return home?

Roles and Responsibilities

There are several job positions in each polling place on Election Day. The Chairperson will assign these duties to each PEO. A brief description of each position is listed below.

- **Chairperson:** Is appointed by the County Auditor, is in charge of the polling place, and is responsible for the conduct of the election. Some precincts may have more than one chairperson.
 - The Chairperson is responsible for all polling place supplies including pickup before Election Day; review of supplies prior to and throughout Election Day; and return of supplies to the county auditor's office after the election.
 - The Chairperson shall call all PEO's prior to Election Day to remind them when to report for work, and of the name of location and the polling place.
 - The Chairperson shall review the setup of the polling place prior to Election Day. REMINDER: Be sure that you know the contact person and phone number for your polling place.
 - Provide your cell phone number to the County Auditor. REMINDER: Be sure you know the phone number of the County Auditor's Office.
- **Voters' Declaration of Eligibility Manager:** Is responsible for looking up and verifying the accuracy of each voter's information including the review of identification. After the information has been validated, the voter signs an eligibility slip, and presents it to the ballot manager. NOTE: In counties using electronic poll books, the eligibility slip is produced by the poll book.
- **Ballot Distribution and Instruction Manager:** Is responsible for selecting the correct ballot style; informing the voter about the ballot marking instructions and what to do when they have finished marking their ballot. Important: Make sure that each voter only gets one ballot.
- **ADA Ballot Marking Device Operator:** Is responsible for instructing the voter on how to operate the marking device and keeping track of the headsets and all other accessories for use with the ballot marking device.

- **Ballot Scanner Manager:** Is responsible for instructing voters on how to insert the voted ballot into the scanner while using the secrecy folder

Assisting Voters with Disabilities

The key to providing quality services to voters with disabilities is to remember that all voters are individuals. Communicate effectively and with respect.

Following are some tips for interacting with voters who have disabilities. In most cases, the best way to learn how to accommodate voters with disabilities is to ask them directly. Here are some suggestions:

- Be considerate of the extra time it might take for a voter with a disability to vote.
- Federal law allows voters with disabilities to be accompanied and to receive assistance by another person while voting. If asked, poll workers can provide assistance as well. However, one poll worker from each major political party must provide assistance when requested.
- Speak directly to the person who has a disability rather than to a companion who may be along to provide assistance.
- Speak calmly, slowly and directly to a person with a hearing impairment. Your facial expressions, gestures, and body movements help in understanding. Writing a note may be helpful.
- Before pushing someone in a wheelchair, ask permission and how you should proceed.
- Greet a person who is visually impaired by introducing yourself and where you are in the room. Provide a guiding device such as a ruler or card for signing forms. When offering walking assistance, allow the person to take your arm and tell the person if you are approaching steps or inclines.
- Be aware that assistance animals must be admitted into all buildings. Such animals are highly trained and do not require special care from anyone other than their owner.

Managing the Media

Members of the media are common visitors to polling places. Members of the media should notify the county auditor ahead of time of their intention to visit a polling place. General guidelines include:

- Allowing members of the media to be inside the polling place to take photographs or film activity, but not allowing members of the media to interfere with the voting process. Members of the media cannot take any images of how a voter marks or has marked a ballot.
- Asking members of the media to identify themselves and to show identification.
- Restricting interviews with voters until the voter has cast a ballot and is outside of the polling place. Members of the media should obtain permission from a voter to use the voter's name and/or photograph.
- Answering questions from or providing comments to members of the media only when authorized to do so by the auditor. If you are not authorized to provide comments to members of the media, refer the individual requesting comments to the auditor.

Poll Watchers/Observers

The following persons are the only persons allowed at the polling place on Election Day:

- Voters and PEOs
- Peace Officers – upon request of Auditor
- Media
- Educational Programs
 - Persons authorized by the auditor, in consultation with the Secretary of State's Office, may be present at the polling place for the purpose of conducting or attending an educational program.
- Poll Watchers
 - A poll watcher is a person who has official authorization to be at the polling place on Election Day. Poll watchers may also be called observers or members of challenging committees. Poll watchers must be accredited and are required to produce ID and proof of accreditation if asked. Poll watchers may represent any of the following:
 - **Political parties:** If a political party has a candidate on the ballot, poll watchers may be present at the polling place on Election Day. For each political party, no more than three poll watchers may be present at a time. A poll watcher representing a political party must have a ***poll watcher designation form*** or a letter of accreditation from the party.
 - **Nonparty political organizations:** A non-party political organization is any political organization that is neither the Democratic Party, the Libertarian Party nor the Republican Party. Each non-party political organization with a candidate on the ballot is permitted to have one poll watcher at a time present at the polling place on Election Day. A poll watcher representing a non-party political organization must have a ***poll watcher designation form*** or a letter of accreditation from the organization.
 - **Non-partisan candidates:** All non-partisan candidates on the ballot may appoint one poll watcher to be present on Election Day. A poll watcher appointed by a candidate must carry a ***poll watcher designation form*** or a letter of appointment signed by the candidate who appointed them.
 - **Groups supporting or opposing public measures:** Poll watchers representing groups supporting or opposing public measures on the ballot are permitted, except at Primary or General elections. No more than three of these poll watchers may be present at any given time. Unlike the other categories of

poll watchers, these poll watchers must notify the auditor of the intention to be present before Election Day and have a *poll watcher designation form*.

Persons not included in the list above are not permitted at the polling place on Election Day. Lawyers and attorneys have no special exemption from these rules and must be official poll watchers with official accreditation to be present at the polls on Election Day.

Poll watchers must have a specific relationship to an office or public measure on the ballot to be present on Election Day. They cannot be:

- A candidate for an office listed on the ballot;
- An elected official whose office is listed on the ballot;
- Or a PEO working at the election.

As a courtesy and if the space allows, PEOs may provide poll watchers a table and chairs near, but separate from, the tables for official Election Day business.

Poll Watchers/Observers May:

- Observe, but not interfere, with the election process.
- Look at the *declaration of eligibility slips* or the voter roster/sign-in sheets.
- Write down the names of people who have or have not voted.
- Challenge a voter's qualifications (if the poll watcher is a registered voter in the county where the challenge occurs).
- Report perceived problems in the precinct to the county auditor.

Poll Watchers/Observers May NOT:

- Interfere with the election process in any way.
- Handle ballots, voting equipment, or the election register.
- Inspect documents produced by voters for the purpose of establishing identity (these documents contain confidential information).
- Compare the signature on record to a signature on any document or ballot or ballot envelope.
- Disenfranchise voters by encouraging challenged voters to cast provisional ballots in a precinct where they do not live.

- Engage in arguments with PEOs, voters, or other poll watchers.
- Interrupt, hinder, oppose, or talk to a voter while in or approaching the polling place.
- Solicit votes for candidates or questions.
- Offer advice or literature to voters.
- Wear buttons, stickers, jewelry, or other clothing of a political nature.
- Use polling place supplies.
- Challenge a voter solely because the voter is registering to vote on Election Day.
- Challenge a voter solely because the voter is changing an address on Election Day.
- View voter identification without voter permission.

Exit Polling

Exit polls may be conducted at any time but tend to occur in close races or in highly publicized contests. Exit polls may be conducted by the media or by political or interest groups.

Individuals conducting surveys or exit polls may NOT:

- Conduct surveys or exit polls inside the polling place.
- Stand inside the building in which the polling place is located or in the building's entryway.

REMINDER: Regardless of weather or any other adverse condition, do not allow exit pollsters to conduct polls inside the building where the polling place is located.

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