



5 Poll Watcher Training Manual

5.2 Introduction

Poll watchers are an essential element in ensuring election integrity and transparency, and in reassuring the public that the election process will be free and fair for all voters. This training manual provides a comprehensive overview of the polling process, and the rights and duties of poll watchers. It is intended to serve both as a resource to guide the training of poll watcher, and as a ready reference for poll watchers as they perform their mission.

5.3 Election Administration¹

5.3.1 Personnel

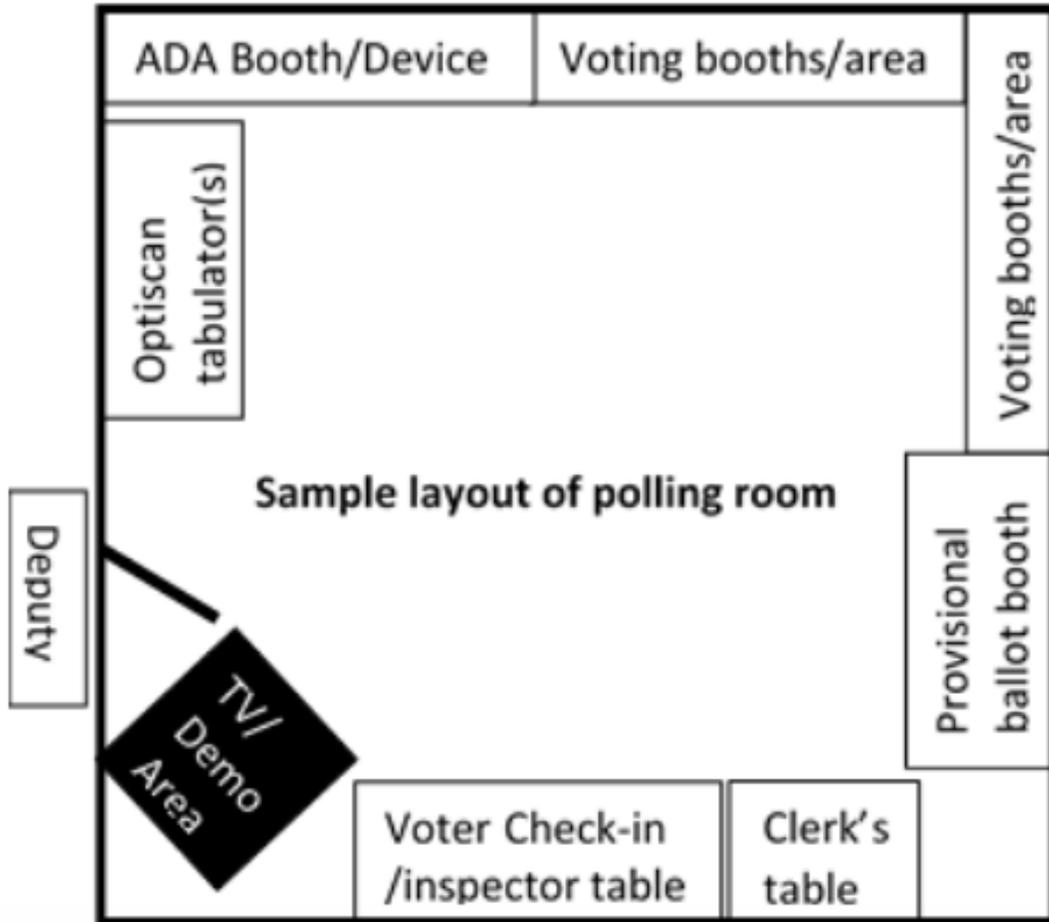
The Supervisor of Elections is the senior election official in a county. The Supervisor of Elections responsibilities include conducting federal, state, county, and local elections; registering voters; maintaining voter registration rolls; mailing advance notice of elections for absentee voters; accepting vote-by-mail ballot requests and sending, receiving and verifying vote by mail ballots; receiving candidate campaign finance reports for district and county offices and making them available to the public; qualifying candidates for district and county offices; maintaining voting equipment; acquiring and equipping polling locations; mapping precincts; and conducting voter outreach drives and voter education activities.

The Supervisor of Elections is also responsible for recruiting and training election officials, including the clerks and inspectors who will staff the election boards (polling teams) in each precinct. The Sheriff is responsible for appointing a deputy to work with each polling team, who will supervise and control the area outside the room where polling takes place. The polling team will be managed by the clerk of the precinct, but if questions arise during the process, these shall be decided by majority vote within the team.

5.3.2 Polling Place Setup

Each polling place should be set up to maintain an efficient flow of voters through the room, while maintaining privacy for ballot marking. There should be sufficient space within the polling location to allow poll watchers to effectively observe all election processes, except the marking of the ballot by the voter. In general, voters will enter the room and stop at the first table, where their ID will be checked and name marked off the voter roll; then they will be issued a ballot, and instructions on how to mark it; then they will be directed to an empty voting screen. The voter will mark the ballot, then proceed to the ballot box/tabulator and insert their ballot, then leave the precinct.

¹ For more information on the polling process, the State of Florida polling place procedures manual can be found [here](#). The Florida election statutes can be found [here](#).



5.4 Rights and Responsibilities of Poll Watchers and Observers

5.4.1 Poll Watchers

Poll watchers must be qualified voters in the county where they are appointed and may visit any early or election day polling location in the county; but a party or candidate is only entitled to have only one poll watcher present at any one time. Each poll watcher will be provided with a poll watcher badge that identifies them by name, and they must wear that badge while in the polling room.

Poll watchers may observe all processes in the polling location except the voter marking their ballot but may not obstruct the orderly conduct of the election. This means that observers may move anywhere within the polling place they need to, as long as they are not impeding the process, or violating the voter's right to mark their ballot in secrecy. The actual wording of the law is important in this case, as some Supervisors ([Palm Beach](#)) have attempted to define a particular location in the polling place for poll watchers:

No watcher shall be permitted to come closer to the officials' table or the voting booths than is reasonably necessary to properly perform his or her functions, but each shall be allowed within the polling room or early voting area to watch and observe the conduct of electors and officials.

Poll watchers must be close enough to inspectors to read IDs and poll books if they are to perform their functions, so in this case that would be a reasonable distance and is the accepted international standard for election observation. Poll watchers are not permitted to speak to or interact with voters in the polling room, and if they have questions about the process, should address those to the clerk.

Poll Watcher Note: For elections to be transparent and credible, poll watchers must be able to effectively observe all election processes and record their observations. If you are prevented from or hindered in observing any process (except a voter in the process of marking a ballot) at any time during the polling or counting, that is a serious offence, and should be challenged to the clerk. If the challenge does not result in immediate relief, record the circumstance and details on an incident report form, and submit that immediately.

5.5 Challenging a Voter

5.5.1 *The Challenge Process*

If an elector or poll watcher has good reason to believe a prospective voter is not qualified to vote in the precinct, they may formally challenge that individual's right to vote. Once challenged, the voter must either prove their eligibility to vote, or cast a provisional ballot.

Challenging a voter is rare for several reasons. It is primarily designed to prevent a form of fraud that is now uncommon, where unqualified people are brought in from neighboring districts to sway an election. It is also rare because of the difficulty of making an effective voter challenge, as the poll watcher or citizen challenging a voter has to be able to recognize the individual, know their name, and know that they are not qualified to vote.

According to statute, any registered elector or poll watcher of a county may challenge the right of a person to vote in that county. The challenge must be made in writing in the following format:

OATH OF PERSON ENTERING CHALLENGE

State of Florida
County of _____

I do solemnly swear or affirm that my name is _____; that I am a member of the _____ Party; that I am a registered voter or poll watcher; that my residence address is _____, in the municipality of _____; and that I have reason to believe that _____ is attempting to vote illegally and the reasons for my belief are set forth herein to wit:

When a voter is challenged, the clerk or inspector will immediately deliver a copy of the challenge (implying it is done on a carbon copy form provided by the clerk) to the voter. If the basis for the challenge is that the voter's legal residence is not in the precinct, the voter can execute a change of legal residence form, and if their new address is in the precinct, they can vote a regular ballot. If their new address is not in the precinct, the clerk will direct the voter to the proper precinct.

Any elector or poll watcher filing a frivolous challenge of any person's right to vote commits a misdemeanor, however, electors or poll watchers shall not be subject to liability for any action taken in good faith and in furtherance of any activity or duty permitted of such electors or poll watchers by law.

5.5.2 Conducting a Voter Challenge

If a voter arrives at the polling location that you know is not qualified to vote in the precinct, you may challenge the voter. Because it will take some time to prepare the challenge form, alert the clerk or an inspector that you plan to challenge the voter, and ask that they suspend processing the voter until the challenge can be prepared. If they refuse to suspend processing, and the individual proceeds through the process; fill in and file an incident report.

A voter challenge should be clear, concise, and complete. The report must contain the date, time, and location of the challenge. Example:

On 11/22/22 at approximately 8:45am I observed John Doe enter the polling location after previously casting a ballot. Mr. Doe received another ballot and attempted to vote a second time. I immediately contacted the Elections Clerk and advised him/her that Mr. Doe had already voted. (Print name, Sign, and date).

5.6 The Polling Process

5.6.1 Before Opening

Precinct staff are required to arrive at the polling location by 6:00 am to begin setting up. If you will be at the location all day, or for the first shift, you should aim to arrive no later than 6:30 am, so you can witness opening processes. Be sure to wear your poll watcher ID and introduce yourself to the clerk when you arrive. Members of the election board will also wear badges identifying them as staff, their role, and if relevant, their ability to provide language assistance.

Outside the polling room required signage in English and Spanish will be posted in a place visible to entering voters. At early voting sites, staff will set-up and clearly designate the secure vote-by-mail drop box. Outside, the deputy will establish a 150-foot perimeter from the door called the no-solicitation zone, within which no electioneering is allowed.

The election team will arrange furniture, precinct supplies, and voting equipment; set up the voting booths in a way that voters cannot see each other's ballots to ensure privacy and set up the accessible voting equipment for persons with disabilities. The clerk will confirm the required equipment is operational, and will check the ballots to confirm the names, numbers and letters on the ballots are identical to a sample ballot provided and will then certify this by signing a form.

With any Poll Watchers present in attendance, the clerk will then confirm the seals on the voting machines are unbroken, and that the numbers on the seals match those in the log, then will open the machines to confirm there are no ballots in the main storage area and the emergency storage area. The clerk will then print a report from each machine. The report, called a zero tape, should list all candidates for the election, with vote totals of zero. Each member of the polling team will sign the zero tape. The zero tape is left attached to the tabulator throughout the day. Poll watchers should be able to confirm that all candidates who should be on the ballot are listed on the zero tape, and that the totals for each candidate are zero.

5.6.2 *Permitted in the Polling Room*

The public is allowed to enter the polling room and watch the procedures before the polls open and after the polls close and all voters have cast their ballots. While the polls are open, the only persons allowed in the polling room on Election Day or during the early voting period are:

- Poll workers
- The supervisor of elections or deputy supervisor of elections
- Voters who are present to vote
- A person (such as an elderly person or a child) in the care of a voter
- A person caring for a voter or assisting a voter (for example, someone assisting a voter who cannot read or does not speak English or assisting an elderly person or a person with disabilities)
- A person who is helping with or participating in a simulated election for minors which has been approved by the supervisor of elections (for example, the Kids Voting Program)
- Poll watchers approved by the supervisor of elections

5.6.3 *Not Permitted in Polling Room*

While the polls are open, the following persons or activities are not allowed in the polling room:

- Candidates, except to vote
- Members of the media, except to vote
- Law enforcement officers or emergency service personnel in a capacity other than as a voter, unless permitted by the clerk or a majority of the election board

If the polling room is in a location commonly used by the public to gain access to businesses or homes (such as the lobby of a condominium) or in an area traditionally used as public area for discussion (such as a mall), there may be other people traveling through the polling area, in which case the clerk will ensure these people do not interfere with the voting process.

5.6.4 *Partisan Expression in the Polling Room*

Poll workers and election staff must remain nonpartisan while on duty during the early voting period and on Election Day. They are not permitted to wear campaign buttons, shirts, hats, or any other items that are politically oriented; or discuss any candidate, political party, issue, or any related topic with other poll workers, poll watchers, or voters. Poll watchers are not allowed to wear campaign buttons, shirts, hats, or other campaign items; or speak to or seek to influence in any way, voters in the polling room.

Voters may bring in pre-marked sample ballots or campaign literature for their personal use but cannot use these to campaign inside the polling place or within 150 feet of the entrance to the polling place. Voters may wear campaign buttons, shirts, hats, or any other campaign items when they enter the polling place to vote. After each voter leaves, a poll worker must remove and discard any campaign or other materials left behind in the voting booth.

5.6.5 *Voter Check-in*

At 7:00 the clerk with open polling. Voters will be allowed into the location and will stop at the voter check-in table and present a photo ID. Accepted forms of ID include:

- Florida driver's license

- Florida identification card issued by the DMV
- United States passport
- Debit or credit card
- Military Identification
- Student Identification
- Retirement center Identification
- Neighborhood association identification
- Public assistance identification
- Veteran health identification card issued by Department of Veterans Affairs
- Florida license to carry a concealed weapon or firearm
- Employee identification card issued by any branch, department, agency, or entity of the federal government, the state, a county, or a municipality

Prospective voters who do not have the required ID may cast a provisional ballot. After voting by provisional ballot, the voter is given a “Notice of Rights” which will include instructions on how to find out if your provisional ballot was counted, and if not, the reason(s) why.

The voter then moves to the E-Pollbook table, where their name will be checked off of the voter list. If the voter is listed as having requested and received an absentee ballot, the voter must surrender their absentee ballot to the clerk or inspector before voting.

Poll watchers should be able to clearly see the ID presented and confirm that the photo on the ID matches the voter, and that the name of the voter is the same as that checked off in the e-pollbook.

5.6.6 The Voting Process

The voter will then be issued a ballot sleeve and ballot, with instruction on how to mark the ballot and use the sleeve to protect the secrecy of their vote as they insert it into the tabulator. They are then directed to an empty voting screen. After marking their ballot, the voter proceeds to the tabulator, and inserts the ballot into the tabulator while covering it with the sleeve, so no one can see how they voted.

If the ballot is mismarked in some way (over vote, under vote, stray marks), the machine will notify the voter and they will have an opportunity to correct the problem. If the ballot is fine, it is accepted, and the voter should be able to see the counter advance by one number and will then leave the polling room.

5.6.7 Closing the Poll and the Counting Process

At 7:00 the clerk will announce the polls are closed, and prevent anyone else from joining a line, but anyone in line at closing will be allowed to vote. When all votes have been cast, an inspector will check the emergency ballot storage on the tabulator, and run any ballots found there through the tabulator. Unless the tabulator broke down during the day, there should not be any ballots in the emergency storage, so if there are, challenge them, and record full details in an incident report form.

Next, the clerk will enter a password in the tabulator, close the poll, and the machine will automatically print a report. As a poll watcher, you should receive a copy of the report. If they do

not provide one, photograph, or hand copy the results report, as this information will be needed for your report. When this process is over, your observation is complete. Please fill in the observation form, if you have not already, and submit immediately.

Thank you for your dedication to free and fair elections in Florida!

The online Poll Watcher Form can be accessed [here](#). The online Incident Report Form can be accessed [here](#). Print versions are below.

Florida Poll Watcher Report Form						
Precinct:		Name:				
Address:		Phone No:				
City/Town:		Email:				
County:		Arrival:		Departure:		
Instructions						
<p>Read the questions carefully. Please make a check (✓) in the appropriate box. If you cannot answer the question, or it is not relevant, leave it blank. If clarification is required, briefly explain in the comment section of the form. If at any time you prevented from observing any process, please challenge this, and if the challenge is not resolved, immediately file an incident report.</p>						
Before Opening					Yes	No
1	Were you allowed to observe the set-up of the precinct before opening? (if no, prepare and immediately file an incident report)					
2	Are all polling team members and required materials present?					
3	Are there individuals from both major parties on the polling team?					
4	Did a poll worker confirm the seals on the machines were unbroken, and that the numbers on the seals matched the numbers in the log?					
5	Did the clerk or an inspector open the tabulators and show you that the main and emergency boxes were empty, before resealing the machines?					
6	Was a zero tape printed and signed by the clerk and inspectors?					
7	Were you able to confirm the zero tape listed all candidates, and showed no votes?					
8	Was the zero tape left attached to the tabulator?					
9	Did the precinct open on time (7:00 AM)?					
The Polling Process					Yes	No
10	Were you able to see voter's photo and name on their ID and their name on the e-pollbook?					
11	Could voters mark and cast their ballots in secret, without anyone see how they voted? (if no, give details in the comment section)					
12	Were any voters challenged? (if yes, provide details in the comment section)					
13	Were any procedures challenged? (if yes, provide details in the comment section)					
14	Were poll watchers present from both major parties?					
Closing the Poll and the Counting Process					Yes	No
15	Did the precinct close at 7:00 PM?					
16	Were voters in the line at closing time allowed to vote?					
17	Were there any ballots in the emergency (auxiliary) ballot storage area of the tabulator? (if yes, question clerk, and provide explanation in comment section, or file incident report)					
18	Was a results report run on the tabulator?					
19	Were you given a copy (or allowed to copy) the results tape from the tabulator (if no, file an incident report).					
20	Were you allowed to observe all aspects of the polling and counting process? (If no, file an incident report)					
21	Record the total number of voters from E-Pollbook		Record the total number of ballots cast from tabulator			
22	Did the total number of votes cast from the tabulator report equal the total number of voters checked off in the E-Pollbook? (If no, provide details in the comment section, or file an incident report).					
Please record the total votes for each candidate below						
Candidate Name	Votes	Candidate Name	Votes	Candidate Name	Votes	

Florida Poll Watcher Incident Report Form

Instructions: Please fill in the form as completely as possible as soon as possible after (or during) the incident. Take the time to collect names and contact details of other witnesses. If you collect electronic evidence (picture, video, or audio recording), make a copy of the file, and submit with your report, but retain the original on your phone or other electronic device. Submit the completed form as soon as possible to: FFET

REPORTER INFORMATION

Reported by:	Phone:
Position (voter, poll worker, poll watcher, etc.):	Email:

DESCRIPTION OF THE INCIDENT

Date of incident:	Time of incident:	Police notified: ____ District Attorney notified: ____
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Location of incident:

Description of the incident: (What happened, how it happened, etc. Be as specific as possible. Continue on back if needed and attach additional sheets if necessary)

Is there electronic evidence of the incident? Yes ___ No ___	What type of evidence is it? Phone photo ___ video ___ audio ___
Is the evidence in your possession? Yes ___ No ___	CCTV ___ Other ___

Did you witness the incident? Yes ___ No ___ If no, list the person who reported the incident to you below, along with details of any other witnesses. Attach additional sheets if needed.

WITNESSES

Name of Witness:	Phone:
Role of Witness:	Email:
Name of Witness:	Phone:
Role of Witness:	Email:
Name of Witness:	Phone:
Role of Witness:	Email:
Name of Witness:	Phone:
Role of Witness:	Email:

PARTIES INVOLVED IN INCIDENT

Name:	Phone:
Role:	Email:
Name:	Phone:
Role:	Email:
Name:	Phone:
Role:	Email:

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION