Poll Watcher’s Guide

Board of Elections
In the City of New York
32 Broadway, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10004

(212) VOTE-NYC/868-3692
(866) VOTE-NYC Toll Free
TTY (212) 487-5496 (Hearing Impaired)

www.vote.nyc.ny.us
Poll Watcher’s Guide

Overview

To ensure fair and honest elections, New York State law provides for appointing Poll Watchers to observe voting at the polls. Poll Watchers are designated by candidates, political parties, or independent organizations which have candidates on the ballot and/or political committees.

The Role of the Poll Watcher

The role of the Poll Watcher is to observe elections at the polling sites on behalf of a particular candidate, political party or organization and where they observe irregularities, report these observations to the Elections Inspector, the Police Officer and/or the Board of Elections.

Poll Watcher Qualifications

Poll Watchers must be qualified voters of the City of New York. Poll Watchers must be certified in writing by a candidate or a chairperson of a political committee or independent body and must present a certificate for each election district to the Elections Inspector for that election district. A facsimile of a Poll Watcher’s Certificate appears on the reverse side of this guide.

Number of Poll Watchers

New York State law provides for three Poll Watchers per election district at any one time from each candidate, political committee or independent body. Only one of these watchers may be within the “guard rail.” Few, if any, polling places actually have guard rails. The phrase refers to the portion of the poll site containing the table used by election inspectors and Board of Elections equipment, including the Privacy Booths, Ballot Marking Device (BMD), and Scanners, used to conduct such elections and any areas used by voters within the poll site to move between such locations.
Poll Watcher Rights

The Poll Watcher may:

- Arrive at 5:00 AM before the unlocking and examination of any voting machine to verify no votes have been cast and that the Ballot Boxes and Ballot Bin Liner Case are empty.
- Examine poll books as long as they don’t interfere with inspectors or election proceedings.
- Observe the closing of the polls and the canvass.
- Challenge individual voters on the basis of:
  - Signature authenticity
  - Residence
  - Multiple voting
  - Qualification to vote
  - Electioneering

Such a challenge is to be made with the Election Inspectors, who will make a ruling on the challenge in accordance with approved procedures.

Poll Watcher Limitations

The Poll Watcher may not:

- Electioneer in any manner.
  
  Electioneering includes soliciting votes or distributing, wearing or carrying political literature, posters, banners or buttons or displaying refreshments showing a candidate or party’s name.
- Tamper with election materials. (Including any BOE-posted signs and/or results tape.)
- Interfere with the election process.
- Protest a vote ruling.
- Accompany a voter to the privacy booth and/or scanner/BMD.

If You See A Violation

Poll Watchers are not law enforcement officers, however, they may attempt to enforce their candidate’s rights by reporting a violation to any of the following:

- Election Inspectors / Poll Site Coordinators
- The Police Officer on duty
- The Board of Elections
A primary goal of the 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 Board of Elections.

Michael J. Ryan  
Executive Director

Dawn Sandow  
Deputy Executive Director

Commissioners of Elections

Patricia Anne Taylor, President
Fredric M. Umane, Secretary

Jose Miguel Araujo  
Miguelina Camilo  
Gino A. Marmorato  
Michael Michel  
Rodney L. Pepe-Souvenir  
Simon Shamoun  
Tiffany Townsend  
John Wm. Zaccone

Board of Elections Telephone Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Phone Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Office</td>
<td>(212) VOTENYC / 868-3692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Hearing Impaired)</td>
<td>TTY (212) 487-5496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan</td>
<td>(212) 886-2100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronx</td>
<td>(718) 299-9017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>(718) 797-8800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>(718) 730-6730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staten Island</td>
<td>(718) 876-0079</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Poll Watcher’s Certificate

To The Board of Elections in the City of New York:

Pursuant to provisions of Section 8-500 of the Election Law of the State of New York, the undersigned hereby appoints:

________________________
Name of Individual
(Print)

To act as Watcher on their behalf, at the Primary, General or Special Election to be held on _________ (date) in the _______ Election District, ________ Assembly District, Borough or County of ________________, , City of New York.

________________________
Signature of Candidate,
Chairperson of Political Committee or Independent Body

________________________
Name of Candidate, (Print)
Political Committee or Independent Body