



Poll Watcher Guidelines

QUICK TIPS

- ✓ Upon arrival at the polling place or early voting site, a poll watcher must check in with the Clerk. The poll watcher will be asked to show his or her identification badge received from the Supervisor of Elections Office.
- ✓ Poll watchers are required to furnish their own materials and necessities.
- ✓ Poll watchers may not use poll worker equipment or supplies.
- ✓ Poll watchers may not use the precinct cell phone.
- ✓ Poll watchers are required to bring their own food and drinks.
- ✓ Poll watchers are allowed (as is any member of the public) to observe opening and closing procedures, but may not speak to, or interfere with, the Election Board in any way. The clerk will direct the poll watcher to a designated area away from the voting equipment and voter check-in table.
- ✓ Poll watchers may not walk around the voting area.
- ✓ Poll watchers are prohibited from wearing political advertisements such as T-shirts, buttons, hats, etc. while they are observing in the polling place or early voting site.
- ✓ A poll watcher may not volunteer to help voters who need assistance. A poll watcher may only provide assistance to a voter if specifically requested by that voter and the proper procedures for providing assistance are followed.
- ✓ Poll watchers may not bring radios, television sets, cameras or newspapers into the polling room/early voting site.
- ✓ Poll watchers may not obstruct the orderly conduct of any election.



WHAT FLORIDA ELECTION LAW SAYS ABOUT POLL WATCHERS

(Excerpts from FS 101.111, 101.131, 101.23 and 102.031.)

WHO IS ENTITLED TO HAVE POLL WATCHERS?

Each political party and each candidate may have one watcher in each polling room or early voting area at any one time during the election.

A political committee formed for the specific purpose of expressly advocating the passage or defeat of an issue on the ballot may have one watcher for each polling room or early voting area at any one time during the election.

ARE THERE RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED ON POLL WATCHERS?

Yes. 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 voters and officials.

Poll watchers shall furnish their own materials and necessities and shall not obstruct the orderly conduct of any election.

Poll watchers shall pose any questions regarding polling place procedures directly to the clerk for resolution.

Poll watchers may not interact with voters.

ARE POLL WATCHERS REQUIRED TO BE REGISTERED VOTERS?

Yes. Each poll watcher shall be a qualified and registered voter of the county in which he or she serves. However, no candidate or sheriff, deputy sheriff, police officer, or other law enforcement officer may be designated as a poll watcher.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS TO DESIGNATE POLL WATCHERS?

Each party, each political committee, and each candidate requesting to have poll watchers shall designate, in writing, prior to noon of the second Tuesday preceding the election poll watchers for each polling room on Election Day. The poll watchers for each polling room shall be approved by the supervisor of elections on or before the Tuesday before the election.

Designations of poll watchers for early voting areas shall be submitted in writing to the supervisor of elections at least 14 days before early voting begins. Poll watchers for early voting areas shall be approved by the supervisor of elections no later than seven days before early voting begins.



HOW DO POLL WORKERS KNOW WHO WILL BE POLL WATCHERS IN THEIR POLLING PLACE?

The supervisor shall furnish to each election board a list of the poll watchers designated and approved for such polling room or early voting area.

CAN A POLL WATCHER REVIEW THE LIST OF PERSONS WHO HAVE VOTED?

Yes. When any person has been admitted to vote, the person's name shall be checked by the clerk or one of the inspectors in the Electronic Poll Book, or a paper register. The list of voters who have checked-in at that precinct shall be available for inspection during regular voting hours by poll watchers, except that the clerk may regulate access to the list so as to ensure that such inspection does not unreasonably interfere with the orderly operation of the polling place.

WHO IS ALLOWED TO ENTER A POLLING PLACE?

No person may enter any polling room or polling place where the polling place is also a polling room, or any early voting area during voting hours except the following: 1. Official poll watchers; 2. Inspectors; 3. Election clerks; 4. The supervisor of elections or his or her deputy; 5. Persons there to vote, persons in the care of a voter, or persons caring for such voter; 6. Law enforcement officers or emergency service personnel there with permission of the clerk or a majority of the inspectors; or 7. A person, whether or not a registered voter, who is assisting with or participating in a simulated election for minors, as approved by the supervisor of elections.

CAN A POLL WATCHER CHALLENGE A VOTER AT THE POLLING PLACE?

Yes. Any registered voter or poll watcher may challenge the right of a person to vote. The challenge must be in writing and contain an oath as prescribed by statute, which shall be delivered to the clerk or inspector.

The clerk shall immediately deliver to the challenged person a copy of the oath of the person entering the challenge, and the challenged voter shall be allowed to cast a provisional ballot.

Any voter or poll watcher filing a frivolous challenge of any person's right to vote commits a misdemeanor of the first degree; however, voters 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 voters or poll watchers by law. Each instance where any voter or poll watcher files a frivolous challenge of any person's right to vote constitutes a separate offense.



TRAINING MATERIALS

The Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections recommends that poll watchers review our online poll worker training materials to become familiar with polling place operations, the roles of various members of the election board, policies and procedures, and election laws and rules as they pertain to voting at the polling place.

You can find these materials at <http://hcsoepollworkertraining.com>.

FORMS FOR DESIGNATING A POLL WATCHER

Poll Watcher designation forms are available at the following Supervisor of Elections Offices:

- 601 E. Kennedy Blvd., 16th Floor, Tampa, FL 33602
- 2514 N. Falkenburg Rd., Tampa, FL 33619

Forms can be downloaded at any time from our website: **VoteHillsborough.org**. Click on **About Running for Office**, and then **Campaign and Election Day Guidelines** to find the forms.

For more information, please contact Chelsea Campbell at (813) 384-3944.