



County of Tulare
REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

A GUIDE FOR POLL WATCHERS

POLL WATCHERS are persons interested in election proceedings who are entitled to observe polling place operations during voting hours. However, poll watchers may not disrupt the election process or interfere with a Voter's right to cast a secret ballot. Poll watchers often represent candidates, political campaigns and/or organizations.

POLL WORKERS are appointed by the Registrar of Voters and are responsible for all phases of the election that take place at the polls. They will comply with poll watchers' requests for Voter information.

*Poll Watchers have the right to view all procedures at a polling location and/or at the central counting location. **Please be courteous to our Poll Workers as they are working a very long day and doing their very best. Remain quiet and do not disturb Poll Workers, Election Officials or Voters.** Although Poll Watchers are allowed by law, there are rules and guidelines that must be followed.*

POLL WATCHERS MAY:

1. Observe the proceedings at the polls, including the opening & closing procedures.
2. Obtain information from the Precinct Indexes that are posted near the entrance.
3. Look at the copy of the Precinct Index being updated at the worktable (ONLY IF the Poll Workers are not using it and there are not Voters waiting to vote).
4. Make notes and watch all procedures.

POLL WATCHERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

1. Checking in at each site, whether the polling place or central counting site.
2. Wearing an identification badge.
3. Maintaining a professional manner while observing the election process.
4. Ensuring they do not interfere with the election process.
5. Following established county observation rules/policies.

POLL WATCHERS MAY NOT:

1. Interfere or intimidate Poll Workers or Voters in any way with the conduct of any election.

2. Converse with Poll Workers or Voters in such a manner as to interfere with or delay the voting process (questions regarding the election process shall be directed to the Registrar of Voters office, not the Poll Workers).
3. Touch any voting materials or equipment or sit at the official precinct board table.
4. Use the area between the official precinct board tables, voting booths and vote tabulating equipment as observation point/post.
5. Interfere with the timely closing of polls or transmission of the voting results.
6. Converse with Voters (within 100 feet of the entrance to a poll) relating to the casting of a vote, display any campaign material, wear candidate badges or speak to a Voter relating to their qualifications to vote.
7. Use cellular telephones, pagers or two-way radios inside the polling place, and/or within 100 feet of the entrance to the polling place.
8. Monopolize and/or remove the posted Precinct Indexes so that others are unable to use them.
9. Use telephone or other polling place facilities.

NON-COMPLIANCE WITH RULES:

1. If a poll watcher declines to observe the rules, the Inspector Polling Officer shall ask the poll watcher to leave the polling location.
2. If the poll watcher fails to follow the directions of the Inspector Polling Officer will contact law enforcement.

LAWS TO BE AWARE OF:

1. Any person who **in any manner interferes** with the officers holding an election or conducting a canvass, or with Voters lawfully exercising their rights of voting at an election, as to prevent the election or canvass from being fairly held and lawfully conducted, is guilty of a felony **punishable by imprisonment** in state prison for 16 months or two or three years (E.C. Sec. 18502).
2. Only Poll Workers have the right to challenge a person's eligibility to vote at the polls.
3. Poll Workers are also instructed to report to the Registrar of Voters office the presence of any persons or signs which may be intimidating to Voters or cause interference with the voting process.
4. The use of force, violence or tactic of coercion or intimidation to compel a person to refrain from voting at any election is a felony punishable by imprisonment in state prison for 16 months or two or three years (E.C. Sec. 18540).
5. Damaging or tampering with voting equipment or official election materials in a polling place is a felony, punishable by imprisonment for two, three, or four years (E.C. Sec. 18564).
6. Electioneering is not permitted within 100 ft. of the polling place; that is within 100 ft. from the entrance or door to the room or rooms in which Voters sign the roster and cast their ballots. Only Poll Workers are permitted to post signs within 100 ft. of the polling place. Exit polling is permitted; however, no closer than 25 ft. of polling places by news media or other organizations surveying Voters as to how they voted. Media may come into a poll to film or interview Voters, including Voters in the booth, as long as the Voter consents and there is no disruption to other Voters or the voting process (E.C. Sec. 18370 and Attorney General Opinion).

7. Wearing campaign badges or taking campaign material or literature into the polling place is not permitted.
8. Poll watchers may not sit at the official table [E.C. Sec. 14223(a)].
9. The area between the official table and the voting booths is accessible to Voters only and may not be designated as an observer post (E.C. Sec. 14221).
10. Indexes marked to indicate persons who have voted are posted for reference by the public (E.C. Sec. 14202).
11. The American Flag must be prominently displayed regardless of weather conditions during all polling hours [E.C. Sec. 14105(f)].
12. At the opening of the polls, the ballot box must be opened and shown that it is empty, closed and then shall remain in the polling place until the ballots are counted and returned to the Registrar of Voters office (E.C. Sec. 14215).
13. If a polling place is inaccessible to a Voter with a disability, the Voter may vote a ballot outside the premises in an accessible area as near as possible to the polling place [E.C. Sec. 14282(c)].
14. Voters may request and receive assistance in voting if they declare under oath that they are unable to mark their ballots [E.C. Sec. 14282(a)].
15. A voting booth may not be occupied by more than one person at a time unless a person is assisting the Voter as provided by law. Nothing prevents a Voter from being accompanied by a child under the age of 18 years while within the voting booth area if the child is under the Voter's care (E.C. Secs. 14281, 14222 and 14224).
16. Smoking is not permitted inside the polling place.

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