

Poll Watchers, Observers and Media

To ensure fair and honest elections, New York State Election 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.

ALL Poll Watchers and observers inside the room where voting takes place **MUST** sign the Visitor Log and show proper certificates, authorization letters or identification.

Role of a Poll Watcher:

Observe elections at the Poll Site. Report any observed irregularities to the Poll Site Coordinator or Inspector, Police Officer, and/or the Borough Office.

Poll Watcher qualifications:

Each Poll Watcher must be certified in writing by one of the following: a candidate, a chairperson of a political committee, or a chairperson of an independent body. Each Poll Watcher **must show a certificate** for **each** Election District to the Poll Site Coordinator or Chairperson.

At any time, there are to be no more than three Poll Watchers per ED per candidate, political committee or independent body. Only one of the three is allowed within close proximity to the ED 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 _____ Election to be held on _____	
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	

How to interact with Poll Watchers:

- Welcome them. Introduce yourself with your name and position. The Coordinator should ask to see the Poll Watcher's Certificate and ask them to sign the Visitor Log.
- If Poll Watchers have questions about what they can or cannot do, the Coordinator should show them the Poll Watcher rules on the poster at the entrance.
- Be familiar with what Poll Watchers CAN and CANNOT do.

Poll Watchers, Observers and Media (continued)

Poll Watchers CAN:

- Arrive at 5:00 a.m. 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.
- Compare ballot to Sample Ballot Poster.
- Examine the E-Poll Book as long as they do not interfere with the Inspectors or election proceedings.

If a poll watcher presents a Poll Watcher certificate for your ED and wants to view who voted, and there are no voters in line:

- Press the MENU button on the top left of the E-Poll Book to get to the HOME screen
 - Press Summary Report on the HOME screen
 - Press CHECK-INS at the top of the screen
 - The poll watcher may then scroll through the names of voters who have checked in at the ED
 - If a voter arrives, the poll watcher must stop scrolling and allow the voter to vote
 - Press HOME and GET STARTED to go back to checking in voters
- Observe the closing of the polls and the Return of Canvass.
 - Challenge individual voters on the basis of signature authenticity, residence, multiple voting, or qualification to vote. See “Voter is Challenged” in the Special Situations charts for ED Inspector Serving the Voters.
 - Report possible violations to the Coordinator, Inspector, Police Officer, or Borough Office.

Poll Watchers CANNOT:

- Interfere with the election process.
- Electioneer in any manner within 100 feet of any Poll Site entrance. This includes soliciting votes or distributing, wearing or carrying political literature, posters, banners or buttons, or showing a candidate or party’s name.
- Tamper with election materials including any posted official signs and/or results tape.
- Protest a vote ruling.
- Accompany a voter to the Privacy Booth, BMD, or Scanner.

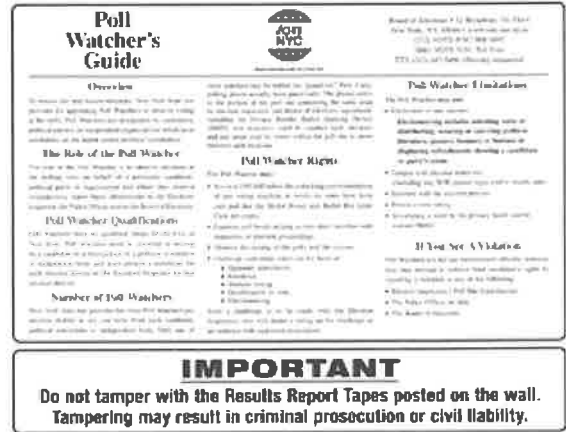
Examples of “Interfering with the election process”:

- Talking to Poll Workers while voters are present
- Talking to voters who are voting
- Carrying on any conversation that may create a distraction or disturbance
- Electioneering

Poll Watchers, Observers and Media (continued)

If a Poll Watcher Breaks a Rule:

- Show them the rules posted at the entrance of the Poll Site and remind them of the specific rule they are violating.
- If the Poll Watcher refuses to comply with the rules, the Coordinator should call the Borough Office.
- If necessary the Police Officer can be asked for assistance.



Observers

There may be observers visiting your Poll Site on Election Day. You may have several observers or you may have none. All are required to have proper authorization. Some examples of observers who may be present include:

- **Federal Observers** are interested in making sure the Voting Rights Act is being followed, meaning no voter is faced with discrimination on the basis of race, color or language. They are also observing whether language assistance is being provided as required. They **do not require** written authorization, but **must show proper identification**.
- **HAVA Observers** and other groups are making sure the Poll Site is accessible and that voters with disabilities are able to vote. They **must present a letter** from the Board of Elections or identification.
- **Board of Elections Observers** are looking to see that policies and procedures are being followed, and to identify areas in need of improvement. They **must show a Board of Elections ID or identification**.

Media/Press

Media/Press are allowed to be inside the Poll Site if they have **written authorization** from the Board of Elections. They are allowed to film or take pictures of individuals with the individual's permission. You may choose not to be photographed. They are also allowed to take pictures of equipment and booths as long as voters are not present.

Exit Polls

Exit polls attempt to find out how voters have voted and are allowed outside the Poll Site beyond 100 feet of any Poll Site entrance. They cannot ask voters how they will vote before they enter the Poll Site.