



# 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](http://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

## 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

## **Board of Elections in the City of New York**

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**

Bianka Perez, President  
Frederic M. Umane, Secretary  
Jose Miguel Araujo  
John Flateau, Ph.D.  
Lisa Grey  
Maria R. Guastella  
Michael Michel  
Michael A. Rendino  
Alan Schulkin  
Simon Shamoun

### **Board of Elections Telephone Numbers**

General Office	(212) VOTENYC / 868-3692
	(866) VOTENYC (Toll-Free)
(Hearing Impaired)	TTY (212) 487-5496
Manhattan	(212) 886-2100
Bronx	(718) 299-9017
Brooklyn	(718) 797-8800
Queens	(718) 730-6730
Staten Island	(718) 876-0079

# 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:

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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.

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Signature of Candidate,  
Chairperson of Political Committee  
or Independent Body

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

