

ALBANY COUNTY POLL WORKER TRAINING CURRICULUM

POLL INSPECTORS

As an Election Inspector, you are responsible for ensuring that elections are conducted in a fair and impartial manner. Two of your most important responsibilities are: **To ensure that ALL eligible voters exercise their right to vote, and that the law is applied uniformly.** There are a number of reasons why this may seem difficult. Certain voters will present problems. Election Law and policies change over time and procedures can be different among counties. Ask your coworkers for help if you need it, and follow the instructions of your Chairperson and the County Board of Elections. Always keep in mind that as an Inspector, you are performing an important service for the public. If you are unable to work on Election Day, please contact your County Board as far in advance as possible, so they can appoint someone to work for you.

Inspector's Overall Duties – Inspectors should be familiar with:

1. Voter qualifications
2. Registration procedures
3. Enrollment procedures
4. Types of ballots and special voting procedures
5. Operation of voting machines
6. Casting ballots
7. Procedures for challenging voters
8. Canvassing vote results

Inspector's Qualifications

To serve as an Inspector, you:

- Must be a registered voter and a resident of the county in which you will work;
- Cannot hold any public elective office or be a candidate for public office or party position to be voted on by voters of the district in which you will work;
- May not be the spouse, parent or child of a candidate running for office in the district in which you will work;
- Must be able to clearly speak, read, and write the English language;
- Must be certified as an Inspector by the County Board of Elections after attending an official training class and by passing a written test.

Absentee Ballots for Inspectors

As an inspector, you may vote by *Special Ballot Application*, if you will not be able to vote in your own election district.

The Board of Inspectors and Chairperson

The four inspectors assigned to each election district comprise the Board of Elections for that district. It is important that you work as a team to ensure that an honest, efficient election is conducted, and that proper order is maintained at your polling site. On Election Day, the Board of Inspectors is the only on-site authority for the election district. You report only to your County Board of Elections.

Each Board of Inspectors must appoint one member to serve as Chairperson for the year. If the Board of Inspectors cannot agree on a Chairperson, you can draw names for the position.

Duties of the Chairperson

The chairperson is a team leader who supervises Election Day activities. Specific duties include:

- Accounting for and distributing all of the day's election supplies;
- Ensuring that all required forms are filled out completely and accurately;
- Making Inspector duty assignments, as well as arranging for meal times and short breaks;
- Announcing vote results at the end of the night
- Making sure pay vouchers are signed;
- Returning your supplies to the Town Clerk of the municipality you are working in. (City of Albany should return them to the Board of Elections.)

Opening the Polls

Polling Hours

Voting hours differ between General and Primary elections. In a **GENERAL** election, all polls in Albany County are open from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. The voting hours in a **PRIMARY** election are from noon (12 p.m.) to 9 p.m.

Preparing to Open the Polls

All Inspectors and Poll Clerks must arrive at the polling site at least thirty minutes before the polls are scheduled to open so that you can accomplish the tasks necessary to open on time. If the building is locked when you arrive, immediately contact your County Board of Elections.

Checking Supplies

Each polling place has its own supply bag with the supplies you need for a smooth election day. Check that you have received the correct poll book for your district. Compare the information printed on your supply bag, with the voting system label or labels. Take an inventory of the materials to be sure that you have affidavit ballots and envelopes, the **Voter's Bill of Rights** notices to persons whose poll records are missing and other supplies. Be sure that the paper ballots you have are the correct ones.

Setting up the Machines

To have a bipartisan atmosphere at your polling site, it is important that all four inspectors view the machines together before opening the polls. Remember, you CANNOT open the polls until at least one inspector from each political party has arrived. If the supplies are not at your site by that time, contact the BOE. Accompanying the voting machines will be a sealed envelope with the keys for the voting system, which will have:

- The E.D. number and location of the polling place
- The number on the machine's outside seal
- The number on the machine's protective counter. (This # indicates how many voters have ever used this machine)

Do the numbers match?

Before opening the envelope, all Inspectors must make sure that the numbers that appear on the outside of the envelope match the respective numbers on the outside of the machine, including the seal number, the protective counter number, and the public counter number. If the numbers do not match, contact your county board **IMMEDIATELY**. Do not permit any voting until you receive direction from your county board.

If the numbers match, open the doors at the rear of the machine and check to ensure that ALL counters inside are set at zero.

Open the door of the paper roll compartment, at the top of the machine. Make sure that the lower paper roll is marked, signed and dated. Sometimes a sticker is used for this purpose. If there is no sticker or other marking, draw a line the full length of the lower roll. Two inspectors should date and sign that line.

In places where a different type of machine is used, the County Board of Elections will supply instructions for setting it up.

Locate the "Before the Polls Open" section on the Statement of Canvass form. Fill in the blanks and have all Inspectors sign the certification at the bottom of the page.

Counter Problems

If any counter (except the protective counter) on the machine does not register zero, notify the machine custodian on duty or call the County Board. If a machine custodian is available, he or she can reset the counters to zero before the polls open. If a custodian cannot service the machine before the polls are scheduled to be open, the Inspectors must immediately write a statement noting any numbers registered on the counters. Sign this statement and post it at the polling place until the machine vote is canvassed. The original number on the counter will be subtracted from the number you record for that counter at the end of the night, and will be verified by the County Board of Elections to determine an actual vote count.

Check to make sure that the face of the machine is correctly labeled, making sure that all candidates' names and propositions appear in the same place as on the sample ballot, provided to you with your other supplies.

If there is any difference between the sample ballot and the machine, immediately notify the Board of Elections.

During the entire process of setting up the machine, make sure that any Poll watchers present at your site, are allowed to view the steps involved.

Situating the Voting Machine and Other Arrangements of the Polling Area

Voting machines should be situated so that the inspectors and poll watchers can view the entire exterior. When a machine is not being used by a voter, the curtain will be open. The ballot strips on the face of the machine should be visible to the inspectors and poll watchers. After each voters leaves the booth, an inspector should check the ballot face to be sure that it has not been defaced or tampered with.

Once you have accounted for all your supplies and positioned the voting system, complete the following eight steps to prepare your polling site for voting:

1. Display the American Flag. When the Flag of the United States is displayed in a manner other than by being flown from a staff it should be displayed flat, whether indoors or outdoors. When displayed either horizontally or vertically against a wall, the union (stars) should be uppermost and to the Flag's right (the observer's left).
2. Post the sample ballots, the Voter's Bill of Rights and any other instructional material provided to you, outside the voting system area so it can be easily seen by voters before they vote.
3. If distance markers have not already been posted, place them 100 feet from the site entrance. No campaigning (sometimes called electioneering) is allowed within this 100-foot area. Political posters, buttons, banners, or signs in this area are not allowed.
4. Inspectors and Poll Clerks should be wearing proper identification buttons or badges.
5. Arrange a table and seating for voters to use when voting by affidavit ballot, or emergency ballot. Leave space so a wheelchair can be accommodated at this table.
6. Paper ballots and other supplies should be kept in a secure place in view of the Inspectors but not accessible to the public. Only take out what you need from the supply suitcase to help keep control of the various materials.

POLL WATCHERS

All Poll watchers must have a written certificate issued by the chairperson of the political party or independent body which they represent. In a primary it can be signed by two or more candidates. On Election Day, the certificate must be shown to the Inspectors of the election district in which the Poll watcher serves. These certificates must be collected by Inspectors when a watcher indicates they do not intend to return to that polling site. When Poll watchers are present at the end of the night to view the canvass and get election results, collect their certificates and return them to the County Board with your supplies.

In a **PRIMARY ELECTION**, any two or more candidates and any party committee may have a maximum of three Poll watchers at an election district site at any time.

In a **GENERAL ELECTION**, any party committee or independent body with at least one candidate on the ballot may have up to two Poll watchers at an election district site.

Poll watchers are entitled to:

1. Be present at the polls from 15 minutes before opening and may stay until after the signing of the Inspector's Report and the results are announced after the polls are closed;
2. View the unlocking of the voting system and ballot boxes, if any, before the polls open;
3. Challenge persons whom they believe are not qualified to vote; and
4. Observe the canvass of the vote.

Poll watchers are NOT entitled to:

1. Assist in the conduct of the election
2. Be a part of any electioneering at the site
3. Greet the voters
4. Handle any official documents or otherwise interfere with the duties of inspectors

Election Day Procedures

1. Ask for the voter's name and residence address. You should loudly and distinctly repeat the person's name and address.
2. Find the voter's registration record in your printed poll book. In a **PRIMARY ELECTION**, check that the voter is enrolled in a political party that has a primary election. A voter in a general election need not be enrolled in a party to vote.

If the voter's name is in your poll roster, but at a different address **still within your election district**, note the new address in the poll book and allow the voter to vote on the machine. . If you are not sure the voter's new address is still in your district, call the Board of Elections. **If more than one district votes in the same polling place, please check with the other election districts within the building to be sure that the voter gets to the correct polling site.**

Name Changes: If a voter has changed his or her name since he or she last voted or registered, they may still vote without re-registering as long as they still reside at the same address in your district. Have the voter sign his or her name, as it appears in your poll roster, and just above it, sign their new name. Note this name change in the appropriate place on your **Challenge Report**.

3. Check the poll roster to see if the voter needs to show identification. Some voters may be required by State Law to show ID on Election Day. The Signature Box in the poll roster will state, for example, "**ID REQUIRED**" if an individual needs to present ID.

The forms of identification that may be accepted at the polling place must be:

A current valid photo ID with the voter's name and picture.

Examples include but are not limited to:

Passport	Pistol or firearm permit
Driver's license	Pilot's license
Non-driver's ID card	Military identification
Student ID card	Government identification

OR

A copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or government document that shows the name and address of the voter.

4. Once the voter has provided the required identification, the inspector will cross out the words "**ID REQUIRED**" that appear in the signature box and **INITIAL** above the box. While covering the pre-printed signature, have the voter sign in the appropriate square. Compare this signature to the original, pre-printed signature. Do not allow the voter to view the pre-printed signature before signing.
5. If the signatures match, enter the next available sequential voter number and your initials. If more than one voting device is being used, direct the voter to the appropriate one, and note the type of voting device in the space provided. If the voter states they are physically unable to sign, enter the words, "Unable to Sign" on the signature line of the record, along with a brief explanation of the voter's disability. Two inspectors should initial this entry.
6. In a **PRIMARY ELECTION**, a person can vote **ONLY** in the party in which he or she is enrolled. If the voter is qualified, give him or her appropriate colored card to match his or her party enrollment. The Inspector or Poll Clerk at the voting system then takes the colored card from the voter and sets the voting system to permit voting in that person's appropriate primary.

NOTE: If someone votes in the **WRONG PARTY**, notify the County Board of Elections **AT ONCE**, and make a note of the details of the incident.

Providing Voter Assistance:

Any voter who states under oath that he or she requires assistance to vote may request help from the Board of Inspectors. **The voter may get help from someone other than the Inspectors, but that person cannot be the voter's employer or union agent.**

If a voter requests assistance from the Board of Inspectors, take the following five steps:

1. Have the voter swear that "he or she needs assistance." The Inspector will ask the voter: **"Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the statements you just made are true?"** If the voter answers yes, then he or she can receive assistance.
2. Have the voter sign the poll record; and indicate in a space provided for your use that he or she received assistance.
3. If the voter has no one to help them, one Inspector from each political party will be selected to give the voter assistance. If the voter requests help from someone other than an Inspector administer the required oath to that individual (see Appendix 9). Make sure that the person providing assistance is not the voter's employer or union agent.
4. The needed assistance should be provided in a way that will guard the voter's privacy, but not influence the vote. The person providing assistance should not observe how the person voted. If you happen to notice how the person voted, tell no one.
5. Enter the name of the voter that received assistance, and the name and address of the person who provided assistance, in Section three of the Challenge Report.

Under no circumstances may an Inspector enter a voting machine booth to give instructions after the voter has closed the curtain.

Whenever possible, instruct the voter on how to use the system before he or she begins to vote. Use the sample ballot to explain the location of candidates' names or any proposals on the ballot.

Processing Ballots

As an Inspector, you will have to familiarize yourself with how to process several different kinds of ballots. All paper ballots must be handled with the same secrecy and safeguards from tampering that are provided by machine voting.

Write-in Votes

A voter may cast a write-in vote for any office and any person whose name **does not appear on the official ballot** for that office. A write-in vote that could have been cast on the official ballot will not be counted. The official ballot contains a space specifically reserved for write-in votes. A pencil, used for write-in votes, will be provided with your Election Day supplies. Check periodically to make sure that you maintain sufficient supplies throughout the day.

Affidavit Ballot or Court Order:

An **Affidavit Ballot** is a special paper ballot which, once voted, goes into a special envelope that must be accurately and completely filled out by the voter. **Affidavit Ballots** may be used by any voter whose poll record is missing and who claims to be a registered voter in your election district. They can also be used by voters who need to present identification at the polling site but did not present ID.

Affidavit ballots may also be used when a voter claims to be enrolled in a political party other than the one indicated on the poll roster, or when a person is already registered in your county, but has recently moved into your district. Make sure all affidavit ballots are properly and completely filled out by both the voter and the inspector. Also, ensure that the voter uses the affidavit ballot from their proper election district.

Guidelines for Voting by Affidavit Ballot

1. A voter's poll record may be "missing" from your set of records because the voter actually is registered in a different district. If you believe this is the case, direct the person to the proper polling place by calling the Board of Elections.
2. If more than one district votes in the same polling place, please check with the other election districts within the same building to be sure that the voter gets to the correct polling site within the building.
3. If the person appears to belong in your district, but his or her poll record is missing, call the Board of Elections, he or she may vote by affidavit ballot or obtain a court order. Give the person the **Notice to Voters** form and answer any questions from the voter.

If the person at your polling place claims to be registered in another district, but has moved into your district, confirm this new address information with the Board of Elections to make sure that the new address is located in the election district in which you are working.

4. If the person agrees to vote on an **Affidavit Ballot**, have the voter complete the affidavit envelope, including all necessary information regarding the voter's qualifications. Any information left off of the ballot envelope may prevent the Board of Elections from counting the ballot.
5. Provide the voter with a paper ballot. Instruct the voter to privately mark the ballot, fold it, and seal it in the affidavit envelope.
6. Make sure the voter signs the affidavit envelope or their vote will not be counted.

7. After the voter has sealed the envelope, an inspector must sign the affidavit envelope in the space provided. Be sure that the county, town, ward, and district information is completed or else it will not be counted.
8. Enter the voter's name and address in section six of the challenge report.

Absentee Ballots

A qualified voter may vote by Absentee Ballot in a General, Primary, or Special election if he or she is:

- Absent from the county on election day;
- Confined by illness or disability; or
- In jail for other than a felony conviction.

Absentee ballots are counted by the County Board. Voters may not deliver their absentee ballot to an inspector at a polling site. Instruct the voter to bring their ballot to the Board of Elections. All ballots must be time stamped by 9 p.m. or they will not be counted.

Emergency Ballots

Some problems may arise that require using emergency paper ballots. Should you find it necessary to use emergency ballots, inform the Board of Elections as soon as possible of the machine breakdown and emergency ballots may be authorized.

Emergency ballots are used when:

The voting machine breaks down. Emergency ballots **must** be used if the machine breakdown lasts more than one hour;

Or

Your election district has used its supply of various paper ballots, or if other paper ballots are not delivered in time for the opening of polls. Do not borrow ballots from another district unless the County Board tells you to. They may not be the same ballots as those needed in your district.

When dealing with a voting system breakdown which requires using emergency ballots, follow these steps:

1. Have the voter sign the poll record as usual, but write "EB" (Emergency Ballot) beside the voter's name in the poll roster.
2. Give the voter an emergency ballot. Instruct him or her to complete the ballot privately and seal it in the envelope provided. In a **PRIMARY ELECTION**, the ballots are color-coded to indicate political party enrollment. Ensure that primary voters are given the correct ballot.
3. Make your best effort to allow voters privacy when they are voting by Emergency Ballot or Affidavit Ballot. To maintain proper order and voter privacy, direct **one voter at a time**.

4. Place the sealed envelope in the plastic bag provided in your election supply bag. Return these to the Board at the end of the night.

Challenges

A voter's qualifications can be challenged at the polling site by an Inspector, Clerk, Poll watcher, or any registered voter who is properly voting at that polling site. Challenges can be made for several reasons:

- the person's signature does not match the current registration signature;
- someone else using the same name has already voted;
- The person is believed not to reside at his or her registered address.

As an inspector, you must challenge any voter whom you know or suspect is not legally entitled to vote in your district.

Challenges of Voters

Follow these steps in processing challenges:

1. Make the challenge before the person votes.
2. Add the challenged voter's name to the **Challenge Report**.
3. Give the challenged voter the **Notice to Voters** form explaining his or her legal options.
4. Question the voter about his or her qualifications.
5. Administer the **Preliminary Oath** (Appendix 9) to the voter. If the voter refuses to answer questions or take the oath, they may not vote. Remind the voter that false statements are punishable as perjury.

Deciding the Challenge

If the Board of Inspectors, by majority vote, is satisfied with the voter's answers to these questions, the challenge is withdrawn and the individual is allowed to vote on the voting system in the normal manner. In the event of a tie, the individual is allowed to vote on the machine.

If the Board of Inspectors decides that the challenge is warranted, the individual is not allowed to vote. However, if the voter still claims to be qualified, the Board of Inspectors will administer the **Qualification Oath** to be sure that the individual understands the voting requirements and that they know if they make a false statement on the affidavit, they will be guilty of perjury. The challenged voter then is allowed to vote on the voting system.

Meeting Voter Needs

Disability Etiquette

All polling sites in Albany County are handicap accessible. Poll inspectors will play an integral role in maintaining accessibility. At almost all polling sites, you will receive some sort of

handicap accessible equipment that you must set up. Most of it will just be putting up handicap parking signs and using cones to create these spaces. Some sites have handicap accessible doorbells or a ramp. If your polling site has a ramp, you will need to set it up and take it down when and if a voter requires it (some of the larger ramps will be set up for you). There are other sites where the handicap entrance is not the same entrance the rest of the voters will use. Should this be the case at your poll site, you will need to meet the voter at the handicap accessible entrance and assist them if required.

Sometimes you will be serving a voter who has a disability or uses a service animal. Remember that it is your responsibility to serve these voters courteously and do everything you can to ensure their voting experience is as easy as possible. Here are some tips:

- Be considerate of the extra time it might take for a disabled voter to vote.
- Know the accessible entrance to the building.
- Give undivided attention to a voter who has difficulty speaking, don't rush them.
- Speak directly to the voter, not to a companion who has come to help.
- Speak calmly, slowly and directly to a voter with a hearing problem.
- Provide easy to follow instructions
- Be patient, listen carefully and do not finish sentences for a voter.
- If you are having trouble being understood, write a note to a voter with a hearing problem.
- If a voter is visually impaired – greet them by letting them know who you are. Offer assistance. If accepted, guide the voter by letting them take your arm.

Service animals are not pets. The Americans with Disabilities Act defines a service animal as any guide dog, signal dog or other animal, not necessarily a dog, individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. Service animals perform some of the functions and tasks that individuals with disabilities cannot perform for themselves.

The following tips will aid you when assisting a voter who is using a service animal:

- Address the person, not the animal.
- Do not pet the animal.
- If there is a complaint about an animal being present, explain that federal and state laws protect the rights of individuals with disabilities to be accompanied by service animals.
- Do not whistle or direct other noises to the animal; such noises may be distracting.
- Avoid questions about the individual's disability or what the animal does for them.
- Do not automatically assume that a person with a service animal is blind.

- If you do not like animals or are afraid of certain animals, it is appropriate to excuse yourself and move away from the service animal.

Guidelines for Interacting with People with Disabilities

1. **Be yourself.** Treat people with disabilities with the same respect and consideration that you have for everyone else. Treat the person as an individual not as a disability. As in any new situation, everyone will feel more comfortable if you relax.
2. **Meeting someone.** When you meet someone, extend your hand to shake if that is what you normally do. A person who cannot shake hands will let you know. If you are meeting a blind person, identify yourself. If you have met before, remind the person of the context; he or she won't have the visual cues to jog the memory.
3. **Helping.** Do not automatically give assistance; ask first if the person wants help. Follow the person's cues and ask if you are not sure. And don't be offended if someone refuses your offer of assistance. It's their choice to be as independent as they can be.
4. **Communication.** Talk directly to the person, not to an aide, friend or interpreter. Ask the person to repeat if you don't understand them. If the person uses a wheelchair, sit down and converse at the same level. Offer to make basic information available in large print, Braille, electronic or audio formats – if such materials are provided to you by your County Board.
5. **Socializing.** Do not leave persons with disabilities out of a conversation or activity because you feel uncomfortable or fear that they will feel uncomfortable. Include them as you would anyone else; let it be their decision whether or not to participate.
6. **Touching.** Do not pat or touch a person with a disability unless there is a good reason (such as shaking hands in greeting or if the person has requested assistance). However, you may gently touch a deaf person to get his attention. Never push a person's wheelchair without their permission. Do not touch someone's cane, wheelchair or other device. It is a part of that person's mobility aids.

Environments

Be sensitive about the setting. A noisy or dark environment or many people talking at the same time might make it difficult for people with vision, speech, or hearing impairments to participate fully in a conversation. Be aware of clear paths of travel for people who use wheelchairs or are blind. Describe goings-on and surroundings (especially obstacles) to a blind person. A person with chemical sensitivity may have a reaction to smoke, perfume, or other toxins in the environment.

Hidden Disabilities

Not all disabilities are apparent. A person may have trouble following a conversation, may not respond when you call or wave, or may say or do something that seems inappropriate. The person may have a hidden disability, such as low vision, or mental illness. Don't make assumptions about the person or the disability.

Closing the Polls and Canvassing the Vote

Closing the Polls

At exactly 9 p.m. the Chairperson should announce that the polls are closing and the doors should be locked, if possible. Any person in line at that time, even if he or she is outside the doors, has the right to vote. Only after the last person has voted can the poll closing procedures begin.

Once the polls have closed, only authorized persons may remain in the polling area. Authorized individuals include the Inspectors, Poll Clerks, Poll watchers, Candidates and other authorized persons.

1. Lock the voting system to prevent further voting;
2. Sign the certificate verifying the number of voters displayed on the public counter, the number on the seal or other security device that you use to lock or seal the voting system, the number on the protective counter, and that the voting system is closed and locked;
3. Account for any ballots cast;
4. Canvass the voting system's votes;
5. Sign all documents and return supply bag to your city or town clerk or the Board of Elections.