



## District of Columbia Board of Elections

# GUIDELINES FOR POLL WATCHERS AND ELECTION OBSERVERS IN THE POLLING PLACE

**Poll Watchers** are individuals designated by a candidate or campaign to observe the election process. **Election Observers** are individuals who wish to observe the election process, but are not designated by a candidate or campaign to serve as poll watchers. The D.C. Board of Elections provides these Guidelines for Poll Watchers & Election Observers in order to ensure the orderly conduct of elections, and to protect the rights of all participants in the voting process.

Site Coordinators are asked to make every reasonable effort to accommodate poll watchers and election observers. Priority accommodation is given first to poll watchers (*1 watcher per precinct per campaign at any given time*), and then to members of the media and election observers. Site Coordinators have the authority to regulate the presence and activities of watchers and observers within the polling place, including limiting the number of watchers or observers at one time and ejecting disruptive individuals.

### **Poll Watchers & Observers must:**

- ❖ Sign in and out on the Sign-in Sheet when you arrive and whenever you leave the polling place or return.
- ❖ Visibly wear a badge issued by the Board at all times while in the polling place that indicates:
  - The name of the candidate or group represented (if any); and
  - The Watcher/Observer's name.
- ❖ Direct questions to the Site Coordinator, or any other poll worker(s) designated.
- ❖ Follow the instructions of the Site Coordinator, and remain within any designated area within the polling place.

### **Poll Watchers & Observers may:**

- ❖ Observe the election process, including opening and closing procedures for the voting equipment and the Special Ballot Box.
- ❖ Unofficially ascertain the identity of persons who have voted;
- ❖ Report any alleged election discrepancies to the Site Coordinator;
- ❖ Ask questions about the election process to the Site Coordinator and listen to conversations between poll workers and voters.

### **Watchers & Observers may not:**

- ❖ Touch any official record, ballot, voting equipment, or counting form.
- ❖ Interfere with or obstruct the election process.
- ❖ Wear campaign buttons, stickers, or other campaign insignia, or hand out any campaign literature.
- ❖ Talk to any voter who is in the process of checking in or casting a ballot.
- ❖ Urge the election or defeat of any candidate or measure on the ballot.
- ❖ Compromise the secrecy of a voter's ballot.
- ❖ Talk on cell phones, except that silent communication by text message and email is permissible.
- ❖ Provide assistance to voters.
- ❖ Take any videos or pictures while inside voting or counting areas, if such use is determined by the election officials to be disruptive or interfere with the process.

**And please remember that candidates cannot serve as poll watchers.**

### **For More Information or Dispute Resolution:**

- ❖ Contact the Office of General Counsel at: (202) 727-2194 or [ogc@dcboe.org](mailto:ogc@dcboe.org).