



CHAPTER 9: ELECTION DAY VOTING¹

Section 9.01 Election Day Voting Introduction

Chapter 9 explains how to run polling places on Election Day, including setting up voting equipment, checking in voters, and handling different ballot types. It covers checking voter IDs, helping voters with disabilities, managing official observers, and keeping campaign activities outside the 100-foot neutral zone. The chapter also explains how to close the polls, count ballots, and safely return all materials to the board office with a team from both political parties.

Remember that the board must have completed the bipartisan, public Logic and Accuracy (L&A) testing prior to any equipment being used. Follow the instructions in [Chapter 5, Section 5.10](#). Boards generally test equipment used in early voting shortly after receiving the Secretary of State's *Form of the Ballot* directive up to about a week before early voting and may do all of the testing at once or do the remainder incrementally leading up to Election Day.

Coordinating with Vendors

The board must have at least one coordination call with each voting system vendor prior to early voting and Election Day. See [Chapter 12, Section 12.04](#) for more details on this coordination requirement.

¹[Directive 2026-36](#).

Section 9.02 Early Voting and Election Day EAP Communication Plan

The board must have at least one printed copy of its Election Administration Plan (EAP) on hand for early voting and Election Day at the board offices. Virtual copies should also be available to key election officials.

Review and ensure that Section III of the EAP, Pre-Election Day and Election Day communication plan [Chapter 2, Section 2.08](#), has the following resources up-to-date:

- utilities contact numbers
- checklist that determines the confirmation of voting hours, location
- frequently visited websites that are needed to do the job effectively
- local and national media outlets with names, email, and phone numbers
- standard template for press releases on letterhead, with prepopulated contact information, in a standard press release format
- all county board of elections social media platforms listed and the contact information for those who have passwords
- points of contact phone number and email address for issues and complaints, both internal and from the public
- a location identified and noted for all press conferences that may need to be scheduled
- a list of communication partners to assist with communication needs (example: community partners and state partners)

The board must also have a plan in place to address potential misinformation and disinformation related to the election. It must notify the Ohio Secretary of State of any urgent communication needs, as the office is prepared to assist county boards with urgent communication matters. The Ohio Secretary of State will provide additional training in the development of a communication response plan.

Section 9.03 Delivery and Return of Ballots and Equipment

DELIVERY TO POLLING LOCATION

Boards must get voting equipment to polling places before or on Election Day.² If board personnel deliver equipment early:

- Keep it secure at all times.
- Prevent any access or tampering.
- Allow only these people to access it:
 - precinct election officials (PEOs)
 - voting location manager
 - board staff

Never store voting equipment at a PEO's home, vehicle, or place of employment. PEOs must never keep the equipment overnight.

At a polling location, store voting equipment as the manufacturer suggests and in a clean and climate-controlled environment. Don't put it where it could get wet or in an area that might flood.

If board employees put removable media storage cards in voting machines when they are delivered to a polling place or transferred to a PEO, the board must use tamper-proof seals. Each seal needs its own unique number that matches a particular voting machine. Keep records of these numbers on three lists (two lists must be kept in

A Precinct Election Official (PEO)

is a registered voter who, on Election Day, is an official responsible for proper and orderly voting in their assigned precinct/polling location.

A Voting Location Manager (VLM)

is a PEO who oversees the election process. They manage the opening and closing of the polling location and transport ballots and voting materials to the board of elections after the polls close. By law, this official must belong to the same political party as the candidate for governor who received the most votes in that precinct during the last state election for governor.³

²[R.C. 3501.11 \(H\)-\(I\); R.C. 3501.37.](#)

³[R.C. 3501.22\(A\).](#)

a secure location at the board office, one with the director and the other with the deputy director).

PEOs must check all pieces of voting equipment for damage when setting up and closing. Precinct election officials must record inspections in the maintenance/event log from the board of elections. They must note any signs of damage or tampering.

Use a Chain of Custody Log ([Form 400](#) or local equivalent) to track who handles voting equipment, election supplies, and/or ballots. Train PEOs to check tamper-evident seals properly.⁴

POLLING LOCATION SECURITY AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

PEOs must control all voting equipment, keys, digital storage devices, ballots, and election supplies at all times. PEOs must promptly report any suspicious activity or damage to the equipment to the board of elections. Give each voting location manager an emergency contact list.

Teach PEOs that in emergencies, keeping people safe comes first. They should only take voting equipment, election supplies, and ballots if it may be done safely. If workers remove these items from a polling location, at least one PEO (better two, one from each major party) must stay with the equipment and supplies at all times.

SECURE RETURN OF BALLOTS, ELECTION DAY SUPPLIES, AND ELECTRONIC POLLBOOKS

When polls close, a bipartisan team must return all ballots and supplies to the board office or other designated place. The team must include the voting location manager and a worker or appointee from the other party who has sworn to safely transport election materials.⁵

PEOs must seal each electronic pollbook with a tamper-evident seal before return.⁶ If it uses a removable data storage unit or makes paper records, workers must seal these items too.

Before and after the polls close, election officials must check voting booths for any signs that do not relate to that election. They must remove election signs, including candidate

⁴[R.C. 3505.15.](#)

⁵[R.C. 3505.31.](#)

⁶[R.C. 3505.31.](#)

withdrawal notices. Tell PEOs during training whether any notices should be kept for future elections.

When moving ballots and election supplies, the bipartisan team must ride in the same vehicle. The board can have others, like law enforcement officials, go with them. One team may transport the ballots and supplies for a whole multi-precinct site.

Section 9.04 List of Registered Voters

The board must give Official Precinct Voter Registration Lists⁷ to each precinct. These must be updated and posted at these times:

1. First posting at 6:30 a.m.⁸ after the voting location manager marks who voted early or absentee and early. List names in alphabetical order when possible. PEOs must keep updating the other copies as people vote.⁹
2. Second posting at 11 a.m.¹⁰ showing who voted since 6:30 a.m. Workers keep updating other copies.
3. Third posting at 4 p.m. showing who voted from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.¹¹ No more postings needed after this.

Party affiliation must be on the lists posted on Election Day.¹²

Anyone can come in to check these lists and take notes.¹³ They can't wear campaign clothing or items and can't disrupt voting. They may not remove the posted Precinct Voter Registration List, so post the lists securely.

⁷[R.C. 3503.23\(A\)](#), the board of elections shall prepare an official precinct voter registration list from the statewide database, showing all qualified voters' names, addresses, and recent primary election party affiliations, arranged alphabetically insofar as practicable, except as restricted by law.

⁸[R.C. 3503.23\(B\)\(1\)](#); [R.C. 3501.32\(A\)](#).

⁹[R.C. 3503.23\(B\)\(1\)](#).

¹⁰[R.C. 3503.23\(B\)\(2\)](#).

¹¹[R.C. 3503.23\(B\)\(2\)](#).

¹²[R.C. 3503.23\(A\)](#).

¹³[R.C. 3503.23\(C\)](#).

Section 9.05 Pollbooks – Paper or Electronic

The pollbook (or poll list) is needed for every election. PEOs use it to check if a voter is registered and eligible to vote in that election at that precinct.

POLLBOOK CONTENTS

A pollbook must have:

- The voter's name
- The voter's address
- An image of the voter's signature
- A space for the voter to sign¹⁴
- The capability to flag a voter as required to vote a provisional ballot and the reason why the voter needs to do so.

In a party primary election, the pollbook needs a space to record which party ballot the voter picks.

The pollbook may have other details officials need in order to give the right ballot type (like ballot style number, districts, etc.).

Pollbooks can be paper or electronic.¹⁵ Electronic pollbooks have the same voter information as paper ones.

Each voter must sign the pollbook. For electronic books, voters sign on a pad or screen. If a voter can't sign, their legally appointed helper (attorney-in-fact) may sign for them.¹⁶

PAPER POLLBOOK BACKUPS

If the board uses electronic pollbooks, it must have paper pollbook backups for each check-in station. If the backup plan splits paper pollbooks alphabetically, it's okay to have split backup pollbooks. The board can give a full copy of the pollbook to each

¹⁴[R.C. 3505.18](#).

¹⁵[R.C. 3503.23](#).

¹⁶[R.C. 3505.18](#); [R.C. 3501.382](#). Generally, signing or affixing a signature to an election-related document requires a person's written, cursive-style legal mark written in that person's own hand. However, voters with a disability may personally affix their signature through the use of a reasonable accommodation, including the use of assistive technology or an augmentative device such as a signature stamp. See [R.C. 3501.011\(A\)](#), [3501.382\(F\)](#) and related [OAG 2015-012](#). In counties with electronic pollbooks, if a voter is physically unable to sign and cannot be accommodated on the electronic poll book, the voter may affix their signature in the backup paper pollbook. In the alternative, the voter may have a properly appointed attorney-in-fact sign on the voter's behalf.

check-in station, but it must have a way to ensure voters get only one ballot. Plan how voters will check in to keep the process accurate and efficient.

If problems with electronic pollbooks require PEOs to switch to paper backups on Election Day, they should use them until polls close. However, if the board tells them to return to the electronic pollbooks after switching to paper, it must have a clear plan to keep accurate records of voter activity. The policy must explain exactly when PEOs may switch back. This standard should consider how much voter activity must be accurately transferred from the backup paper pollbook to the electronic pollbook.

Train PEOs to use backup paper pollbooks. This includes how to pick the right ballots based on precinct or split, and how to make and post Precinct Voter Registration Lists.

SPECIAL MARKINGS IN THE POLLBOOK

Mark the pollbook to show voters who may need special processing (like a 17-year-old voter) or who must use provisional ballots.

- **17-Year-Old Voter**

Ohio law lets 17-year-olds who will be 18 by the next general election vote in primaries, but only for nominating candidates and presidential convention delegates.¹⁷ This is because they'll be able to vote for the nominees at the November general election.

Like all voters, 17-year-olds must be registered and show a valid ID.

Voters who are 17 at the time of the primary cannot vote on:

- State Party Central Committee
- County Party Central Committee¹⁸
- Questions and Issues

The ballot style for 17-year-old voters is on the board voting system and in its board instructions.

- **First-time Registrant By-Mail**

¹⁷[Schwerdtfeger v. Husted](#), 2016 Ohio Misc. LEXIS 18, Franklin C.P. No. 16 CV 002346 (March 11, 2016). [R.C. 3503.01](#); [R.C. 3503.011](#); [R.C. 3503.07](#). *State ex rel. Webber v. Felton*, 77 Ohio St. 554 (1908).

¹⁸[R.C. 3513.14](#), State and county party central committees are elected at the primary election.

Federal law requires special handling for first-time registrants by mail who didn't provide valid ID when registering (driver license number, last four digits of Social Security number, or copy of acceptable form of ID). Mark these voters in the pollbook as needing to show ID to vote a regular ballot. Federal law requires all voters to show ID before casting a regular ballot.¹⁹ If any voter doesn't, they must vote provisionally.

- **Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV)/Social Security Administration (SSA) Mismatch**

Federal law and state law requires comparing new voter registrations with records from the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) or Social Security Administration (SSA) to check ID info (the voter's driver license number and/or the last four digits of the voter's Social Security number).²⁰ If the information provided by the voter and entered in the registration system doesn't match other government databases, the board must place the voter in CONFIRMATION status and send the voter a Voter Information Confirmation Notice [Form 10-C](#) or [Form 10-D](#) and mark or "flag" the voter in provisional status with the corresponding code (see also [Chapter 4, Section 4.09](#)).²¹

The following codes and legal values will appear in the pollbook.

¹⁹[52 U.S.C. § 21083\(b\)](#).

²⁰[52 U.S.C. § 21083\(a\)](#); [R.C. 3503.151\(E\)](#).

²¹[R.C. 3503.201\(A\)\(1\)\(b\)](#).

PROVISIONAL REASON	Code Description	Associated BMV_MATCH_CODE
NULL/Blank	The voter is not required to vote a provisional ballot.	
ADD	The voter must verify their address (returned undeliverable acknowledgement).	Applied at BOE
SSN	The voter must verify the last 4 digits of their SSN4 (BMV/SSA mismatch on the SSN4).	Hold for future value
DOB	The voter must verify their date of birth (BMV/SSA mismatch on DOB).	DYNNNN DYNYYN DYNNNN DYYYYN
DLN	The voter must verify their driver license number/state ID number (BMV/SSA mismatch on the DLN).	DN
MMM	The voter must verify their driver license number/state ID number, last four of their SSN AND their date of birth (BMV/SSA mismatch on DLN, SSN4 and DOB).	NN_
MDB	The voter must verify their driver license number/state ID number AND date of birth (BMV/SSA mismatch on DLN and DOB).	Hold for future value
MDS	The voter must verify driver license number/state ID number AND last four of their SSN (BMV/SSA Mismatch on DLN and SSN4).	Hold for future value
MBS	The voter must verify their date of birth AND the last four of their SSN (BMV/SSA Mismatch on DOB and SSN4).	Hold for future value

These codes will indicate to precinct election officials why the voter must cast a provisional ballot.

- **Requested Absentee Ballot**

Flag voters who request absentee ballots (either by mail or in person) in the pollbook.²² If they come on Election Day, they must vote provisionally. This is true even if they say they never got or returned their absentee ballot.²³ Update all pollbooks with these flags, including on Election Day, using a supplemental list. For electronic pollbooks, upload the supplemental absentee voter list before polls open.

Don't let PEOs accept completed absentee ballots at polling places on Election Day.²⁴ Voters must return absentee ballots to the board office before polls close at 7:30 p.m. on Election Day.²⁵

- **Undeliverable Acknowledgment Card**

When an acknowledgment notice comes back as undeliverable, board employees must send a confirmation notice ([Form 10-C](#) or [10-D](#)) by forwardable mail giving the voter a chance to fix or confirm the information on file with the board. The board must mark or "flag" the voter in provisional status with the corresponding code in Section 4.09.²⁶

- **Former Ohio Resident — Presidential Election Only**

(This is not a common occurrence.)

Mark the pollbook "Former Resident's Presidential Ballot" for former Ohio residents who have filed a Certificate of Intent to Vote in a Presidential Election. On Election Day, these former residents must vote at the precinct and polling location where they last lived in Ohio.²⁷

- Give these voters a centrally counted, optical scan, paper ballot from their former Ohio precinct.
- After they mark their ballot, the voter must put it in an envelope clearly labeled "Former Ohio Resident's Presidential Ballot."

²²[R.C. 3509.09\(A\).](#)

²³[R.C. 3509.09\(B\).](#)

²⁴[R.C. 3509.05\(D\).](#)

²⁵[R.C. 3509.05\(D\).](#)

²⁶[R.C. 3503.19\(C\); R.C. 3503.201.](#)

²⁷[R.C. 3504.01.](#)

For more information, please refer to [Chapter 7, Section 7.06](#).

Section 9.06 Finding Voters, Identification, Ballot Type

FINDING VOTERS IN POLLBOOK — PAPER OR ELECTRONIC

PEOs Must Direct Voters to Correct Polling Location

Voters are responsible for registering their correct address, knowing their precinct and polling location, and bringing valid ID on Election Day. Precinct and voting location info is available online at [Find My Polling Location](#).

When voters are at the wrong precinct, PEOs must direct them to their correct precinct and polling location. Workers must explain that a provisional ballot cast in the wrong precinct won't count and give the voter the board's phone number.²⁸ Train poll workers on these rules.

Use Form 12-D for Wrong Precinct but Correct Polling Location

A provisional ballot cast in the wrong precinct of a multi-precinct polling place may count if PEOs didn't tell the voter they were in the wrong precinct.²⁹

If a voter won't go to their correct precinct, let them cast a provisional ballot but explain it won't count.³⁰ To document this, PEOs must fill out [Form 12-D](#) and attach it to the voter's provisional ballot envelope.³¹

If PEOs don't complete and attach [Form 12-D](#), the board must remake and count the provisional ballot for any contest the voter could vote for in their correct precinct.

²⁸[R.C. 3505.181\(C\)](#).

²⁹[R.C. 3505.181](#).

³⁰[R.C. 3505.181\(C\)\(1\)](#).

³¹[R.C. 3505.181\(C\)\(2\)](#).

IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS – For the Purpose of Voting –

ACCEPTABLE		UNACCEPTABLE
Driver License	State ID	Non Renewable/Non Transferable Credential
U.S. Passport	Interim ID	Ohio Mobile ID
U.S. Passport Card	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs ID	Identifier (on the back)
U.S. Military ID or Ohio National Guard ID	U.S. Military Dependent ID	

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IDENTIFICATION

Ohio law requires every voter to say their full name and current address and show photo ID when arriving at the polls on Election Day.³² [Posters showing acceptable ID](#) are available on the Secretary of State's website.

Acceptable photo IDs must not be expired and include:

- An Ohio driver license, state ID card, or interim ID form issued by the BMV or deputy registrar.

Note: An Ohio driver license or state ID with an old address IS ACCEPTABLE if the voter's current address is in the pollbook.

- A U.S. passport or passport card.
- A U.S. military ID card, U.S. military dependent ID card, Ohio National Guard ID card, or U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs ID card.³³

³²[R.C. 3505.18.](#)

³³[R.C. 3501.01\(AA\).](#)

For more info on voter identification, see [Directive 2023-03](#).

The following forms of ID are **NOT** acceptable for voting:

- driver license or photo ID card from a different state
- mobile IDs
- Social Security card
- birth certificate
- utility bill
- bank statement
- government check
- paycheck
- insurance card
- registration notice from the board of elections
- Ohio Mobile ID
- driver license or ID that contains a “Non-Renewable/Non-Transferable” identifier
- driver license or ID that contains a “Noncitizen” identifier (but may be used in conjunction with [additional proof of citizenship](#), such as a U.S. Passport, Certificate of Citizenship, or Certificate of Naturalization)

CHOOSING VOTER BALLOT TYPE

Regular Ballots

Give voters a regular ballot if they meet the following requirements:

- The voter’s name and address are in the pollbook.
- They provide a valid photo ID.³⁴

³⁴[R.C. 3505.18](#).

- For name changes, they provide proof of the legal name change (like a marriage license, court order, or other document showing both current and prior names) and complete and sign a Notice of Change of Name ([Form 10-L](#)).³⁵

If a voter changed their name but has no proof, they must vote provisionally.³⁶

If a voter moved within the same precinct, they must fill out a Voter Registration Form to update their address in the county's voter files before voting a regular ballot.³⁷

Provisional Ballots

Voters must cast a provisional ballot when:

- Their name isn't in the pollbook or supplemental voter list.³⁸

Note: Before giving a provisional ballot, PEOs must make sure the voter is in the correct precinct and is not eligible to cast a regular ballot in a different precinct or polling location. If they're in the wrong precinct, direct them to the correct one.³⁹

- They don't show proper or valid photo ID.⁴⁰
- They show photo ID which includes a notation indicating the individual is a noncitizen of the United States and they do not provide proof of citizenship when challenged under [R.C. 3505.20\(A\)](#).
- They moved to a different precinct without updating their voter registration by the deadline (30 days prior to the election).⁴¹
- They changed their name and moved to a different precinct without updating their voter registration by the deadline (30 days prior to the election).⁴²
- They changed their name and don't have proof of the legal name change.⁴³

³⁵[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(1\)\(b\)](#).

³⁶[R.C. 3505.181\(C\)\(1\)](#).

³⁷[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(1\)\(a\)](#).

³⁸[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(1\)](#).

³⁹[R.C. 3505.181\(C\)\(1\)](#).

⁴⁰[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(2\)](#).

⁴¹[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(6\)](#).

⁴²[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(6\)](#).

⁴³[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(6\)](#).

- Note: Voters who changed their name but didn't update their registration may cast a regular ballot if, before or on Election Day, the voter shows election officials proof of their legal name change, such as a court order or marriage license, that includes both their former and current names and completes [Form 10-L](#).⁴⁴
- Their signature doesn't match the signature on file.⁴⁵
- They were challenged and the challenge was resolved against the voter.⁴⁶
- Their registration notice was returned to the board as undeliverable.^{47*}
- The voter received a confirmation notice due to a database mismatch in the voter's registration information, and the voter failed to provide the requested information more than 14 days before the election (see also ***Election Day Mismatch Verification***).⁴⁸
- They requested an absentee ballot.⁴⁹
- They already cast a ballot in that election.

For reasons marked with an asterisk (*), flag these voters in the pollbook as needing to cast provisional ballots.

For additional information on the casting and counting of provisional ballots, see [Chapter 8, Provisional Voting](#).

Election Day Mismatch Verification

If a registered voter does not correct an issue with their registration more than 14 days⁵⁰ before the election, the voter will be required to cast a provisional ballot.⁵¹

On Election Day, the registered voter must complete [Form 12-B Provisional Ballot Affirmation](#) and provide the information needed to correct their registration. If the

⁴⁴[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(1\)\(b\)](#).

⁴⁵[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(7\)](#).

⁴⁶See [Advisory 2019-03](#); [R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(5\)](#).

⁴⁷[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(4\)](#).

⁴⁸[R.C. 3503.201\(A\)\(1\)\(b\)](#); [R.C. 3503.201\(D\)\(1\)](#).

⁴⁹[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(3\)](#).

⁵⁰[R.C. 3503.23](#).

⁵¹[R.C. 3503.201\(D\)\(1\)](#).

registered voter does not provide this information on Election Day, they must submit it within four days after the election for their provisional ballot to be counted.⁵²

Step-by-Step Instructions for Poll Workers on Election Day Mismatch Verification

1. Check the pollbook and identify the issue
 - When the voter states their name and address, locate their record.
 - If the pollbook shows the voter has an unresolved registration issue (and is flagged to vote provisional), continue to Step 2.
2. Explain the situation in plain terms
 - We suggest you say something like this to the voter: *"Your registration record has an issue that hasn't been corrected yet, and a new state law requires us to get that corrected so your ballot can be counted. This is an effort to make sure Ohio has accurate voter rolls, and by fixing that now, we make sure you won't have problems in the future. In order to do that, you are required to vote a provisional ballot, and as long as your information is verified your vote can still count."*
3. Provide the provisional ballot materials
 - Issue the voter a provisional ballot and the required provisional ballot paperwork per your precinct supplies.

Give the voter [Form 12-B Provisional Ballot Affirmation](#)

- Provide [Form 12-B Provisional Ballot Affirmation](#).
- Instruct the voter to complete it fully and accurately.
- Ask the voter to provide the needed information on [Form 12-B Provisional Ballot Affirmation](#). Tell the voter to include the information required to correct their registration (for example, updated address/name information or other required details shown by the pollbook flag).

⁵²[R.C. 3503.201\(D\)\(1\), \(2\)](#).

- If your procedures allow poll workers to review for completeness, do a quick check for missing sections without coaching the voter on what to write.
4. If the voter has supporting documents with them, follow site procedures
 - If the voter offers documents/info at the polling place, follow your board's instructions on what can be accepted/recorded at the polling location.
 - If the voter does not have the information or documents with them, proceed to Step 7.
 5. Clearly explain the "4-day deadline"
 - Tell the voter: *"If you don't provide the required information today, you must provide it to the board of elections within four days after Election Day or your provisional ballot may not count."*
 - Provide any written handouts your board supplies, including Updated [Form 12-H](#), and point the voter to where/how to contact the board (address, phone, hours) if that information is included in your materials.

6. Ensure the provisional ballot is properly completed and secured
 - Confirm the voter has:
 - completed [Form 12-B Provisional Ballot Affirmation](#), and
 - placed their voted ballot in the correct envelope.
 - Secure the ballot and forms according to the chain of custody instructions.
7. Mark the pollbook correctly
 - Record that the voter cast a provisional ballot, following your pollbook/poll pad steps.
8. Escalate if anything is unclear

If the pollbook flag is confusing, the voter's status is ambiguous, or the voter disputes the requirement, contact the Voting Location Manager or the board immediately and follow their direction.

SIGNING POLLBOOK — PAPER OR ELECTRONIC

After deciding the ballot type, the voter must sign or make their legal mark⁵³ in the pollbook (paper or electronic). If a voter can't sign, they may make a mark on the signature line, and the PEO who watched must write the voter's name after the mark.⁵⁴

If the voter is physically unable to mark the pollbook, their attorney-in-fact can sign for them.⁵⁵ Voters must fill out and [Form 10-F](#) or [Form 10-G](#) with the board office to have an attorney-in-fact. If a voter has this form on file with the board, the attorney-in-fact's signature will be noted in the pollbook. The attorney-in-fact must come with the voter to sign for them. Compare the signature to the one on file, and if it matches, give the voter a regular ballot.⁵⁶

Note that an attorney-in-fact is different from a power of attorney. For someone with power of attorney to sign election forms, they must have a valid attorney-in-fact appointment on file with the board.

⁵³[R.C. 3501.011](#); [R.C. 3505.18\(B\)](#).

⁵⁴[R.C. 3505.18\(B\)](#).

⁵⁵[R.C. 3505.18\(B\)](#).

⁵⁶[R.C. 3501.382](#).

GIVING A REGULAR BALLOT/AUTHORITY TO VOTE

After the voter has signed the pollbook, give an Authority to Vote slip, Voter Access card or Ballot card for their correct precinct and/or split and let them vote. If using paper ballots, detach the next ballot from Stub B (leaving Stub A attached), give it to the voter, and call the voter's name and stub number on each of the ballots. The PEO should write the stub numbers opposite the voter's signature in the pollbook. The voter then goes to one of the voting booths to mark their ballot privately.⁵⁷ No mark shall be made on any ballot which would in any way enable any person to identify the person who voted the ballot.⁵⁸

CURBSIDE VOTING

Curbside voting helps voters with disabilities who can get to the polling location but cannot enter.⁵⁹ They send someone inside to tell election officials they need to vote curbside. Display information about curbside parking and eligibility.

When a voter requests curbside voting:

1. One poll worker checks the pollbook for the voter's name.
2. If the voter is qualified and in the correct precinct, write their name and address on a blank sheet of paper or find it in the electronic pollbook.
3. Two officials from different parties take this information outside to the voter.
4. The voter confirms their name and address are correct.
5. The voter provides appropriate ID, which workers must check.
6. The voter signs the sheet or electronic pollbook.
7. The officials return to the polling place and verify the voter's signature in the pollbook.
8. They mark "Curbside Voter" next to the voter's name in the pollbook.
9. They get the correct paper ballot and proper envelope or secrecy sleeve (an envelope in the supply kit labeled: "Curbside Ballot Envelope or secrecy sleeve")

⁵⁷[R.C. 3505.18\(B\).](#)

⁵⁸[R.C. 3505.18\(B\).](#)

⁵⁹[R.C. 3501.29\(C\).](#)

for voted regular curbside ballots, or “Provisional Curbside Ballot Envelope” for voted provisional curbside ballots).

10. They take the appropriate ballot and corresponding envelope or secrecy sleeve to the voter outside.
11. They explain how to mark the ballot.

The voter marks the ballot and puts it in the envelope or sleeve (provisional voters must complete [Form 12-B Provisional Ballot Affirmation](#) and receive [Form 12-H Provisional Ballot Notice](#)).

12. The two election officials return the sealed ballot to the polling location and put it in the proper ballot container. Boards should have a policy that determines whether these are scanned centrally or in the polling location.

If the curbside voter can’t sign their name:

1. The two election officials witness the voter’s mark on the form or electronic pollbook.
2. They return it to the polling place.
3. They write “Curbside Voter – Unable to Sign” next to the voter’s name in the pollbook.

If the curbside voter can’t mark their ballot, the two election officials follow procedures for voters who need marking help.⁶⁰ See **Section 9.09**.

Section 9.07 Marking the Ballot

TIME TO MARK BALLOT

Voters may take up to 10 minutes in a voting booth when all booths are full and others are waiting. However, give voters enough time to mark and check their ballot. The 10-minute limit doesn’t apply to voters using accessible voting machines.⁶¹

If a voter is taking a long time, two workers from different parties may politely ask if they need help.

⁶⁰[R.C. 3505.24.](#)

⁶¹[R.C. 3505.23.](#)

REPLACEMENT BALLOTS

If a voter tears, spoils, makes a mistake on, or damages a paper ballot, they may return it for a new one. Voters using electronic voting machines don't need a replacement ballot because they can change their selections before casting the ballot.

When giving replacement ballots:

- If a voter returns a damaged ballot, they must fold it to hide any marks they made.
- If they make a mistake on the second ballot, give them a third ballot.
- Never give more than three ballots to any voter.
- When receiving a returned damaged ballot, PEOs must write "Defaced" on the back and place it and the stub in the proper containers.
- Voters using paper ballots must return every ballot issued to them before they leave, even unmarked ones.⁶²

FLEEING VOTERS

If a voter uses a voting machine but leaves without pressing the cast ballot button, two PEOs from different parties must cancel that ballot.

If a voter gets an optical scan paper ballot but leaves without feeding it into the scanner (or if the scanner rejects it due to an over-vote or blank ballot and the voter doesn't fix it), two PEOs from different parties must put that ballot in the spoiled ballot container.

In both cases, the PEOs must note this for ballot-reconciliation purposes.

LIST OF WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

The board must give each polling place a list of declared write-in candidates.

Don't post this list but show it to voters who ask to see it. The board may, but isn't required to, post a list of write-in candidates on its website.

⁶²[R.C. 3505.23](#).

Section 9.08 Helping Voters

State and federal laws require polling places to be accessible to people with disabilities. The Help America Vote Act⁶³ requires that all voters must be able to vote privately and independently.

The Americans with Disabilities Act⁶⁴ sets standards for equal access to public facilities, including polling places. See also [Chapter 6, Section 6.02](#).

Never deny anyone the right to vote because of mobility, vision, speech, cognitive, intellectual, or hearing impairments.⁶⁵

Voters with disabilities may ask for help marking their ballots. They can choose a person to help them or ask for two PEOs, one from each party. Voters may choose anyone except their employer, an agent of their employer, a union officer or agent, or any candidate on the ballot.⁶⁶

Train the board PEOs on the rights of voters with disabilities and how to help them effectively and respectfully.

The Secretary of State's office publishes a [Precinct Election Official Manual](#) before major elections with guidelines for communicating and helping voters with disabilities.

Section 9.09 Challenge of Elector by PEOs

On Election Day, only PEOs or the voting location manager may challenge voters, and only for these reasons:⁶⁷

- The voter is not a U.S. citizen.⁶⁸ See [Non-Citizen Challenges](#) below.
- The voter has not lived in Ohio for 30 days prior to the election.
- The voter doesn't live in the precinct.
- The voter is not old enough to vote.

⁶³52 U.S.C.A § 21081(a)(3)(A).

⁶⁴52 U.S.C.A. § 12131-12165.

⁶⁵52 U.S.C.A § 21081(a)(3)(A).

⁶⁶R.C. 3505.24.

⁶⁷R.C. 3505.20.

⁶⁸*Boustani v. Blackwell* (2006), 460 F.Supp.2d 822.

If challenged for one of these reasons, the voter should fill out [Form 10-U Affidavit-Oath-Examination of Person Challenged](#) (:

- If a majority of PEOs decide the voter is eligible to vote after they complete [Form 10-U Affidavit-Oath-Examination of Person Challenged](#), give them a regular ballot.
- If the voter refuses to complete [Form 10-U Affidavit-Oath-Examination of Person Challenged](#), they must vote provisionally, and workers must note this on the Precinct Elections Officials Problems and Corrections page or Precinct Election Officials Notes page.

If a majority of the PEOs can't determine eligibility, give the person a provisional ballot.⁶⁹

MANDATORY CHALLENGE OF RIGHT TO VOTE FOR NONCITIZENS

All voters must be U.S. citizens eligible to vote in Ohio and must show a valid photo ID.⁷⁰

If a person intending to vote appears at a polling place and provides an Ohio driver license, state ID, or interim ID that indicates the person is not a U.S. citizen, election officials are required to challenge the voter's eligibility under [R.C. 3505.18](#).

If the person challenged provides proof of U.S. citizenship⁷¹ documents and completes an affidavit (Updated [Form 10-U](#)), they may cast a regular ballot.⁷² If the person challenged does not provide proof of U.S. citizenship and completes [Form 12-B Provisional Ballot Affirmation](#), to have the provisional ballot counted, the voter must provide proof of U.S. citizenship to the board of elections within the four-day post-election cure period. The next section describes the process to verify citizenship.

⁶⁹[R.C. 3505.20](#).

⁷⁰[R.C. 3505.18\(A\)\(1\)](#); [R.C. 3509.051\(B\)](#).

⁷¹As defined in [R.C. 3501.01\(EE\)](#). See [Directive 2026-02](#) for a list of acceptable documents.

⁷²[R.C. 3505.20\(A\)](#).

Step by Step Instructions for Poll Workers on Citizenship Verification at Polling Locations⁷³

1. Greet the voter and collect the basics

Ask the voter to state their name and current address.

Locate the voter in the pollbook.

2. Review the voter's identification

If the license or ID contains a "NON-RENEWABLE/NON_TRANSFERABLE" identifier (on the front side), the identification is not valid.

If the voter presents an Ohio driver license, Ohio state ID, or interim ID, check the card carefully (paying close attention to the back side, which would indicate the word "NONCITIZEN" if the person is not a U.S. citizen).

If the ID contains a "NONCITIZEN" identifier (on the back side), the identification requires additional proof of citizenship, and you must proceed with a challenge of the voter's eligibility.

Only ask for additional proof of citizenship from people who show a photo ID with a "noncitizen" mark or otherwise unauthorized form of photo ID. (See [Boustani v. Larose, N.D. Ohio No. 1:06CV2065, 2024 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 196824, at *18 \(Oct. 30, 2024\)](#) for more information).

3. Issue the required eligibility challenge

Inform the voter (calmly and neutrally) that the ID presented indicates that they are not a citizen of the United States, as required by Ohio law, and that the law requires you to challenge their eligibility to cast a ballot.

4. Have the voter complete Updated [Form 10-U](#)

Provide [Form 10-U Affidavit–Oath–Examination of Person Challenged](#).

Ensure the voter completes the form as instructed.

Follow your normal steps for administering the affirmation of U.S. citizenship per your training.

⁷³[R.C. 3505.18\(A\)\(3\)](#).

4. Determine whether the voter can vote a regular ballot or must vote a provisional ballot

If the voter provides acceptable proof of U.S. citizenship⁷⁴ at the polling place:

The voter may vote a regular ballot (per your board's instructions), and you should document the resolution according to procedure.

If the voter does not provide acceptable proof of U.S. citizenship at the polling place:

The voter must vote a provisional ballot.

5. Issue the provisional ballot, if required

Provide the voter with the provisional ballot materials and any required provisional forms, as outlined in your precinct procedures.

Make sure the voter completes all required provisional paperwork before the ballot is secured.

6. Give clear “next steps” for the voter

Inform the voter that their provisional ballot will only count if they provide proof of U.S. citizenship to the board of elections within four days of Election Day.

Provide [Form 12-H Provisional Ballot Notice](#) and any additional information as instructed by your board of elections (and point out office location/hours if included).

Document and secure materials

If board policy permits and the pollbook allows, mark the record to reflect the following:

- the challenge,
- [Form 10-U](#) completion, and
- that a provisional ballot was issued (if applicable).

⁷⁴ As defined in [R.C. 3501.01\(EE\)](#). See [Directive 2026-02](#) for a list of acceptable documents.

Secure the provisional ballot and forms according to chain-of-custody procedures.

Escalate if something is unclear

If the voter disputes the process, is missing from the pollbook, or you are unsure about acceptable documents, contact the voting location manager or the board immediately and follow their directions.

Boards of elections are required to provide updated and sufficient training on non-citizen challenges to poll workers and voting location managers, who should be prepared to clearly explain the new requirement for verifying proof of U.S. citizenship to individuals intending to vote.

Proof of citizenship documents include:⁷⁵

- A current Ohio driver license or Ohio state ID number, if the Secretary of State has already confirmed that citizenship documents were provided to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles;
- A current Ohio driver license or state ID issued on or after April 7, 2023, or a copy of the front and back of the ID, as long as it does not say the person is a non-U.S. citizen;
- A U.S. birth certificate, certification of birth, or consular report of birth abroad (or a copy of one of these);
- A valid U.S. passport or passport card, or a copy of the passport's ID page or both sides of the passport card;
- A Certificate of Naturalization or Certificate of Citizenship, or a copy of one of those documents;
- An approved immigration notice (Form I-797) showing approval of a request to replace a naturalization or citizenship document, or an equivalent document issued by the federal government.

If the voter's current legal name is different from the name shown on their citizenship document, the voter must also provide proof of the name change, such as a marriage certificate or court order.

If a person's U.S. citizenship status is challenged at the polling place and they cast a provisional ballot, the board of elections must provide the individual with Form 12-H

⁷⁵ [R.C. 3501.01\(EE\)](#).

Provisional Ballot Notice Handout, which lists the acceptable documents and explains the next steps the voter may need to take for their ballot to be counted.⁷⁶

For a complete list of acceptable and unacceptable forms of voter IDs with photos, see “Voter Identification Requirements” in the [Precinct Election Official Manual](#).

Section 9.10 Observers

GENERAL RULES

Qualifications

All observers (except recount observers⁷⁷ and [Congressional Election Observers](#)⁷⁸) must be qualified Ohio voters.⁷⁹ They don’t need to be registered in the county where they observe.

People Not Eligible to Observe⁸⁰

These people cannot serve as observers at early voting sites, board offices before the Official Canvass, or precincts on Election Day:

- peace officers in uniform⁸¹
- state highway patrol trooper in uniform
- firefighters in uniform
- armed services or militia members in uniform
- anyone wearing any other uniform
- anyone carrying a weapon
- candidates (unless they’re on a party controlling committee, or appointed to observe an Official Canvass, recount, or election audit)⁸²
- election “monitors” (organizations may call people “monitors,” but Ohio law only recognizes official observers)

⁷⁶[R.C. 3505.182](#).

⁷⁷[R.C. 3513.03](#).

⁷⁸[COCOA Act of 2024](#).

⁷⁹[R.C. 3505.21\(B\)](#).

⁸⁰[R.C. 3505.21\(B\)](#).

⁸¹[R.C. 2935.01\(B\)](#).

⁸²[R.C. 3505.21\(B\)](#).

Pay

Observers cannot accept pay from any county, city, village, or township for serving as an observer.⁸³

Oath

Every observer is required by law to take this oath prior to observing:

"You do solemnly swear that you will faithfully and impartially discharge the duties as an official observer, assigned by law; that you will not cause any delay to persons offering to vote; and/or that you will not disclose or communicate to any person how any elector has voted at such election."⁸⁴

On Election Day, a PEO must give this oath. For other types of observers, an election official, director, or deputy director may administer the oath. When observing over multiple days, observers don't need to retake the oath but should affirm to an election official that they understand they remain under oath.

Watching and Inspecting

Observers may only watch election proceedings. They may never handle any election materials.

Observers may move freely where ballots are being cast, processed, counted, or recounted, as long as they don't engage in prohibited activities.⁸⁵ The board may deny observers access to areas where ballots are not being handled.

Observer Communication

Communication with Election Officials

Observers may not interfere with election officials running the election. They may have casual conversations with officials during slow times to gather information about the process, but their statutory purpose is to watch. Observers may not enforce laws or

⁸³[R.C. 3505.21\(F\)](#).

⁸⁴[R.C. 3505.21\(F\)](#).

⁸⁵Observers at a precinct are permitted to "watch every proceeding of the precinct election officials from the time of the opening until the closing of the polls." Observers are also permitted to "inspect the counting of all ballots in the polling location or board of elections from the time of the closing of the polls until the counting is completed and the final returns are certified and signed." [R.C. 3505.21\(C\)](#). However, Observers shall not be permitted to witness the examination and opening of identification envelopes returned by, and the processing and counting of absent voter's ballots cast by, electors who have confidential voter registration records in a manner that would permit the observers to learn the identities or residence addresses of those electors. [R.C. 3509.06](#).

advocate for voters. They may leave the voting area to contact the board of elections with concerns, which the board may address when appropriate.

Audio and Video Devices

Observers cannot use any electronic or audio/visual recording devices in ways that disrupt the election, intimidate voters, or violate ballot secrecy or voter privacy. They cannot use phones, walkie-talkies, or other communication devices to discuss the election inside a polling place. As long as they aren't harassing,⁸⁶ they may collect information from the posted registration lists.⁸⁷

Observers may use communication devices and audio/video devices if:

- The devices make no noise (low vibration is allowed).
- They only send and receive text messages, emails, or other nonverbal communications.
- They don't take photos, videos, or record conversations inside.
- They don't talk inside the polling place using the device.
- They don't create disruptions.
- They don't use devices to interfere with an election or intimidate voters.

Limitations

Prohibitions

Observers must not:

- Campaign in any way.
- Block voters from reaching or leaving the polling place.
- Disrupt the election.
- Intimidate, harass, or try to influence voters or PEOs.
- Carry weapons.
- Violate ballot secrecy or voter privacy.⁸⁸

⁸⁶As defined by [R.C. 3501.90](#).

⁸⁷[R.C. 3503.23\(C\)](#).

⁸⁸Unless specifically exempted by law, all observers are subject to the statutory prohibitions in Title 35 of the Revised Code.

Observers cannot enforce laws or advocate for voters before PEOs.

Removal

While the board must allow observers throughout the election process, it can remove observers who violate Ohio law or Secretary of State directives or who interfere with the election.⁸⁹

Only the voting location managers, directors, deputy directors, and appointing authorities can remove observers. Law enforcement officials must remove observers when ordered by these officials.⁹⁰

If an observer is removed, the voting location manager, director, deputy director, or appointing authority may take their certificate of appointment and return it to the board office with a note about the removal.

WHO MAY APPOINT OBSERVERS

These “appointing authorities” may appoint observers at primary, special, or general elections:

- any political party (county or state) supporting candidates on the ballot⁹¹
- any group of five or more candidates⁹²
- ballot issue committee recognized by the board as supporting or opposing a ballot issue.
 - Any committee advocating for or against a ballot issue may petition the board asking to be recognized as the committee entitled to appoint observers. File these petitions by 4 p.m., 20 days before the election. If multiple committees file to be recognized for the same issue, the board must decide which committee gets to appoint observers. The board must decide at least 12 days before the election and notify each committee by registered mail.⁹³

⁸⁹[R.C. 3501.33](#); [R.C. 3505.21](#).

⁹⁰[R.C. 3501.33](#); [R.C. 3505.21](#).

⁹¹[R.C. 3505.21\(B\)](#).

⁹²[R.C. 3505.21\(B\)](#).

⁹³[R.C. 3505.21\(E\)](#).

TYPES OF OBSERVERS

Ohio law provides for six types of election observers. A person may observe at multiple locations during the election process.

- **Observers at Early In-Person Absentee Voting Locations**

An appointing authority may appoint one observer at the early in-person absentee voting location.⁹⁴ Depending on the county, this may be at the board office or another designated site.

- During early voting:
 - Observers may switch with others on different days.
 - Only one observer per appointing authority may watch at once.
- **Appointment Notice Deadline** - 11 days before early in-person absentee voting starts.
- **Amendment Deadline** - 4 p.m. the day before the observer serves.⁹⁵

- **Observers at Precincts on Election Day**

An appointing authority may appoint one observer per precinct on Election Day. Observers may cover multiple precincts, but each precinct may have only one observer from each appointing authority.⁹⁶

Note: A precinct cannot have more than six total ballot issue committee observers. When there are more than six, the committees must agree on which observers will serve. If they don't agree, PEOs must choose six observers to represent both sides of the issues.⁹⁷

Precinct observers may be present from one-half hour before polls open until PEOs finish processing ballots, complete other post-closing tasks, and return the ballots and other supplies to the board.

⁹⁴[R.C. 3505.21\(A\).](#)

⁹⁵[R.C. 3505.21\(C\).](#)

⁹⁶[R.C. 3505.21\(C\).](#)

⁹⁷[R.C. 3505.21\(E\).](#)

- **Appointment Notice Deadline** - 11 days before Election Day.
- **Amendment Deadline** - 4 p.m. the day before Election Day.⁹⁸

- **Observers at a Board Office Before the Official Canvass**

An appointing authority may appoint one observer to watch provisional ballot casting at the board office, ballot counting on Election Day, and absentee/provisional ballot processing before canvassing.⁹⁹

The board can allow an appointing authority to appoint more than one observer to the office when appropriate. For instance, when processing provisional ballots will take several days, the board could allow an appointing authority to appoint multiple observers and substitutions for them.

Note: Observers appointed to the board office may also observe at any precinct in the county. An appointing authority may have only one such observer, who must file their certificate of appointment with the board. They must also present a copy to the voting location manager at precincts.¹⁰⁰

The board must notify observers of when it will process and count absent voters' ballots and determine provisional ballot eligibility.

- **Appointment Notice Deadline:** 11 days before the first date the observer is appointed to serve.
- **Amendment Deadline:** 4 p.m. the day before the election or the first date the observer is appointed to serve.¹⁰¹

- **Official Canvass Observers**

These appointing authorities may designate a qualified voter to observe the Official Canvass:

- county political party executive committees
- Independent/nonpartisan candidate nominating committees

⁹⁸[R.C. 3505.21\(A\), \(C\); R.C. 3506.13.](#)

⁹⁹[R.C. 3505.21\(C\).](#)

¹⁰⁰[R.C. 3505.21\(C\).](#)

¹⁰¹[R.C. 3505.21\(C\).](#)

- Ballot issue petition committees
- Any committee that opposed a ballot issue and was allowed an observer at the election¹⁰²
- **Appointment Notice Deadline:** Before the Official Canvass begins.
- **Recount Observers**
 - Candidate Recounts:

Each candidate may observe the recount and can designate one additional person. This person does not need to be an elector. If the board performs the recount at multiple stations, the candidate may appoint enough observers to have one at each active station.¹⁰³
 - Question or Issue Recounts:

The committee chairperson supporting or opposing the issue may observe a recount and appoint legal counsel to observe.¹⁰⁴

Appointment Notice Deadline: Within five days after the board posts the notice about recount dates and times.

Recount observers may freely observe but cannot interfere or touch ballots. They cannot challenge the board's determination of whether or not a ballot or vote is counted.¹⁰⁵ Such challenges are reserved for a Contest of Election.¹⁰⁶

- **Post-Election Audit Observers**

Any entity that appointed regular or Official Canvass observers may appoint post-election audit observers.

- **Appointment Notice Deadline:** Within five days after the board issues a public notice about post-election audit date and time.
- **Amendment Deadline:** The day before the post-election audit.

¹⁰²[R.C. 3505.32\(B\).](#)

¹⁰³[R.C. 3515.03](#); [R.C. 3505.21](#).

¹⁰⁴[R.C. 3515.03](#).

¹⁰⁵[OAG 74-103](#).

¹⁰⁶[R.C. 3515.08](#).

FORMS

The Secretary of State's office provides forms for observer appointments. There are two forms for each of the six types of observers ([Forms 214-219](#) and [Form 220](#)).

1. Notice of Appointment and Amendment of Appointment

The appointing authority must notify the board in writing of appointees' names, addresses, and locations where they'll serve. They may file amendments until 4 p.m. the day before the appointed observation date.¹⁰⁷

Amendments may substitute observers at the same location but cannot add new locations or additional observers beyond what's legally permitted.

2. Certificate of Appointment

After filing a timely notice of appointment with the board, the appointing authority must issue a certificate of appointment to the observer.

Observers present their certificate to the appropriate election official when arriving at their observation location.¹⁰⁸

Appointing authorities should file original documents with the board in person. However, fax or email with a PDF attachment is acceptable. The appointing authority is responsible for any transmission problems.

CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS

The Confirmation of Congressional Observer Access Act of 2024 (COCOA Act) requires states to grant access to Congressional Election Observers for federal elections.¹⁰⁹

A Congressional Election Observer is a House or Senate employee designated in writing by the chair or ranking minority member of:

- The Committee on House Administration of the House of Representatives.
- The Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate, or any successor committees.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷[R.C. 3505.21\(C\).](#)

¹⁰⁸[R.C. 3505.21\(C\), \(E\).](#)

¹⁰⁹[COCOA Act of 2024.](#)

¹¹⁰[COCOA Act of 2024, \(sec.304\)\(d\).](#)

These observers gather information about elections, including for contested elections in Congress.¹¹¹

States must give these observers full access to observe all federal election administration procedures, including areas where ballots are cast, processed, counted, or certified.¹¹²

Congressional Election Observers must not:

- Handle ballots or election equipment.
- Advocate for any position or candidate.
- Reduce ballot secrecy or voter privacy.
- Interfere with voters casting ballots.
- Interfere with election administrator duties.
- Otherwise disrupt election administration.¹¹³

Observers may ask questions of election officials and workers.¹¹⁴

State or local election officials can remove a Congressional Election Observer if they believe the observer has or will engage in:

- Intimidation or deceptive practices prohibited by federal law.
- Disruption of voting, processing, counting, or certification.¹¹⁵

If they are removed, the election official must provide written notice to the relevant Congressional Committee Chairs and Ranking Members within 24 hours explaining why.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹[COCOA Act of 2024. \(sec.304\)\(d\).](#)

¹¹²[COCOA Act of 2024. \(sec.304\)\(b\)\(1\).](#)

¹¹³[COCOA Act of 2024. \(sec.304\)\(b\)\(2\).](#)

¹¹⁴[COCOA Act of 2024. \(sec.304\)\(b\)\(3\).](#)

¹¹⁵[COCOA Act of 2024. \(sec.304\)\(c\)\(1\)\(A\).](#)

¹¹⁶[COCOA Act of 2024. \(sec.304\)\(c\)\(1\)\(B\).](#)

INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

Sometimes foreign officials visit to learn about U.S. democratic processes, typically through the U.S. Department of State, academic institutions, or similar organizations. Some visits fulfill international treaty obligations.

However, Ohio law limits who may be present in polling locations on Election Day. Only election officials,¹¹⁷ observers, journalists, police officers, people checking voter lists, voters (and their nonvoting age children), or people assisting another voter may enter.¹¹⁸ Since Ohio law doesn't include international observers, they cannot enter polling locations on Election Day.

Section 9.11 Closing the Polls

Train PEOs on proper closing procedures and what to do if voting hours are extended by court order.

All polls must close at 7:30 p.m.¹¹⁹ unless extended by court order.

POLL CLOSING PROCEDURES

About 30 Minutes Before Polls Close

- ❑ PEOs should announce the precinct name repeatedly to voters in line.
- ❑ PEOs should make sure voters are in the correct polling place and precinct.
- ❑ Announce that the polls will close soon but anyone in line at 7:30 p.m. will be able to vote.

Announcement of Close of Polls

- ❑ At exactly 7:30 p.m., the voting location manager must announce, "The polls are closed!"¹²⁰ If people are still waiting to vote, they must be allowed to vote.¹²¹
- ❑ To handle waiting voters:
 - Move the line inside the polling place, or

¹¹⁷As defined in [R.C. 3501.01\(U\)](#).

¹¹⁸[R.C. 3501.35\(B\)](#); [R.C. 3503.23\(C\)](#) [R.C. 3501.35\(B\)\(2\)](#).

¹¹⁹[R.C. 3501.32\(A\)](#).

¹²⁰[R.C. 3505.26](#).

¹²¹[R.C. 3501.32\(A\)](#).

- Place a PEO behind the last person in line at 7:30 p.m. to prevent others from joining.

Court Order

- ❑ If the court extended hours past 7:30 p.m., PEOs need to know who was last in line at 7:30 p.m.
- ❑ Let voters who were in line at 7:30 p.m. vote regular ballots.
- ❑ Voters who arrive between 7:30 p.m. and the court-ordered closing time must vote a provisional ballot¹²²
- ❑ Keep these provisional ballots separate in case the court decision is later overturned.
- ❑ Write "After close of polls by order of the court" on the ID Envelope - Provisional Ballot Affirmation ([Form 12-B](#)).

CLOSING THE POLLING LOCATION

In precincts using direct recording electronic (DRE) voting machines (Touch Screens)

In precincts using DRE machines, PEOs must:

- ❑ Record all ballot statistics on the Balance/Reconciliation Sheet the board provides.
- ❑ Count and record the total number of regular ballots voted (per local board of elections instructions).¹²³
- ❑ Count and record the total number of paper provisional ballots cast by voters who arrived between 6:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.
- ❑ In case of a court order, count and record provisional paper ballots cast by voters who arrived after 7:30 p.m.
- ❑ Count and record spoiled or defaced paper ballots.¹²⁴

¹²²[52 U.S.C.A. §21082\(c\).](#)

¹²³[R.C. 3505.26\(E\).](#)

¹²⁴[R.C. 3505.26\(C\).](#)

- ❑ Count and record unvoted paper ballots without removing stubs.¹²⁵
- ❑ Count and record signatures in the pollbook.¹²⁶
- ❑ Post precinct results at the polling location as directed.
- ❑ Double-check ballot statistics and sign the Closing Certificate and Election Day Balance/Reconciliation Sheet.

In Precincts using Optical Scanners

In precincts using optical scanners, the PEOs must:

- ❑ Count and record total regular paper ballots voted.
- ❑ Count and record total paper provisional ballots cast between 6:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.
- ❑ **In case of a court order only**, count and record total provisional paper ballots cast after 7:30 p.m.
- ❑ Count and record total damaged paper ballots.
- ❑ Count and record total unvoted paper ballots.
- ❑ Count and record total signatures in pollbooks.
- ❑ Post results at the polling place as directed.
- ❑ Record all statistics (regular, provisional, spoiled and defaced, unvoted) on the Election Day Balance/Reconciliation Sheet provided.
- ❑ Double-check ballot statistics and sign Closing Certificate and Election Day Balance/Reconciliation Sheet.

In Precincts using Electronic Pollbooks

In precincts using electronic pollbooks, PEOs must:

- ❑ Seal each electronic pollbook with a tamper-evident seal before returning it.

¹²⁵[R.C. 3505.26\(B\).](#)

¹²⁶[R.C. 3505.26\(A\).](#)

- ❑ If an electronic pollbook uses removable media storage or produces a paper record, seal these with a tamper-proof seal and put them in a proper container before return.¹²⁷
- ❑ Transport any electronic pollbook, removable media storage, and paper records to the board office, like other election materials.

In All Precincts

Finally, in all precincts, the PEOs must:

- ❑ Bring in flags and remove signs from inside and outside the polling place.
- ❑ Close and pack voting equipment following board directions.
- ❑ Securely pack ballots and supplies.
- ❑ Immediately return them to the board or a designated drop-off location (see Secure Return of Ballots and Election Day Supplies below).

SECURE RETURN OF BALLOTS AND ELECTION DAY SUPPLIES

After closing, a bipartisan team must return all ballots and supplies to the board office or other designated location. The team must include:

- The voting location manager.
- An employee or appointee from a different political party who has sworn to properly transport election materials.¹²⁸

The bipartisan team must travel in the same vehicle. Additional people, such as a law enforcement official, may accompany them. One team may transport the materials for an entire multi-precinct polling location.

¹²⁷[R.C. 3505.31.](#)

¹²⁸[R.C. 3505.31.](#)

Section 9.12 Partisan Primary Elections

CHALLENGES BASED ON PARTY AFFILIATION

PEOs, board members, directors, deputy directors, and clerks can only challenge a voter's party affiliation when they doubt the voter belongs to the party whose ballot they request.¹²⁹

The board cannot require every voter, or those who voted a ballot for a different political party in the past, to sign a "Statement of Person Challenged as to Party Affiliation" ([Form 10-W](#), [Form 10-X](#), or [Form 10-Z](#)) before voting in person or by mail. Such a policy goes beyond what the law allows.¹³⁰ The law expects infrequent party challenges based on an official's personal knowledge, similar to challenges about a person's qualifications or whether they received payment for their vote.¹³¹ Any challenge is serious and shouldn't be automatic.

Ohio's primary process balances voters' participation rights with political parties' association rights. Officials cannot challenge party affiliation unless they have personal knowledge suggesting the voter doesn't belong to that party. In these rare cases, use [Form 10-W](#), [Form 10-X](#), or [Form 10-Z](#) as appropriate, according to [R.C. 3509.06\(D\)](#) and [R.C. 3513.20](#).

ISSUING A BALLOT DURING A PRIMARY ELECTION

When issuing primary election ballots, PEOs should ask voters what type of ballot they want: a political party ballot or issues-only ballot. If voters ask about the choices, the PEO should explain the political party ballot choices, if any. After a voter chooses, the PEO must record this choice in the pollbook by marking either the political party or that an issues-only ballot was requested.¹³²

Next, PEOs must give the voter the proper ballot or voting authority slip/device and direct them to the appropriate voting area.

¹²⁹[R.C. 3513.19\(A\)\(3\)](#).

¹³⁰[R.C. 3513.19](#).

¹³¹[R.C. 3513.19\(A\)](#).

¹³²[R.C. 3513.18](#), there shall be provided in the pollbooks pages on which shall be recorded the names of all electors voting on said question or issue and not voting in such primary.

Section 9.13 Required Postings

REQUIRED POSTINGS, GENERALLY

The board must post several voting-related signs inside and outside the polling location.

Signs Outside

PEOs must place:

- ❑ One large flag at the polling place entrance.¹³³
- ❑ Two small flags 100 feet from the entrance.¹³⁴ These flags establish the “neutral zone”.
- ❑ Directional signs from parking areas or streets to the polling location entrance.

Signs Inside

PEOs must display these notices where voters can easily see them:

- ❑ precinct signs identifying the precinct, especially where lines might form
- ❑ Voting Rights Information Poster
- ❑ Secure the Vote Poster
- ❑ information on federal and state laws against fraud and misrepresentation
- ❑ Special Voting Instructions Poster explaining regular ballot and provisional ballot procedures
- ❑ official sample ballot
- ❑ full text of condensed ballot language for state or local issues
- ❑ notice about voting more than once at the same election ([Form 10-V](#))
- ❑ any other notice or poster required by law or provided by the Secretary of State

Place one set of these notices at eye level for seated voters or those using wheelchairs (about four feet from the floor).

¹³³[R.C. 3501.30\(A\)\(3\).](#)

¹³⁴[R.C. 3501.30\(A\)\(4\).](#)

Before each election, check the [Secretary of State's website](#) for the current list of required signs.

Section 9.14 Prohibitions

CONGREGATING, CAMPAIGNING, DISTRIBUTING FOOD, OR SOLICITING INSIDE A POLLING LOCATION

Polling places are “neutral zones” with specific rules about who may enter and what conduct is allowed.

Only allow these people to enter the polling location during the election:¹³⁵

- election officials¹³⁶
- observers¹³⁷
- police officers
- people checking voter lists
- voters (and their nonvoting age children)
- journalists
- people assisting voters

Place two small U.S. flags 100 feet from the polling place entrance (or as close to 100 feet as possible), marking the neutral zone.¹³⁸ The only people allowed in this zone, or within 10 feet of voters waiting outside the zone, are election officials, observers, police officers, or voters waiting to vote.¹³⁹ No one can campaign, loiter, try to influence voters, or prevent or delay voters from entering or leaving.

¹³⁵[R.C. 3501.35\(B\)](#); [R.C. 3503.23\(C\)](#).

¹³⁶[R.C. 3501.01\(U\)](#). An “election official” includes the following individuals: (1) Secretary of State; (2) Employees of the Secretary of State serving in an elections-related capacity; (3) Members, director or deputy director, and/or employees of a board of elections (including part-time and temporary employees); and (4) Voting location manager and other precinct election officials.

¹³⁷[R.C. 3505.21](#). Includes congressional election observer.

¹³⁸[R.C. 3501.30\(A\)\(4\)](#).

¹³⁹[R.C. 3501.30\(A\)\(1\)](#).

No campaigning, campaign materials, or food distribution is allowed inside the neutral zone.¹⁴⁰ However, these activities are allowed outside the neutral zone (beyond the flags or 10 feet from voters in line).

Ohio law prohibits offering “money or other valuable thing” to influence voting.¹⁴¹ Food, discounts, and similar items count as bribes under Ohio laws.¹⁴²

ATTIRE AND PARAPHERNALIA

Attire and paraphernalia at polling places must follow electioneering laws.¹⁴³ Items or clothing showing the political party names, candidates, or support or opposition to ballot issues are prohibited. PEOs can ask people to remove or cover offending items. If a voter refuses, they must still be allowed to vote if eligible.¹⁴⁴ The official should refer the voter’s name and address to the board in case it wants to consult the county prosecutor.

Acceptable attire includes school spirit wear like jackets, jerseys, or hats with the school’s name or mascot, even if a school levy is on the ballot. Prohibited items explicitly advocate for or against a ballot measure, candidate, or party, like “Vote for Bob” or “Defeat the Levy.” Slogans indirectly related to political issues without specific advocacy are allowed.

Election officials should prioritize maintaining peace and being sure voters can cast their ballots without feeling intimidated.

COLLECTING SIGNATURES AT A POLLING LOCATION

Groups sometimes gather petition signatures outside polling places. This is not permitted inside or within the neutral zone marked by the small U.S. flags.¹⁴⁵ However, they can collect signatures outside the neutral zone.

PROBLEMS WITH CONDUCT AT A POLLING LOCATION

The board must instruct PEOs to contact the board office or law enforcement immediately if they experience problems with anyone’s conduct at a polling place.

¹⁴⁰[R.C. 3501.35\(A\)](#).

¹⁴¹[R.C. 3599.01\(A\)\(3\)](#). See also the prohibitions contained in [R.C. 3599.02](#).

¹⁴²Even a professor’s award of extra credit to a student who votes in an election has been considered “a thing of value.” [OAG 96-033](#).

¹⁴³[R.C. 3501.35\(A\)](#).

¹⁴⁴[R.C. 3501.33](#).

¹⁴⁵[R.C. 3501.35\(A\)](#). *United Food & Commercial Workers Local 1099 v. City of Sidney* (6th Cir. 2004), 364 F.3d 738 (circulators were not deprived of their free speech rights when they were prohibited from collecting signatures within the “campaign-free zone”).

UNLAWFUL POSSESSION OF BALLOTS

No PEO can possess or transfer ballots outside their official Election Day duties.¹⁴⁶

Section 9.15 Media Access to Polling Locations

MEDIA ACCESS INSIDE THE POLLS

As used in this section, members of the media encompass a person engaged in, connected with, or employed by any news medium, including a newspaper, magazine, press association, news agency, or wire service, a radio or television station, or a similar medium. They work in gathering, processing, transmitting, compiling, editing, or disseminating information for the general public.¹⁴⁷

Election officials must give members of the media reasonable access to polling places as long as they don't interfere with workers or voters.¹⁴⁸

Consider these factors when determining reasonable access:

- whether the member of the media is credentialed (from an accredited news source)¹⁴⁹
- how long they stay at a polling location
- length of voter lines
- size and layout of the polling location
- protecting voter privacy during the journalist's presence
- member of the media's conduct
- how the member of the media's presence affects voters and election officials

No one, including members of the media, may disrupt voting, interfere with the election, intimidate voters, or compromise ballot secrecy. The board and voting location

¹⁴⁶[R.C. 3599.07](#).

¹⁴⁷[R.C. 3501.35\(B\)\(2\)](#) establishes that "journalist" has the same meaning as in [R.C. 2923.129](#). That section has since been revised and longer includes the definition of "journalist". The definition provided herein is the definition used in [R.C. 2923.129 prior to September 29, 2015](#), and is the same definition used in other sections of the Revised Code, including in [R.C. 149.43](#).

¹⁴⁸[Beacon Journal Publishing Company, Inc. v. Blackwell](#) (6th Cir. 2004), 389 F.3d 683 at 685; [R.C. 3501.35\(B\)\(2\)](#).

¹⁴⁹A board of elections does not issue credentials to journalists. A journalist should already possess press credentials. These credentials are sufficient to grant the journalist access to a polling location.

managers may remove members of the media if they do these things. Members of the media must ask voters' permission before recording them at polling places.

No one may try to bypass the observer process by claiming to be a member of the media.

Train board employees and voting location workers to inform the director and deputy director when members of the media visit polling places.

EXIT POLLING AT A POLLING LOCATION

Exit polling isn't considered electioneering and is allowed within 100 feet of polling place entrances (within the area marked by the small U.S. flags).¹⁵⁰

People conducting exit polls cannot enter polling places, disrupt the election, or otherwise break the law. They also cannot wear anything that could be seen as campaigning for or against candidates or issues on the ballot.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰*American Broadcasting Co., Inc. v. Blackwell* (S.D. Ohio 2006), 479 F.Supp.2d 719 at 744.

¹⁵¹[R.C. 3501.35](#); [R.C. 3599.24](#).

Chapter 9 Checklist: Election Day

Before Election Day

- ☐ Deliver and secure voting equipment.
- ☐ Prepare and update voter registration lists.
- ☐ Create paper pollbook backups for electronic pollbooks.
- ☐ Train officials on all procedures, especially provisional ballots.
- ☐ Process observer appointments.
- ☐ Prepare signs and required postings.

Election Day Setup

- ☐ Post required flags and signs.
- ☐ Place one large flag at entrance.
- ☐ Place two small flags 100 feet from entrance.
- ☐ Display all required inside notices and posters.
- ☐ Post first copy of registered voter list at 6:30 a.m.

During Voting Hours

- ☐ Verify voter ID and eligibility.
- ☐ Direct voters to correct precincts when needed.
- ☐ Issue proper ballot types (regular or provisional).
- ☐ Update and post voter lists at 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- ☐ Provide assistance to voters who request it.
- ☐ Monitor neutral zone for prohibited activities.
- ☐ Process curbside voters when requested.

Closing Procedures

- ❑ Announce closing at 7:30 p.m.
- ❑ Allow voters in line at closing to vote.
- ❑ Count all ballot types and voting statistics.
- ❑ Complete Balance/Reconciliation Sheet.
- ❑ Pack materials securely.
- ❑ Transport all materials via bipartisan team.
- ❑ Post results at the polling location.

Special Situations

- ❑ Handle court-ordered extended hours correctly.
- ❑ Process challenges according to legal requirements.
- ❑ Work with observers properly.
- ❑ Provide reasonable access for journalists.
- ❑ Address voter needs without delay.