

## **Chapter 6: PRECINCTS, POLLING LOCATIONS, AND PRECINCT ELECTION OFFICIALS**

Directive 2022-10

### **Section 6.01 Precincts & Polling Locations**

#### **DEFINITIONS**

1. **Precinct**

Means a district within a county established by the board of elections of such county within which all qualified electors having a voting residence therein may vote at the same polling location.

2. **Polling Location**

Means that location provided for each precinct at which the electors having a voting residence in such precinct may vote.

A precinct is the district the board creates while the polling location is the building where the voter travels to in order to cast their ballot.

#### **PRECINCTS**

1. **Generally**

The board must provide a polling location for each precinct and provide adequate facilities at each polling location for conducting elections.<sup>1</sup>

2. **Size of Precinct**

Each precinct must contain a number of electors, not to exceed 1,400, that the board of elections determines to be a reasonable number after taking into consideration the type and amount of available equipment, prior voter turnout, the size and location of each selected polling location, available parking, availability of

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<sup>1</sup> [R.C. 3501.29](#).



an adequate number of precinct election officials and handicap accessibility and other accessibility to the polling location.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. **Drawing Precinct Lines**

The board may divide any portion of a political subdivision located within its county into precincts and may establish, define, divide, rearrange, and combine the several election precincts within its county. Precincts must be drawn along census block lines.<sup>3</sup>

### 4. **Waiver of Census Block Restrictions**

However, the board may apply in writing to the Secretary of State for a waiver of the census block requirement if drawing precinct boundaries by census blocks is not feasible because:

- a. Physical boundaries or residential development practices exist that would cause unusual hardship for voters, or
- b. A precinct would contain more than 1,400 voters.,
- c. Any waiver request must explain in the fullest detail possible why the waiver is needed for a particular block. Additionally, the board's waiver request must include the appropriate map showing the relevant, existing (and proposed, if changed) precinct and census block boundaries.<sup>4</sup>

### 5. **Separate Precinct Required for Disabled Soldiers**

The lands used for a state or national home for disabled soldiers must constitute a separate election precinct and, if necessary, may be divided and rearranged within such limits as other precincts are arranged and divided.<sup>5</sup>

### 6. **Combining/Moving Precincts**

#### a. **Generally**

The board may change the location of the polling location for each precinct when it is necessary to maintain the requirements as to the number of voters in a precinct and to provide for the convenience of the voters and the proper conduct of elections.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [R.C. 3501.18](#).

<sup>3</sup> [R.C. 3501.18](#).

<sup>4</sup> [R.C. 3501.18](#); [R.C. 3501.29](#).

<sup>5</sup> [R.C. 3501.20](#).

<sup>6</sup> [R.C. 3501.18](#).



b. **Exceptions**

A board cannot change the number of precincts or the precinct boundaries during the 25 days immediately preceding a primary or general election, nor between January 1 and the day on which the members of a county central committee of a political party are elected.<sup>7</sup>

c. **Written Notice to Electors and the Secretary of State**

When the board deems it necessary to change, divide, or combine any precinct, or to relocate a polling location, it must, prior to the next election, notify each of the registrants in the precinct of such change by mail.<sup>8</sup>

When the board changes the boundaries of any precinct, it shall notify the Secretary of State of the change not later than 45 days after making the change.

d. **Restrictions on Changes**

If the board changes the boundaries of a precinct after the filing of a local option election petition pursuant to [R.C. 4301.32](#) to [R.C. 4301.41](#), [R.C. 4303.29](#), or [R.C. 4305.14](#) that calls for a local option election to be held in that precinct, the local option election shall be held in the area that constituted the precinct at the time the local option petition was filed, regardless of the change in the boundaries. If the board moves forward with the changes then the result is a split precinct. The Secretary of State's Office discourages boards from making changes until after the elections when this situation occurs.

## POLLING LOCATIONS

### 1. **Public Buildings**

The board must utilize for polling locations, in so far as practicable, rooms in public schools and other buildings supported by tax dollars. Upon the board's application, the authority that has the control of any building or grounds supported by taxation under the laws of Ohio must make available the necessary space for the purpose of holding elections and adequate space for the storage of voting machines, without charge. A *reasonable* amount of money may be paid for necessary janitorial service.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> [R.C. 3501.18](#).

<sup>8</sup> [R.C. 3501.21](#).

<sup>9</sup> [R.C. 3501.29](#).



## 2. **Private Buildings; Rental; Insurance**

When polling locations are established in private buildings, the board may pay a reasonable rental therefore. It also may pay the cost of liability insurance covering the premises when used for election purposes, or the board may purchase a single liability policy covering the board and the owners of the premises when used for election purposes.<sup>10</sup>

## 3. **Removable Buildings**

When removable buildings are supplied by the board, they shall be constructed under the contract awarded to the lowest and best bidder, and the board must observe all ordinances and regulations in effect regarding accessibility and safety. The board shall remove all such buildings from streets and other public places within 30 days after an election, unless another election is to be held there within 90 days.<sup>11</sup>

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

All county boards of elections are required by both state and federal law to provide polling locations that are accessible to people with disabilities. People with disabilities must have the opportunity to vote privately and independently just as any other voter in the state of Ohio. All county boards of elections must verify before each election that their polling locations are accessible, including having the appropriate accessible parking for voters with disabilities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”) was enacted by Congress on July 26, 1990, creating standards for accessibility, including voting locations. The Help America Vote Act of 2002 authorized federal appropriations to the states to ensure that “polling locations, including the path of travel, entrances, exits, and voting areas of each polling facility, [are] accessible to individuals with disabilities, including the blind and visually impaired, in a manner that provides the same opportunity for access and participation (including privacy and independence) as for other voters.”<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, Ohio law requires county boards of elections to ensure that polling locations:

- Are free from barriers that would interfere with a handicapped person entering or exiting;
- Have sufficient handicapped parking spaces;

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<sup>10</sup> [R.C. 3501.29](#).

<sup>11</sup> [R.C. 3501.29\(A\)](#).

<sup>12</sup> Help America Vote Act (2002), Sec. 261.



- Have level entrances or non-skid ramps that meet state law and ADA requirements; and
- Have doorways that are a minimum of 32 inches wide.<sup>13</sup>

To determine if a polling location is free of barriers to access by people with disabilities and in compliance with federal and state law, county boards of elections must always use the most recent version of the Secretary of State's Polling Location Accessibility Checklist and Accessible Parking Guide to evaluate every polling location in its county upon selection of that location as a polling location. Whenever a revised checklist is published by the Secretary of State's Office, all polling locations should be re-evaluated using that checklist prior to the next regular general election.

All county boards of elections must maintain a file of its completed checklists and must develop an internal procedure for periodic review of all voting locations to confirm accessibility or the necessity for appropriate remediation strategies. All polling locations should be reviewed for accessibility at least once every two calendar years if not more frequently. In developing its file of completed checklists, boards of elections are encouraged to consider the Presidential Commission on Elections Administration's recommendation that local election officials also "maintain a diagram of every polling location to include at a minimum: room dimensions, location of power outlets, the proposed positioning of voting and voter processing equipment, the entry and exit routes, and signs required by the Americans with Disabilities Act."<sup>14</sup>

The Secretary of State's ADA Coordinator and Regional Liaisons are available to assist county boards of elections with developing polling location assessment strategies. The United States Election Assistance Commission has also published a Quick Start Management Guide for Accessibility that many boards of elections may find helpful.

A board can use the Automated Accessibility Checklist Program to conduct its assessment. The Program is a software application that can be loaded onto a tablet device. It allows a user to complete the survey onsite using a tablet device to enter results and measurements and upload photographs.

If a county finds that a polling location is not accessible, action must be taken to ensure compliance. Such action may include:

1. Notifying the owners of the facility of the problem(s) causing the inaccessibility of that facility in an effort to coordinate a permanent remediation of the accessibility challenge;

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<sup>13</sup> [R.C. 3501.29\(B\)](#).

<sup>14</sup> The American Voting Experience; Report and Recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration (January, 2014), Page 33.



2. Purchasing equipment to temporarily mitigate the inaccessibility of that facility for voters with disabilities and ensure that this equipment is in place and achieving its purpose on Election Day; or
3. Finding another facility, as may be permitted by law,<sup>15</sup> that meets the requirements of accessibility for use as a voting location.

Accessibility of a polling location to voters with disabilities applies equally to “offices and rooms” established pursuant to [R.C. 3501.10](#), including the office of the board of elections.

## **VERIFICATION OF ACCESSIBLE POLLING LOCATIONS**

Before the day of an election, the director of the board of elections of each county must sign a statement verifying that each polling location that will be used in that county at that election meets the requirements of [R.C. 3501.29\(B\)\(1\)\(b\)](#).<sup>16</sup> Secretary of State [Form 16](#) must be signed by the director and the deputy director or, if a board of elections does not have a deputy director, by the chairperson of the board.

Additionally, the director and deputy director (or chairperson when the board of elections does not have a deputy director) of a board of elections must file a signed statement ([Form 17](#)) before each election to verify that each polling location is in compliance with federal and state laws governing general polling location accessibility.

## **OUTSIDE THE POLLING LOCATION**

Travel the route from the accessible parking space(s), through the accessible entrance, and all the way inside the polling location to make sure there are no barriers for people with disabilities.

Specifically, check for the following issues:

1. Directional signs are posted guiding voters to the nearest accessible entrance to the polling location;
2. If equipment is provided by the board of elections to temporarily mitigate any barrier (e.g. temporary parking sign(s), cones for designated parking space(s), ramp(s), etc.) check that it is properly set it up, if required by your board of elections; and
3. If an alternate/separate entrance is being used specifically for accessibility, ensure that it is unlocked.

If the precinct election official finds that accessibility is lacking, they should notify the board of elections and be alert that voters with disabilities may need additional

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<sup>15</sup> When a board of elections considers if necessary to relocate a polling location, it must notify by mail prior to the next election, each of the registered voters in the precinct. [R.C. 3501.21](#).

<sup>16</sup> [R.C. 3501.29\(E\)](#).



assistance in accessing the polling location. To ensure proper accessibility for voters, the board should provide accessibility equipment/supplies if the items are not already located at the polling location.

### **INSIDE THE POLLING LOCATION**

Once the precinct election official has checked the route from the parking area to the polling location entrance, they should make sure the route to the voting area inside the polling location and the voting area itself is also accessible. If an elevator or vertical lift is needed to access the voting area, ensure that it is in working order and can be used independently by voters with disabilities if needed. Voters with disabilities should be able to easily move from the entrance to the voting area, throughout the voting process and to all the voting stations. Make sure there is a 36-inch wide path through the voting area, accessible tables, accessible voting machines, and adequate privacy provided.

Be prepared to provide reasonable accommodations to voters with disabilities or voters who need assistance. For example, make sure chairs are available for voters with mobility-type disabilities and/or voters who are elderly, have a serious illness, or are pregnant and cannot stand for a long period of time.

### **ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES IN GENERAL**

#### **Common barriers to accessibility:**

- Lack of designated accessible parking spaces;
- Lack of vertical signs or access aisles at accessible parking spaces;
- Sidewalks without curb-cuts;
- Steps at polling location entrances;
- Thresholds or steps that have an extreme change in height;
- Gravel, grates, or cracks in the sidewalk;
- Heavy interior doors;
- Doors not operable with a closed fist (i.e., round door knobs, thumb operated handles, etc.);
- Tripping hazards, such as loose mats or unsecured electrical cords; and
- Obstructions that protrude from the wall and are undetectable by a cane or are sitting in a walkway that make maneuvering difficult.



## **SIMPLE SOLUTIONS TO ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES**

Often there are simple ways to modify a polling location to allow people with disabilities equal access to the polling location and the voting equipment. Below are some simple solutions to accommodate persons with a disability (i.e., using a wheelchair, walker, crutches, cane, scooter, service animal, a friend's arm, other mobility aids, etc.) so that they can easily move through the polling location:

- Use temporary signs to designate accessible parking spaces;
- Use directional signs to designate accessible entrances;
- Post directional signs inside the building designating the specific room being used for voting;
- Use temporary ramps to mitigate the lack of curb-cuts;
- Prop open doors that are heavy, or not operable with a closed fist;
- Leave a 36-inch passageway throughout the room being used for voting;
- Place chairs, trash cans, or cones underneath protruding objects attached to a wall above the floor (objects protruding more than four inches from the wall) to make them cane-detectable;
- Set up voting machine(s) to be used by voters with a disability in an accessible and private location within the room being used for voting;
- Tape down or remove loose mats, electrical cords, or wires;
- Remove obstacles in the route of travel; and
- Place chairs along the walking route or in the voting location where a person can rest if necessary.

## **POLLING LOCATION SUPPLIES**

On Election Day, before the polls open at 6:30 a.m., the precinct election official team will need to work quickly, efficiently, and in teams to accomplish the many tasks necessary before voters arrive to vote.

Working in teams of two while setting up the polling location can make the work go more quickly and help prevent errors. For example, one person can read off items from a checklist or supply list while another person checks to see if the item has been included in the supplies. A thorough review at this point will save time and lessen concerns later in the day.



## **CHECKING THE SUPPLIES AND FORMS**

The precinct election official team should locate the Polling Location Supplies Checklist and review to make sure the following necessary supplies are available to the polling location:

- Quick Reference Guide (flip chart) for Precinct Election Officials from the Secretary of State;
- Other official precinct election official manuals, instructions or guides from the board of elections;
- [Directive 2008-80](#): Voter Identification Requirements;
- Chain of Custody forms for voting materials;
- Reference guides for voting equipment;
- Emergency contact list for the county board of elections;
- Stickers to give to voters when they have voted;
- Precinct election officials' name tags;
- Locks and seals;
- Precinct election officials' oath and payroll sheet; and
- Miscellaneous supplies (e.g., extension cords, tape, paper clips, pens, rubber bands, three-prong adapter or any other needed items).

Check the list of forms, supplies and instructions to make sure the following necessary items are available at the polling location, and check that they are designated for the applicable precinct:

- Encoders/Access Cards (if applicable);
- Pollbook;
- Signature Pollbook;
- Official Precinct Voter Registration Lists;
- Absentee Voter List;
- Ballot Stub Containers;
- Precinct Voting Location Guide;
- Identification Envelope - Provisional Ballot Affirmation
- (Secretary of State [Form 12-B](#), have with optical scan paper ballots on the correct table);



- Provisional Voter Precinct Verification Form ([Form 12-D](#));
- Provisional Ballot Notices (includes hotline number) ([Form 12-H](#));
- The official ballot bag or box for voted provisional ballots (have in an accessible but secure location);
- Voter Registration and Change of Address Forms;
- Forms and envelopes;
- List of write-in candidates (if applicable);
- Soiled/Defaced Ballot Envelope;
- Accounting chart for the purpose of recording the number of paper ballots, when applicable;
- Precinct identifier sign (place above the table so it is in plain view of voters entering the polling location);
- Signature Pollbook and Official Precinct Voter Registration List (place next to each other so both can be checked by two precinct election officials);
- Precinct referral cards (have on table, if available);
- Quick Reference Guide (flip chart) for Precinct Election Officials from the Secretary of State, which contains uniform provisional ballot and voter identification requirements (make sure Guide is on the table); and
- Any other official precinct election official manuals, instructions, or guides created by the county board of elections to accompany the Quick Reference Guide.

Make sure the precinct election officials responsible for provisional voting have the necessary materials close at hand, including the following:

- Un-voted paper ballots that are correct for the precinct;
- Identification Envelopes - Provisional Ballot Affirmation ([Form 12-B](#));
- Provisional Voter Precinct Verification Form ([Form 12-D](#));
- Provisional Ballot Notices (includes hotline number) ([Form 12-H](#));
- Provisional Ballot Tally Sheet; and
- Precinct Voting Location Guide.

### **PREPARING FOR SPECIAL SITUATIONS**

Make sure all necessary forms and materials are available, including the following:

- Voter Registration Forms;



- Notice of Name Change Forms ([Form 10-L](#));
- Challenge Forms ([Form 10-U](#)), used only by precinct election officials and not by observers;
- Alternative language materials, if applicable; and
- Candidate withdrawal notices, if applicable. Election officials must ensure that outdated notices from prior elections are not posted in the voting booths or posted within the polling location.

## EMERGENCY CHANGES TO POLLING LOCATIONS

Except in an emergency, no change in the number or location of polling locations may be made during the 25 days immediately preceding a primary or general election.<sup>17</sup> If the board determines that a change to a polling location is required within the 25 days prior to an election, the board must:

1. By majority vote, vote to change the polling location;
2. Immediately notify the Secretary of State's Office by emailing [SWVRD@OhioSoS.gov](mailto:SWVRD@OhioSoS.gov) with the updated polling location information;
3. Notify all impacted voters of the change by mail and contact via phone and email, if possible;
4. Update the board's voter registration system, website, and social media with the new location. All printed or published lists provided to other agencies or entities must also be updated;
5. Attempt to communicate the change in polling locations to all community partners and local news outlets; and
6. Make best efforts to post signs at the previous polling locations to direct voters to the correct polling location, even if such emergency change is temporary;

The board should consider acquiring signs that can be quickly customizable if an emergency polling location change is necessary (i.e., blank yard signs on which text can be added quickly).

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<sup>17</sup> R.C. 3501.18(A)



## ADJUSTED TRAVEL TO POLLING LOCATIONS

The board must attempt to communicate with all political subdivisions, utility companies, municipal service departments, the county engineer, and the Ohio Department of Transportation (“ODOT”) district office at least 90 days before the date of which an election is held and when early voting begins.

If there is an expected road closure, the board must complete the following tasks:

1. Contact the political subdivision to determine if the road under construction may be reopened for Election Day. If it cannot be reopened, the board must communicate the road closure to the community using social media or other forms of communication.
2. Contact local law enforcement and street departments and engage them to help monitor the situation and direct voters to the detoured route, if necessary.
3. Contact all local media outlets to inform them of the alternative route to the polling location.
4. Utilize the board’s social media and website to inform the public of the road closure and the detoured routes to the polling location.
5. Place signs at all major intersections impacted by the road closure and use signs to direct voters to the detoured path. Signs should be placed prior to Election Day so that voters travelling before Election Day may be made aware of the change.
  - a. Send a letter to all impacted voters informing them of the road closure and the detoured route to the entrance of the polling location, if the letter will arrive to the voter prior to the election. Be sure to outline all available alternative routes to the location.
  - b. Provide information to the voters about absentee voting (in person and by mail). Do not include the actual application but provide the voter with information, such as the link to complete the application.
6. Engage other community partners to help inform the public of the closure on Election Day. For example, flyers at local establishments (i.e., pizza shops, retail stores, gas stations) could help get the word out as well.



## ASSIGNMENT OF ELECTORS TO ANOTHER PRECINCT OR COUNTY

### 1. Another Precinct

When only a portion of a precinct is included within the boundaries of an election district, the board of elections may assign the electors residing in such portion of a precinct to the nearest precinct or portion of a precinct within the boundaries of such election district for the purpose of voting at any special election held in such district.<sup>18</sup> The statute defines “election district” as “a school district, municipal corporation, township, or other political subdivision that includes territory in more than one precinct or any other district or authority that includes territory in more than one precinct and that is authorized by law to place an issue on the ballot at a special election.”<sup>19</sup>

The board must notify the electors who have been assigned of the location of the polling location where they can vote at least 10 days prior to the election.

### 2. Another County

In any election in which only a part of the electors in a precinct is qualified to vote, the board may assign voters in such part to an adjoining precinct. Such assignment may be made to an adjoining precinct in another county with the consent and approval of the board of elections of such other county if the number of voters assigned to vote in a precinct in another county is 200 or less.<sup>20</sup>

The board of elections of the home county must notify its electors who have been assigned, at least 10 days prior to the holding of any such election, of the location of the polling location where they are entitled to vote at such election.<sup>21</sup>

When a county agrees to host voters from another county for a special election, the host county is responsible for preparing, issuing, and tabulating all ballots for that election. The host county also must provide paper ballots to the home county for any voter who needs to cast a provisional at the home county board of elections.

The home county for these voters is responsible for providing the host county with the voter registration information necessary to prepare a supplemental record of the voters for the poll list or pollbook.

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<sup>18</sup> [R.C. 3503.01\(B\).](#)

<sup>19</sup> [R.C. 3503.01\(B\).](#)

<sup>20</sup> [R.C. 3503.01\(B\).](#)

<sup>21</sup> [R.C. 3503.01\(B\).](#)



If the board is transferring voters to another county, please send an email to the Elections Counsel general inbox as soon as the decision is made. The Secretary of State's Office will provide instructions to both counties that outline the responsibilities of the home county and the host county.

## VOTING EQUIPMENT

A county that utilizes direct recording electronic voting machines ("DRE") as its primary voting system is required to arrange for a sufficient number of these devices to accommodate the number of electors in each precinct. The county should deploy at least one DRE voting machine for every 175 registered voters in a precinct or voting location at which the DREs are programmed to allow any voter in the location to vote on any machine in the location. In determining the number of registered voters, a board does not have to count electors who did not respond within 30 days to any confirmation notice. It may also exclude from the count any registered voter who has requested an absent voter ballot (by mail or in person) as of the date the allocation decision is made by the board. There must never be fewer than two DRE voting machines in any precinct or voting location. Except that in a presidential primary or a regular state election, there must never be fewer than three DRE voting machines in any precinct voting location.

Boards of elections should take note of the contests on the ballot in each political subdivision to determine whether or not the board should exceed the minimum requirements of state law as it relates to the board's provision of voting equipment and ballots for the election.

When allocating voting equipment, the county should also take into consideration the size and location of each polling location, available parking, accessibility to the polling location, and the number of candidates and issues appearing on the ballot.<sup>22</sup>

## SET-UP FOR MULTIPLE PRECINCT POLLING LOCATION

A multi-precinct voting location is a voting location at which voters from more than one precinct are assigned to vote.

If the board of elections, by a vote of at least three members of the board, opts to have a single voting location serve more than one precinct, the board must do both of the following:<sup>23</sup>

- ❑ Designate a single voting location manager for the voting location, who shall be a member of the political party whose candidate received the highest number of votes for governor at the most recent general election for that office in the

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<sup>22</sup> [R.C. 3506.12\(A\)](#).

<sup>23</sup> [R.C. 3501.22](#).



precincts whose polling locations are located at the applicable voting location, when tallying the combined vote for governor in all such precincts.

- Combine the pollbooks for those precincts to create a single pollbook for the voting location.

Multi-precinct voting locations increase the efficiency by which voters check in, reduce the possibility of voter confusion, including questions around “wrong precinct, right polling location” and provisional ballots, and adapt easily to an electronic pollbook environment. As such, all boards of elections are instructed to designate a single voting location manager for each multi-precinct polling location and to combine the pollbooks for those precincts in a multi-precinct polling location to create a single pollbook for the voting location, as authorized by law. If a multi-precinct voting location uses electronic pollbooks, the board may reduce the number of precinct election officials from four per precinct to two, so long as the board approves the reduction by the affirmative vote of at least three of its members.<sup>24</sup>

## **BEST PRACTICES FOR IMPLEMENTING MULTI-PRECINCT POLLING LOCATIONS**

Two essential components of a multi-precinct polling location regardless of voting system are: a sign in station and a provisional ballot station.

### **1. Sign In Station**

Instead of having a separate table or station and book for each precinct, the voting location must have tables or stations, identified for voters to check in using the first letter of the voter’s last name (unless the county has deployed electronic pollbooks at the polling location, in which case voters may check in at any electronic pollbook station).

- a. Voters will show identification and sign the signature pollbook at a table, or station, based upon the first letter of the voter’s last name instead of at a table based upon the voter’s precinct.
- b. The board must vote to determine the alphabetical break-down in its county.
- c. Using the alphabetical division set by the board based on the number of precincts in the voting location the one book is then separated into individual books.
- d. All of the information normally printed in your signature pollbook will remain (voter’s name and address, precinct, ballot style, signature image, notice to voter provisionally due to absentee request, etc.).

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<sup>24</sup> [R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(2\)\(c\)](#).



- e. The PEO must be able to check off the voter's name on the Precinct Voter Registration Lists at the same time the voter signs the signature pollbook.
- f. The same alpha-division approach will be taken with the Precinct Voter Registration List (the 6:30 a.m., 11 a.m., and 4 p.m. lists).
- g. Each table must have signs posted notifying voters of the alphabetical division for each table or station.
- h. Counties still using clerk books in addition to the signature pollbook may find it necessary to have only one alpha division per precinct.
  - o While some counties find clerk books to be a helpful reconciliation tool because it creates a duplicate record of voters as they check in, the use of clerk books is not required by state law.

## 2. **Suggested Alphabetical Break-Down**

### **Without Clerk Books**

2 precincts > 3 stations > A-G, H-P, Q-Z

3 precincts > 4 stations > A-E, F-K, L-R, S-Z

4 precincts > 5 stations > A-C, D-H, I-N, O-S, T-Z

### **With Clerk Books**

2 precincts > 2 stations > A-K, L-Z

3 precincts > 3 stations > A-G, H-P, Q-Z

4 precincts > 4 stations > A-E, F-K, L-R, S-Z

## 3. **Provisional Ballot Station**

The voting location must have one specific station dedicated for voters who may cast a ballot provisionally. The station must be staffed by precinct election officials who have been trained specifically for this task on the following:

- a. Rules and procedures for provisional voting;
- b. Proper use of the Precinct Voting Location Guide and precinct maps (used to determine if the voter is in the correct voting location);
- c. Correctly completing [Form 12-D](#) (when necessary); and
- d. How to find and issue the proper provisional ballot and ballot style to the voter based on the voter's residential address and precinct.

## 4. **Voting Machines**

In general:

- a. Should be programmed such that a voter can cast a ballot using any voting device in the location;



- b. Voter must still vote the proper ballot style (both precinct and precinct split) for the voter's residential address.

5. **Precinct Count Optical Scanner**

If more than one optical scanner is deployed to provide sufficient ballot box capacity or when the number of ballot styles exceeds the capability of a precinct count optical scanner to accept ballots from any ballot style in the location:

- a. The optical scanner programmed to accept the voter's particular ballot style must be clearly marked, easily identifiable to voters, and
- b. The PEOs must be appropriately trained to direct voters to the correct scanner.

6. **Issuing Ballots: DRE and Hybrid Counties**

For DRE counties or TOUCH SCREEN counties:

In some DRE counties, the programming of the smartcard for each individual voter is the necessary "authority to vote" step to ensure the voter receives the correct ballot style after signing the signature pollbook.

When a smartcard is not used, Boards should use an "authority to vote," or similar form, on which precinct election officials at the voter sign-in table will write down the voter's correct precinct, precinct split, or ballot style (or party for a partisan primary election) for the voter to take to the next step in the process. Alternatively, precinct election officials may print the "authority to vote" slip containing this information from the electronic pollbook.

7. **Issuing Ballots: Optical Scan Counties**

Establish a ballot station between the signature check-in station and the voting booths. This will ensure that the voter is issued the correct ballot.

Use an "authority to vote," or similar form to be completed by the PEO and given to the voter after signing the signature pollbook.



## POLLING LOCATIONS ARE NEUTRAL ZONES

A polling location is a “neutral zone.” Accordingly, Ohio law imposes specific limitations on who may enter a polling location and what conduct is permissible therein. Only an election official,<sup>25</sup> an observer,<sup>26</sup> a police officer, a person reviewing the 11:00 a.m. or 4:00 p.m. list of registered electors, a voter (including the voter’s children who are of non-voting age when accompanied by the voter), or a person assisting another person to vote shall be allowed to enter the polling location during the election.<sup>27</sup>

Two small United States flags must be placed 100 feet from the entrance to each polling location on the thoroughfares or walkways leading to the polling location (or as near to 100 feet as possible). No one, other than an election official, observer, police officer, or an elector waiting to mark, marking, or casting their ballot, may loiter or congregate within this “neutral zone” or within 10 feet of any elector waiting in line to vote if the line of voters extends beyond the flags.<sup>28</sup> Ohio law prohibits anyone from soliciting or attempting to influence any elector’s vote at a polling location and from preventing or delaying an elector from entering or leaving a polling location.<sup>29</sup>

### MEDIA ACCESS TO A POLLING LOCATION

Elections officials must grant members of the media reasonable access to polling locations. This mandate stems from a United States Court of Appeals decision, which held that the media must be granted “reasonable access” for the purpose of news-gathering and reporting so long as [the members of the media] do not interfere with precinct election officials and voters as voters exercise their right to vote.<sup>30</sup>

In its decision, the court did not define “reasonable access.” Therefore, a board of elections must consider the following factors to ensure that the voting process is not disrupted:

1. Whether the media representative is credentialed (i.e., is the person from an accredited media source);<sup>31</sup>
2. The length of time the media is present at a polling location;
3. The length of voter lines at the polling location;

<sup>25</sup> [R.C.3501.01\(U\)](#). An “election official” includes the following individuals:

(1) Secretary of State; (2) Employees of the Secretary of State serving the division of elections in the capacity of attorney, administrative officer, administrative assistant, elections administrator, office manager, or clerical supervisor; (3) Director of a board of elections; (4) Deputy director of a board of elections; (5) Member of a board of elections; (6) Employees of a board of elections; (7) Precinct election officials; (8) Employees appointed by the boards of elections on a temporary or part-time basis.

<sup>26</sup> [Chapter 4 of this manual](#).

<sup>27</sup> [R.C. 3501.35\(B\)](#); [R.C. 3503.23\(C\)](#).

<sup>28</sup> [R.C. 3501.30\(A\)\(4\)](#).

<sup>29</sup> [R.C. 3501.35\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3599.24](#); [R.C. 3599.26](#).

<sup>30</sup> *Beacon Journal Publishing Company, Inc. v. Blackwell* (6<sup>th</sup> Cir 2004), 389 F.3d 683 at 685; [R.C. 3501.35\(B\)\(2\)](#).

<sup>31</sup> A board of elections does not issue credentials to a member of the media. A member of the media already should possess press credentials. These credentials are sufficient to grant the member access to a polling location.



4. The size and layout of the polling location;
5. Protecting voter secrecy during the media's presence;
6. The conduct of the media representative; and
7. The effect of the presence of the media on voters and election officials.

No person – including a representative of the media – may disrupt the voting process, interfere with the election, intimidate voters, or jeopardize the secrecy of any ballot. If a member of the media interferes with the administration of the election, intimidates a voter, or jeopardizes the secrecy of a ballot, they may be removed from the polling location. The media must respect a voter's right to privacy by requesting the voter's permission prior to recording the voter or the voter's actions while in or about the polling location.

No person may attempt to subvert the statutory observer process by attempting to gain access to a polling location as member of the media.

Precinct election officials should inform the director and deputy director if the media visits a polling location.

### **EXIT POLLING AT A POLLING LOCATION**

Exit polling is not electioneering and is therefore permissible within 100 feet of the entrance to a polling location (i.e., within the area marked by the placement of two small U.S. flags).<sup>32</sup> Persons conducting exit polls may not enter a polling location, interfere with or disrupt the election, or otherwise violate the law. Further, persons conducting exit polls at a polling location may not wear anything that may be construed as campaigning for or against any candidate or issue on the ballot.

### **COLLECTING SIGNATURES AT A POLLING LOCATION**

Occasionally, groups may station persons outside of a polling location to gather signatures on a petition. Persons are not permitted to collect signatures inside of a polling location or within the neutral zone outside of the polling location (i.e., within the area marked by the placement of two small U.S. flags).<sup>33</sup> However, there is no prohibition against collecting signatures outside the neutral zone.

### **DISTRIBUTING FOOD AND CAMPAIGNING AT A POLLING LOCATION**

Campaigning, displaying campaign material or distributing food inside of the neutral zone of a polling location is prohibited.<sup>34</sup> However, nothing in Ohio's election laws prohibit a person or entity from campaigning, displaying campaign material, or

<sup>32</sup> *American Broadcasting Co., Inc. v. Blackwell* (S.D. Ohio 2006), 479 F.Supp.2d 719 at 744.

<sup>33</sup> [R.C. 3501.35\(A\)](#); *United Food & Commercial Workers Local 1099 v. City of Sidney* (6<sup>th</sup> 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").

<sup>34</sup> [R.C. 3501.35\(A\)](#).



distributing food outside of the neutral zone of a polling location (i.e., outside of the flags marking the 100 foot barrier or beyond 10 feet from any elector waiting in line to vote, if the line to vote extends beyond the flags).

Ohio law prohibits anyone from procuring or offering “money or other valuable thing to or for the use of another, with the intent that it or part thereof shall be used to induce such person to vote or to refrain from voting.”<sup>35</sup> Food, discounts, and other such inducements are “things of value” for purposes of the election law statutes on bribery.<sup>36</sup>

## **PROBLEMS WITH CONDUCT AT A POLLING LOCATION**

Boards of elections must instruct precinct election officials to contact the board office or the appropriate law enforcement official immediately if they experience a problem with the conduct of any person at a polling location.

### **Section 6.02 Precinct Election Officials**

Precinct election officials ensure the election is conducted lawfully and assist voters in a courteous and respectful manner. Ohio law provides that the county board of elections selects, generally, four residents of the county in which the precinct is located to serve as precinct election officials. Counties are permitted to assign more than four precinct election officials to a precinct, and often they do when they expect a high voter turnout.

One precinct election official will be selected to act as the voting location manager with overall responsibility for overseeing the election process, including overseeing opening and closing of the polling location and transporting of ballots and voting materials to the board of elections after the polls close. The law requires that the voting location manager have the same political affiliation as the party whose candidate for governor received the most votes in that precinct at the last state election for governor.

Precinct election officials work as a team to conduct an election at their assigned precinct.<sup>37</sup> All precinct election officials must enforce the peace and good order in and about the polling location. They must keep the entrance to the polling location open and unobstructed. They also must prevent and stop any actions or attempts to obstruct, intimidate or interfere with any elector (registered voter) when checking in or voting. They must protect official observers against being bothered or harmed while observing election processes. Ohio law requires that precinct election officials must act in such a way as to prevent riots, violence, tumult or disorder.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> [R.C. 3599.01\(A\)\(3\)](#); See also the prohibitions contained in [R.C. 3599.02](#).

<sup>36</sup> Even a professor’s award of extra credit to a student who votes in an election has been considered to be a “thing of value.” [Ohio Attorney General Opinion No. 96-033](#).

<sup>37</sup> [R.C. 3501.22](#).

<sup>38</sup> [R.C. 3501.33](#).



In addition to these general expectations, the voting location manager and precinct election officials have certain duties to perform before and on Election Day. See the Secretary of State Precinct Election Official Training Manual for more details.

## QUALIFICATIONS

Precinct election officials must be qualified electors registered to vote in the county where they serve. They need not reside in the precinct where they serve as precinct election officials.

## RESTRICTIONS<sup>39</sup>

An elector cannot serve as a precinct election official if that elector:

1. Has been convicted of a felony or any violation of the election laws,
2. Is unable to read and write the English language readily,
3. Is a candidate for an office to be voted for by the voters of the precinct in which the person is to serve, other than a candidate for county central committee who is not opposed by any other candidate in that precinct,
4. An individual may not serve as a precinct election official in any precinct or polling location where a family member or business associate will appear on a ballot for election or nomination to any public or party office at that same election.

## APPOINTMENT & TERM

On or before September 15 in each year, the board of elections, by a majority vote, appoints for each precinct, four competent and qualified electors, who are residents of the county in which the precinct is located, as precinct election officials. The term of a precinct election official is for one year.

Not more than one-half of the total number of precinct election officials assigned to a precinct may be members of the same political party. This provision permits the board to hire electors unaffiliated with a political party to serve as precinct election officials. The board may, at any time, designate any number of precinct election officials, not more than one-half of who may be members of the same political party, to perform their duties at any precinct in any election.

**Exception:** A board may reduce the number of precinct election officials, from four per precinct to two, at a voting location that both (1) serves more than one precinct; and (2) uses electronic pollbooks. At least three board members must vote in favor of the reduction.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> [R.C. 3501.15; R.C. 3501.27.](#)

<sup>40</sup> [R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(2\)\(c\).](#)



Additionally, if the board of elections determines that four precinct election officials are not required in a precinct for a special election, the board of elections may select two of the precinct's election officials, who are not members of the same political party, to serve as the precinct election officials for that precinct in that special election.<sup>41</sup>

## RECRUITMENT GOALS

To ensure that boards of elections have an adequate number of precinct election officials to fully staff every precinct as well as back-up precinct election officials to account for cancellations and shortages, the Secretary of State's Office recommends a recruiting goal of at least fifteen percent more precinct election officials than the minimum number needed to staff the polling locations. These additional poll workers should be trained and prepared to staff polling locations in the event their services are required. Boards should consider assigning more than four precinct election officials to a precinct if high voter turnout is expected.

## CERTIFICATE OF APPOINTMENT

The board must issue to each precinct election official a certificate of appointment. The precinct election official must present their certificate to the voting location manager at the time the polls are opened. The board of elections may revoke the certificate at any time for good and sufficient reasons. The certificate shall be in the form the board prescribes and shall specify the precinct, ward, or district in and for which the person to whom it is issued is appointed to serve, the date of appointment, and the expiration of the person's term of service.<sup>42</sup>

## REMOVAL FROM OFFICE

The board may summarily remove any precinct election official from office at any time for neglect of duty, malfeasance, misconduct in office, or any other good and sufficient reason.<sup>43</sup>

## VACANCIES

The board of elections must fill vacancies for unexpired terms. When new precincts have been created, the board must appoint precinct election officials for those precincts for the unexpired term.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> [R.C. 3501.22](#).

<sup>42</sup> [R.C. 3501.22\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3501.27\(A\)](#).

<sup>43</sup> [R.C. 3501.22](#); [R.C. 3501.27](#).

<sup>44</sup> [R.C. 3501.22](#); [R.C. 3501.27\(C\)](#).



## COMPENSATION

Every precinct election official in a county must be paid at the same hourly rate, which cannot be less than the minimum hourly rate (\$7.25 per hour) established by the Fair Labor Standards Act (“FLSA”) and not more than \$133.72 per day.

In accordance with [R.C. 3501.28\(D\)](#), the Secretary of State establishes by rule the maximum amount of per diem compensation that may be paid to precinct election officials under [R.C. 3501.28](#) each time the FLSA is amended to increase the minimum hourly rate. Upon learning of an increase, the Secretary of State must determine by what percentage the minimum hourly rate has been increased under the FLSA and establish a new maximum amount of per diem compensation that precinct election officials may be paid under [R.C. 3501.28](#) that is increased by the same percentage that the minimum hourly rate has been increased under the FLSA.

No board of elections may increase a precinct election official’s pay during a calendar year unless the board has given written notice of the proposed increase to the board of county commissioners not later than October 1st of the preceding calendar year.

A board of elections may increase the pay of a precinct election official during a calendar year by up to, but not exceeding, nine percent over the compensation paid during the previous calendar year to a precinct election official in the county where the board is located if the compensation so paid during the previous calendar year was less than \$85 per diem.

A board of elections may increase the pay of a precinct election official during a calendar year by up to, but not exceeding, four and a half percent over the compensation paid during the previous calendar year to a precinct election official in the county where the board is located if the compensation so paid during the previous calendar year was more than \$85 but less than \$95 per diem.

The board of county commissioners may review and comment upon a proposed increase and may enter into a written agreement with a board of elections to permit an increase in the compensation paid to precinct election officials for their services during a calendar year that is greater than these applicable percentage limitations.

No precinct election official who works less than a “full Election Day” will be paid the maximum amount allowed by law or as set by the board of elections, whichever is less. “Full Election Day” means the period of time between the opening of the polls and the completion of the procedures when the polls are closed.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> [R.C. 3501.28](#).



## VOTING LOCATION MANAGERS

In return for the performance of their statutory duties, voting location managers receive additional compensation in an amount, consistent with [R.C. 3501.28](#), determined by the board of elections.<sup>46</sup>

Voting location managers who deliver and return election supplies may receive additional compensation of not more than five dollars for each trip to the polling location and five dollars for each trip from the polling location to the board office, plus mileage for each trip at the rate provided by rules governing travel adopted by the Office of Budget and Management.<sup>47</sup>

## WITHHOLDING COMPENSATION

The board of elections may withhold any precinct election official's compensation for failure to obey the instructions of the board or to comply with the law relating to the duties of a precinct election official.<sup>48</sup>

## PUBLIC EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM ("PERS")

Precinct election officials paid less than \$600 per calendar year are excluded from PERS participation.

## SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE

The compensation of all elections officials who earn less than \$1,600 per calendar year is exempt from Social Security and Medicare deductions.

## PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

State law permits a public employee (e.g., employee of the State of Ohio, a county, township, city, village, school district, etc.) to receive paid leave from the employee's employment for the purpose of being a precinct election official. In these instances, the public employee receives both the employee's regular compensation plus the compensation given for service as a precinct election official. The employee must receive authorization from their employer prior to confirming their service as a precinct election official. Local work rules and collective bargaining agreements may limit an employee's ability to serve as a precinct election official.

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<sup>46</sup> [R.C. 3501.22](#); [R.C. 3501.28](#); [R.C. 3501.36](#).

<sup>47</sup> [R.C. 3501.36](#).

<sup>48</sup> [R.C. 3501.28](#).



## SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD PEOS<sup>49</sup>

Ohio law contains two different provisions for a 17-year-old Ohio resident to serve as a precinct election official<sup>50</sup>

### GENERAL PROVISION<sup>51</sup>

If the board of elections determines that not enough qualified electors in a precinct are available to serve as precinct election officials for any election, it may appoint as precinct election officials persons who are at least 17 years of age and are registered to vote in accordance with [R.C. 3503.011](#) and [R.C. 3503.07](#).

### CONJUNCTION WITH A SCHOOL<sup>52</sup>

In addition, a 17-year-old senior may participate in a program established in conjunction with a high school. A board of elections, in conjunction with the board of education of a city, local, or exempted village school district, the governing authority of a community school established under Chapter 3314 of the Revised Code, or the chief administrator of a nonpublic school may establish a program permitting certain high school seniors to apply and, if appointed by the board of elections, to serve as precinct election officials at a primary, special, or general election. Unlike the general provision above, the Revised Code does not require a participant in the high school program to be registered to vote.

A participant who is (1) registered, and (2) cast a partisan ballot in a primary, may serve in a bipartisan team. Participants who would like to affiliate and serve on Election Day should consider voting early in-person absentee in the first two weeks of voting.

Boards are limited in how many of these 17-year-old participants they may deploy:<sup>53</sup>

- If a precinct has less than six precinct election officials, it may have one 17-year-old participant (three or four adults + one 17-year-old participant).
- If a precinct has six or more precinct election officials, it may have up to 2 17-year-old participants (five or six adults + one or two 17-year-old participants) or (four adults + two 17-year-old participants).

A board of education, governing authority, or chief administrator that establishes a program under this division in conjunction with a board of elections may establish additional criteria that students shall meet to be eligible to participate in that program, in addition to the requirements established by [R.C. 3501.22 \(C\)\(2\)](#).

<sup>49</sup> [R.C. 3501.22\(B\)](#); [R.C. 3501.22\(C\)](#); [R.C. 3501.22\(D\)](#).

<sup>50</sup> R.C. 3501.22(B) and (C).

<sup>51</sup> R.C. 3501.22(B).

<sup>52</sup> R.C. 3501.22(C).

<sup>53</sup> R.C. 3501.22(D).



Any student applying to participate in this program as part of the student's application process shall declare the student's political party affiliation with the board of elections. No student appointed as a precinct election official pursuant to this program shall be designated as a voting location manager. Any student participating in this program shall be excused for that student's absence from school on the day of an election at which the student is serving as a precinct election official.

## TRAINING

Only qualified electors who have completed a program of instruction as prescribed by the Secretary of State in the rules, procedures, and law relating to elections may serve as election officials. The board should use training materials prepared by the Secretary of State. The board may also use additional materials prepared by or on behalf of the board. Unpaid volunteers may be used in conducting the training. The board may reimburse the volunteers for actual and necessary expenses incurred in participating in the program.

**Note:** The board may reimburse precinct election officials, at a rate determined by the board, for attending training sessions.<sup>54</sup>

### NEW PRECINCT ELECTION OFFICIALS

Each new precinct election official must be trained in-person on the county's voting equipment before participating in the person's first election as a precinct election official. Any program of instruction must be scheduled within 60 days before the election in which the precinct election official will participate.<sup>55</sup>

### PREVIOUSLY TRAINED PRECINCT ELECTION OFFICIALS

Precinct election officials, other than voting location managers, who have been previously trained, need only receive instruction once every three years, when the county changes voting equipment, or when the board or Secretary of State considers the instruction necessary. This training must include in-person training on the county's voting equipment. Voting location managers must be reinstructed before the primary election in even-numbered years. Any program of instruction must be scheduled within 60 days before the election in which the precinct election official to be trained will participate.<sup>56</sup>

Boards of Elections may offer online or virtual training as the sole method of training for experienced precinct election officials who are already trained on the current voting system's equipment. Boards may offer self-paced trainings through a learning management platform. If a board chooses to offer a self-paced training option, the

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<sup>54</sup> [R.C. 3501.27.](#)

<sup>55</sup> [R.C. 3501.27\(B\).](#)

<sup>56</sup> [R.C. 3501.27\(B\).](#)



board must be able to track the progress of each participant to ensure they complete the entire training. The board must also provide an assessment to each potential precinct election official, including those who participate in live or self-paced virtual training, to ensure the precinct election official understood the information provided during training.

## CONDUCT

The way a precinct election official conducts themselves at the polling location sets the tone for the voting location and serves as an example for voters. Treating voters and other elections officials with courtesy and respect is the foundation for a smooth process. If a precinct election official has patience with voter, the voter will have patience with the precinct official if problems arise.

### **DESIRED PRECINCT ELECTION OFFICIAL CONDUCT:**

Precinct election officials should treat voters in a professional manner, work efficiently with each other and resolve problems so that voters can vote with ease and privacy. Precinct election official activity should not distract voters from their business at the polls.

### **UNACCEPTABLE PRECINCT ELECTION OFFICIAL CONDUCT:**

1. Precinct election officials may not campaign at the polling location or attempt to influence voters or other precinct election officials regarding their vote for or against a candidate or issue;
2. Precinct election officials may not wear or disseminate any campaign literature or paraphernalia, including, but not limited to literature, sample ballots, slate cards, campaign badges, campaign clothing or campaign buttons;
3. Precinct election officials may not introduce into the polling location, or use during their working time, items that might distract them from managing the polls (i.e., laptops not provided by the board of elections, newspapers, iPods or other music players, cell phones for personal use, radios, televisions, etc.);
4. Precinct election officials may not solicit contributions for raffle tickets or sell anything at the polling location, such as baked goods, candy, crafts, etc.;
5. Precinct election officials may not place any food or drink on the check-in table, or on or near voting equipment or supplies;
6. Precinct election officials may not engage in any other activities identified as illegal or unacceptable according to the board of elections, the Secretary of State, or state or federal law; and



Precinct election officials may not refuse to enforce election laws, especially the laws that apply to precinct polling locations.<sup>57</sup>

## ETHICS

All precinct election officials (including rovers, scouts, and other similar, temporary election day positions) appointed by the boards of elections must comply with Ohio ethics laws and the provisions of the Secretary of State's Ethics Policy applicable to them. All current and future precinct election officials shall complete the Ethics Policy Acknowledgment Form ([Form 351](#)). The board of elections shall keep the completed form for the precinct election official on file at the board office.

As outlined in the Secretary of State's Ethics Policy:

1. [R.C. 3501.15](#) prohibits precinct election officials from serving in any precinct where the precinct election official is a candidate on the ballot, except for unopposed candidates for a political party county central committee.
2. Precinct election officials (including rovers, scouts, or similar, temporary election workers) may not serve in any precinct in which a family member or business associate is a candidate for elected office.
3. Precinct election officials (including rovers, scouts, or similar, temporary election workers) shall not wear or distribute shirts, buttons, stickers, or other campaign paraphernalia for or against any candidate or issue at the office of the Secretary of State, at the office of the board of elections, or at any polling location.
4. Precinct election officials (including rovers, scouts, or similar, temporary election workers) shall not engage in any political activity while on board of elections time.
5. Precinct election officials (including rovers, scouts, or other similar, temporary election workers) should avoid actions and associations that create an appearance of impropriety, that undermine public confidence in Ohio elections officials, or that interfere with the performance of duties by Ohio elections officials.

For precinct election officials (including rovers, scouts, or other similar, temporary election workers), violations of this policy may be reported to the director or deputy director of the board of elections. Reports also may be made anonymously by mailing a written statement in a sealed envelope to the board of elections to the attention of the director or deputy director.

Violations of this ethics policy by a precinct election official (including rovers, scouts, or other similar, temporary election workers) may result in dismissal from service and no opportunities for further service as a precinct election official.

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<sup>57</sup> [R.C. 3501.33](#); [R.C. 3501.35](#).



## VOTING LOCATION MANAGER (“VLM”)

The voting location manager is the manager for the precinct polling location and is responsible for the overall conduct of the election at the precinct polling location.

### **THE VOTING LOCATION MANAGER WILL DO THE FOLLOWING PRIOR TO ELECTION DAY:**

- Pick up any election supplies, following the board of elections’ instructions;
- Check any supply container labels to make sure they are for the correct precinct, assuring not to break any seals in the process;
- Go to the polling location so that the VLM knows how to get there, can easily locate parking, and be familiar with where the voting equipment can be found;
- Contact the polling location facility about getting in to set up for the election, if this is required by the board of elections; and
- Contact the precinct election officials assigned to the precinct to confirm their commitment for Election Day and to arrange a time to set up the polling location, if this is required by the board of elections.

### **THE VOTING LOCATION MANAGER WILL CARRY OUT THE FOLLOWING DUTIES ON ELECTION DAY:**

- Arrive at the polling location not later than 6:00 a.m., or by the time required by the county board of elections, if earlier;
- Administer the oath of office to other precinct election officials and ensure they take and sign the oath statement, and personally sign the oath statement;<sup>58</sup>
- Formulate a work plan for Election Day, including work assignments, lunch schedules, and break schedules (if the county board of elections has not already done this);
- Arrange the polling location and set up voting machines as directed by the board of elections;
- Review with precinct election officials any special instructions or recent changes to instructions;
- Break the seal on the election supply container and confirm that the supplies, including ballots, are the correct supplies for the precinct or polling location;
- Before the polls open on Election Day, on the Official Precinct Voter Registration List to be posted at the precinct polling location, check off all absentee and early

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<sup>58</sup> [R.C. 3501.31](#).



provisional ballot voters listed on the Supplemental Absentee List. Copies of the Official Precinct Voter Registration List are updated and posted throughout the day so that the public can see which registered voters in the precinct have voted;

- Post the Official Precinct Voter Registration List at 6:30 a.m. and post updates at 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. showing who has voted in the precinct. The general public is permitted to be in the polling location to read and take notes from these lists while the polls are open;
- Officially open and close the polls;
- Administer the oath to any duly appointed poll observers;
- Ensure that all campaigners and campaign materials are situated 100 feet beyond the entrance to the polling location, as marked by the U.S. flags posted outside the entrance to the polling location (even if the flags cannot be placed at 100 feet, the boundary extends to 100 feet);<sup>59</sup>
- Complete any necessary chain of custody procedures for voting materials;
- Return the ballots and required voting materials and supplies to the board of elections with a precinct election official, employee, or appointee of the board to whom an oath was given and who is a member of a different political party; and
- Perform any other duties assigned by the county board of elections.

## BIPARTISAN RETURN OF ELECTION MATERIALS

The ballots and required voting materials and supplies must be transported to the board of elections by a voting location manager with a precinct election official, employee, or appointee of the board to whom an oath was given and who is a member of a different political party than the voting location manager. Please also refer to specific transport instructions provided by your board of elections for more details.

Each board of elections must arrange for the delivery of voting equipment to polling locations prior to or on Election Day. If voting equipment will be delivered to a polling location prior to Election Day, the board must arrange for the security of the equipment at the polling location. The storage of voting equipment at a precinct election official's home, vehicle, or place of employment is prohibited, and a precinct election official must never retain custody of voting equipment overnight.

At a polling location, voting equipment must be stored in the manner recommended by the voting equipment manufacturer and in a clean and climate-controlled environment.

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<sup>59</sup> [R.C. 3501.30](#).



The equipment must not be stored on the ground in an area prone to flooding or where liquids accumulate.

If memory cards are inserted into the voting machines when they are delivered to a polling location or transferred to a precinct election official, the board is required to use tamper evident seals to allow detection if the memory card is tampered with while in the machine. The seal must be unique to each machine with a documented, unique identifier that corresponds to the particular voting machine. Documentation of the unique identifier for the tamper evident seal as it corresponds to a particular voting machine should be maintained on three lists. Two lists must be retained in a secure location at the board office, with one kept by the director and the other by the deputy director.

Upon set up and closing, precinct election officials must inspect all pieces of voting equipment that are assigned to their precinct for any physical damage. Precinct election officials must document the inspections on a maintenance/event log provided by the board of elections and must specifically note any signs of damage or tampering discovered on the equipment or cases used to house the equipment.

Additionally, boards of elections must use a Chain of Custody Log ([Form 400](#) or local equivalent) to document the exchange of custody of voting equipment, election supplies, and/or ballots. Boards of elections should train precinct election officials on inspection of tamper evident seals so they know what to look for when inspecting the equipment.

## POLLING LOCATION SECURITY AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Precinct election officials must maintain control over all voting equipment, keys, memory cards, ballots, and all other election supplies at all times. Any suspicious activity or damage to the equipment must be reported to the board immediately. The board must provide each voting location manager with a list of persons to contact in the event of an emergency.

Precinct election officials must be instructed that, in the event of an emergency, their first priority is the safety of the electors and other election officials. Precinct election officials should remove voting equipment, election supplies, and ballots only if it may be done safely. If any voting equipment, election supplies, and ballots are removed from a polling location, at least one (preferably two, one of each major political party) must remain with the equipment and supplies at all times.



## **SECURE RETURN OF BALLOTS AND ELECTION DAY SUPPLIES**

At the close of polls, all ballots and election supplies (i.e., pollbooks, poll lists, tally sheets, election reports, and other materials) must be returned by a bipartisan team to the board of elections office or other location designated and staffed by the board. The bipartisan team must consist of the voting location manager, precinct official, employee or appointee of the board who is a member of a different political party than the voting location manager and “has taken an oath to uphold the laws and constitution of this state, including an oath that the person will promptly and securely perform the duties [of promptly and securely transporting and delivering ballots and election supplies to the board of elections].”<sup>60</sup>

When transporting ballots and election supplies, the bipartisan team must travel in the same vehicle. The board is permitted to have one or more additional persons, such as a law enforcement official, accompany the bipartisan team. One bipartisan team may transport the ballots and election supplies for an entire multi-precinct polling location.

## **OTHER PRECINCT ELECTION OFFICIAL GENERAL DUTIES**

### **A precinct election official must perform the following duties:**

- Prior to Election Day, go to the polling location to know how to get there, can easily locate parking, and be familiar with where the voting equipment can be found;
- On Election Day, arrive at the polling location not later than 6:00 a.m., or by the time required by the county board of elections, if earlier;
- Take the precinct election officials’ oath of office, administered by the voting location manager and sign the oath statement;<sup>61</sup>
- Sign the payroll sheet; and
- Conduct the election properly and lawfully.

### **Precinct election officials must also perform tasks assigned by the voting location manager such as:**

- Assist in arranging the precinct polling location;
- Assist in opening and closing the precinct polling location;
- Assist voters, as necessary, and in a courteous and respectful manner;
- Know how to properly use the voting machines;

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<sup>60</sup> [R.C. 3505.31](#).

<sup>61</sup> [R.C. 3501.31](#).



- Ensure the security of the voting machine(s) and all associated materials and supplies;
- Verify and sign forms as needed;
- Ensure that all campaigners and campaign materials are situated 100 feet beyond the entrance to the polling location, as marked by the U.S. flags posted outside the entrance to the polling location (even if the flags cannot be placed at 100 feet, the boundary extends to 100 feet);<sup>62</sup>
- Record important information as necessary;
- Post the Official Precinct Voter Registration List for the precinct at 6:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.;
- Check voter ID;
- Supervise the use of paper signature or electronic pollbook(s) and check-in voters;
- Make sure voters are correctly issued regular or provisional ballots; and
- Perform any other duties as assigned by the county board of elections.

## **OATH**

On or before Election Day, each precinct election official must execute the following oath of office:

State of Ohio, County of \_\_\_\_\_, ss: I do solemnly swear that under the penalty of perjury that I will support the Constitution of the United States of America and the Constitution of the State of Ohio and its laws; that I have not been convicted a felony or any violation of election laws; that I will discharge to the best of my ability the duties of PRECINCT ELECTION OFFICIAL in and for Precinct \_\_\_\_\_ in the County of (Township) or (Ward and City or Village)

\_\_\_\_\_, in the election to be held on the \_\_\_\_\_ as required by law and the rules and instructions of the Board of Elections of said county; and that I will endeavor to prevent fraud in such election, and will report immediately to said Board any violation of the election laws which come to my attention, and will not disclose any information as to how any elector voted which is gained by me in the discharge of my official duties.

<sup>62</sup> [R.C. 3501.30](#).