

Poll Watchers

Poll Watchers have rights established by the NYS Election Law

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

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

Poll Watchers are entitled to:

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

Poll Watchers may not assist or interrupt in the conduct of the election or be part of any electioneering at the polling site.

Poll Watchers may not greet the voters and they are not allowed to handle any official documents or otherwise interfere with the duties of Inspectors. This type of "help" is strictly prohibited.

Only one watcher from each political party committee or independent body may be near the inspector table at any time.

Poll Watchers may not have lap tops or tablets with them in the polling place.

Poll Watcher Certification

All Poll Watchers must have a written certificate issued by the chairperson of the political party or independent body, which they represent. In primary, two or more candidates can sign it. On Election Day, the certificate must be submitted to the Inspectors of the election site in which the Poll Watcher serves. Inspectors must collect these certificates and return them to the County Board, in the black binder.

Poll Watchers must be qualified voters in the county in which they serve, except in New York City, where they may serve at any election district in the city.

**SAMPLE
Poll Watcher
Certificate**

WATCHER CERTIFICATE (Election Law, Section 8-500)

Date of Election: _____

Appointing authority: _____
(Insert name of political party/political committee/ independent body/ candidate here)

Name of watcher: _____

County or city of watcher's residence: _____

Poll site where watcher is to appear: _____
(Insert town/village/city and the election district number here)

Signature of Appointing Authority Individual: _____

Print name of Appointing Authority Individual: _____

Title of Appointing Authority Individual: _____

GUIDELINES

- At a General Election or special election, watchers shall be appointed by: the chair or other officer of any party committee, independent body whose candidates are upon the ballot, or political committee supporting or opposing a ballot proposal.
- At a Primary Election, watchers shall be appointed by the chair or other officer of any party committee or any candidate on the ballot.
- Each watcher must be a qualified voter of the city or county in which he/she is to serve.
- Watcher certificates must be delivered to an inspector at the election district.
- Not more than three watchers for any appointing authority may be appointed to serve at the same election district at the same time.
- Watchers may be present at the polling place at least fifteen minutes before the unlocking and examinations of any voting machine or ballot box at the opening of the polls, until after the signing of the inspectors' returns and proclamation of the result.
- Not more than one watcher for any appointing authority may be within the guard rail at any one time.
- No person shall be appointed or act as a watcher who is a candidate for any public office to be voted for by the voters of the election district in the same election in which the watcher is to serve.

(Sample prepared by the State Board of Elections for use on Election Day or days of Early Voting)

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