

Poll Watchers – Frequently Asked Questions

(Reference: T.C.A. § 2-7-104)

I. Who May Appoint Poll Watchers?

- A. Each political party - Political Party means an organization which nominates candidates for public office.
- B. Each candidate in a general or primary election
- C. Any citizens' organization interested in a question on the ballot
- D. Any citizens' organization interested in preserving the purity of elections and in guarding against abuse of the elective franchise

II. How Many Poll Watchers May be Appointed?

- A. Political parties may appoint two (2)
- B. Each candidate may appoint one (1) or more (Although multiple poll watchers may be appointed, only one (1) of the poll watchers may be in a polling place at any given time.)
- C. Each citizens' organization may appoint two (2)

III. How Are Poll Watchers Appointed?

- A. Appointments must be submitted to the county election commission
- B. Appointments must be written and signed by the appointing authority
- C. Appointments may designate the same person to serve in more than one polling location

IV. To Which Locations May Poll Watchers be Appointed?

- A. Early Voting
 - 1. County election commission office; and/or
 - 2. Satellite location(s)
 - 3. Nursing home(s)
 - 4. Penal institution(s)
- B. Election Day
 - 1. Polling site
 - 2. Absentee counting board

V. When Must Appointments be Made?

A. Early Voting

1. No later than 12:00 noon two (2) business days before the first day of early voting; or
2. No later than 12:00 noon two (2) business days before the poll watcher will be present at the early voting site

B. Election Day

1. Appointments must be submitted no later than 12:00 noon two (2) business days before the election

VI. Who May Not be Appointed as a Poll Watcher?

- A. Anyone who will be or who is a candidate for an office on the ballot
- B. County election commission members

VII. What Must Poll Watchers Do Upon Arriving at the Polls?

- A. Upon arrival at the polling place, a poll watcher must display his appointment badge to the Officer of Elections.
- B. The poll watcher shall sign the poll watcher register.
- C. The poll watcher shall wear a badge displaying their "name" and the words "POLL WATCHER". The County Election Commission will provide the badges (labels) for candidates or campaign committees ensuring the precinct officials know they have been duly appointed.

VIII. What May Poll Watchers Do?

- A. Watch and inspect performance in and around polling place
- B. Speak to the Judges and the Officer of Elections
- C. Through Judges, challenge voters
- D. During preparation and certification, inspect the poll lists
- E. Inspect the ballots while being called and counted
- F. During preparation and certification, inspect the tally sheets
- G. Present a protest of any aspect of the conduct of the election to the Officer of Elections, County Election Commission or Inspector

IX. What Poll Watchers May Not Do?

- A. Interfere with any voter in preparing or casting voter's ballot
- B. Prevent election official from performing his or her duties
- C. Inspect signature lists during the election hours
- D. Observe the giving of assistance to a voter
- E. Wear campaign material of any kind during the performance of his or her duties
- F. Exit the room of the counting board after the actual counting of ballots begins until completion of the counting and the polls close.
- G. Possess electronic devices when observing the duties of the absentee counting board
- H. Speak to the voters; this includes greeting the voter or standing in the doorway where the voter enters
- I. Take photos or videos of voters while voting or while inside Polling Location.

X. May Poll Watchers Engage in Campaign Activities?

- A. In the polling place - **NO**
- B. Outside the 100' boundary – **YES**

NOTES:

- *After removing the poll watcher badge or credentials, the Poll Watcher may engage in campaign activity outside of the campaign free zone.*
- Once the poll watcher resumes his or her duties as a poll watcher, any and /or all campaign activity must cease.

POLL WATCHER ACTIVITY CHART

- Poll watchers may be appointed by each political party; each candidate in a general or primary election; any citizen’s organization interested in a question on the ballot; and any citizen’s organization interested in preserving the purity of elections and in guarding against abuse of the elective franchise;
- Poll watchers may be appointed at whatever location where voting occurs; and
- Poll watchers must be appointed no later than 12:00 noon two (2) business days before the day of voting.

PERMITTED ACTIVITIES	PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Watch and inspect performance in and around polling place ✓ Through judges, challenge voters ✓ During preparation and certification, inspect the poll lists ✓ Inspect the ballots while being called and counted ✓ During preparation and certification, inspect the tally sheets ✓ Present a protest of any aspect of the conduct of the election to the officer of elections, county election commission or inspector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Interfere with any voter in preparing or casting voter’s ballot ✗ Prevent election official from performing his or her duties ✗ Observe the giving assistance to a voter ✗ Wear campaign material of any kind during the performance of his or her duties ✗ Engage in any campaign activity within the 100’ boundary ✗ Exit the room of the counting board after the actual counting of ballots begins ✗ Possess electronic devices when they are observing the duties of the absentee counting board. ✗ Photographs and videos are prohibited

