

POLLWATCHERS

Candidates, political parties, qualified organizations of citizens, state nonpartisan civic organizations, and organized groups of proponents for and opponents to a proposition on the ballot may appoint pollwatchers. Pollwatchers may be present to observe the conduct of the election before the polls open, during voting hours, and after the polls close. A reasonable number of pollwatchers are also allowed in the central counting location. Pollwatchers may view the vote by mail, early voting, and grace period registration and voting tabulation processes as well as the counting or remaking of provisional ballots at the discretion of the election authority; however, at least one representative of each established political party and authorized agents of the SBE shall be permitted to observe this process at all times. All pollwatchers shall be permitted to view all reasonably requested records relating to the conduct of the election, provided they do not touch or handle any of the election materials and the secrecy of the ballot is not impinged. (10 ILCS 5/7-34, 17-23, 18-6, 19-10, 20-10)

Qualifications

- Registered voter in Illinois.
 - Must have valid pollwatcher credentials issued to them by the election authority or the SBE.
 - Must have separate pollwatcher credentials for each precinct they enter.
 - If they are a candidate pollwatcher, they must have candidate credentials issued to them by the election authority or SBE.
- (10 ILCS 5/7-34, 17-23)

Pollwatcher Credentials

Each pollwatcher must surrender their credentials to the judges when they enter the polling place. If an individual refuses to surrender their credentials, or if the credentials are not valid, the individual must leave. All credentials remain in the possession of the judges and are returned to the election authority after the polls close. (10 ILCS 5/7-34, 17-23)
In order to be valid, pollwatcher credentials must contain the following information:

- 1) The real or facsimile signature of the election authority or the Chair and Vice Chair of the SBE;
 - 2) The real or facsimile signature of the candidate, state, or local party chair, the presiding officer of a civic organization or the chair of a group of proponents for or opponents to a proposition (whichever applies);
 - 3) The signature and address of the pollwatcher; and,
 - 4) A statement that the pollwatcher is registered to vote from the address shown.
- (10 ILCS 5/7-34, 17-23)

Note: Neither the election authority nor the SBE may require any such party official, the candidate, the presiding officer of the civic organization, or the chair of the proponent or opponent group to submit the names or other information concerning pollwatchers before making credentials available to such persons or organizations. (10 ILCS 5/7-23)

Number of Pollwatchers Allowed in the Polling Place

Pollwatchers may come and go throughout the day as long as they do not interfere with the election process. In addition, pollwatchers may be substituted during the course of the day as long as the number of pollwatchers in the polling place does not exceed the number allowed by law. (10 ILCS 5/7-34, 17-23)

If the polling place becomes overcrowded with pollwatchers and their presence interferes with the conduct of the election, a majority of the judges may decide to limit the number of pollwatchers by drawing lots; however, at least one pollwatcher for candidates, political parties, qualified organizations of citizens, State nonpartisan civic organizations, and organized groups of proponents for and opponents to a proposition must be allowed to remain in the polling place. (10 ILCS 5/7-34, 17-23)

**NUMBER OF POLLWATCHERS ALLOWED IN EACH
PRECINCT/POLLING PLACE AT ANY GIVEN TIME**

APPOINTING AUTHORITY	PRIMARY ELECTION DAY	GENERAL ELECTION DAY	EARLY VOTING SITES
CANDIDATE	TWO	TWO	ONE
ESTABLISHED OR NEW POLITICAL PARTY	ONE	TWO	ONE
*QUALIFIED ORGANIZATION OF CITIZENS	ONE	ONE	ONE
PROONENTS AND OPONENTS OF A BALLOT PROPOSITION	ONE	ONE	ONE
**STATE NONPARTISAN CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS	ONE	ONE	ONE

(10 ILCS 5/7-31(1)-(5), 17-23(1)-(5))

** Each organization of citizens within the county or political subdivision, which has among its purposes or interests the investigation or prosecution of election fraud.*

*** Each State nonpartisan civic organization within the county or political subdivision shall be entitled to appoint one pollwatcher per precinct, provided that no more than 2 pollwatchers appointed by State nonpartisan civic organizations shall be present in a polling place at the same time.*

Note: Each organization (including proponent/opponent of referenda groups) shall have registered its name and address and the names and addresses of its principal officers with the proper election authority at least 40 days before the election.

(10 ILCS 5/7-34(3), 17-23(3))

Pollwatcher Rights

- Pollwatchers are allowed in the precinct/polling place before the polls open, during voting hours, and after the polls close.
- Pollwatchers may leave and re-enter the polling place during voting hours unless such activity becomes disruptive.
- Before the polls open, the pollwatchers may observe all the procedures the election judges utilize to set up the election, such as comparing ballot sheets with specimen ballots.
- During voting hours, the pollwatchers should be near enough to the judges so they can visually examine the procedures taking place, such as the election judges comparing the signature and address verification of the voter.
- The pollwatchers should never be allowed to sit at the election judge's station or handle any election materials, nor should the pollwatcher be so close to the judges or voter that the conduct of the election is being interfered with.
- After the polls close, pollwatchers can observe all the procedures election judges utilize to close the polls, such as counting write-in votes. Pollwatchers should only leave and re-enter the polling place after it has closed in cases of necessity.
- Pollwatchers may challenge a person's right to vote and may call the judges' attention to any incorrect procedure or violations of the Election Code.
- A pollwatcher should be permitted to view all reasonably requested records relating to the conduct of the election provided the secrecy of the ballot is not impinged.

(10 ILCS 5/7-34, 17-23, 18-6, 19-10, 20-10)

Note: Pollwatchers are not allowed to touch or handle any of the election materials the election judges are using. No persons except those employed and authorized for the purpose shall touch any ballot, ballot box, return, or equipment. (10 ILCS 5/24A-13, 24B-13, 24C-14)

Other Officials in the Polling Place

Representatives of the SBE, the election authority, the office of the State's Attorney, and the Attorney General's Office as well as federal, state, or local law enforcement officials who are acting in their official capacities are also entitled to be in the polling place. After displaying official credentials or proper identification, these individuals may observe the conduct of the election. They may station themselves where they can see the information contained on the signature verification records and ballot applications, and where they may also observe the voting booths and ballot box/tabulator. These individuals may also remain in the polling place after the polls close to observe closing procedures. (10 ILCS 5/7-34, 17-23)