

Checklist for Presiding Election Judges

Office of the Texas Secretary of State, Election Division

June 2006

Prior to Election Day

- ⌚ Visit the polling place that you have been appointed to serve prior to Election Day.
- ⌚ Make note of the space—what’s it like? Think about how your polling place will be set up and the “flow of voters.” Think about placement of the qualifying tables, voting systems, etc. If you have 5-10 people in line, will they all be able to wait inside the polling place? If there are 2 doors or 2 entrances, you may want to designate one door as the “in” door, and one as the “out” door so that the polling place doesn’t get congested.
- ⌚ Check to see that you have a telephone; if not, make arrangements with the political subdivision hiring you to provide a cell phone so that you can call and check on a person’s registration status, if needed.
- ⌚ Locate restrooms.
- ⌚ Make sure that you have tables and chairs at the polling place—if not, call the political entity that appointed you to make sure that you will have them (delivered) by Election Day. Do the same with voting booths-make sure that you have sufficient space.
- ⌚ Make sure that you have a name, telephone number (home, cell, and office phone) of the person that is responsible for unlocking your polling place. (You should have received this information at your training school or via a phone call, etc. prior to Election Day from the entity appointing you as judge).
- ⌚ Contact your alternate judge and clerks several days before Election Day to make sure they are still available to serve on Election Day. If the alternate judge is not able to serve for whatever reason, please advise the entity appointing you immediately. If this happens on Election Day, you will need to appoint a clerk to serve as your alternate judge.
- ⌚ Remind your alternate judge and clerks that they need to arrive at the polling place early; we suggest no later than 6:15 a.m. on Election Day.
- ⌚ Examine your supplies—make sure that you have everything that you need to conduct your election. Make sure that you have:
 1. Your Election Kit containing all of the forms
 2. An “office supply box” containing plenty of indelible markers (pens)
 3. Nametags
 4. The Handbook for Election Judges and Clerks published by the Office of the Secretary of State
 5. Voting Precinct Map, if available
 6. Listing of Polling Place Locations for Today’s Election
- ⌚ Complete the headings of forms so that you don’t have to do that on the morning of the election. *This will really save you time* and it is a good way to familiarize you with all of the different forms that are used throughout the day.
- ⌚ Read the Election Judges and Clerks Handbook so that you are ready for various instances that may (or will) occur on Election Day.

- ⌚ Plan your menu—Election Day is a long day! This is the fun part—make sure that you have food and beverages covered—that would be breakfast, lunch and probably an early dinner or at least, snacks throughout the day.

Election Day: Before the Polls Open

- ⌚ Arrive early! Remember, the polls open at 7 a.m., so we recommend that you arrive no later than 6:15 a.m. to allow ample time to setup.
- ⌚ Set up the outside and entrance area of the polling place
- ⌚ Administer the oaths, including the oath of assistance, which will be sufficient for the entire day. Assistance is defined as the act of helping a voter who qualifies for assistance and actually needs help reading or marking the ballot. Election workers will need to take the oath in this instance if they did not do it earlier. General instructions like saying “pick up the ballot and proceed to a voting booth” do not constitute assistance.
- ⌚ Review the work assignments and schedule
- ⌚ You will receive a copy of the Early Voting Roster, which indicates those voters who voted by personal appearance and those who voted early by mail. You may need to indicate on the list of registered voters those persons who voted early—make sure that you indicate Voted Early (you could use a stamp for this) in the signature column.
- ⌚ Check your list of registered voters for correct information and **go over these points with your workers prior to opening the polls:**
 1. **“S” notation** = Suspense List. Voter has probably moved, voter must complete a statement of residence.
 2. **REMIND YOUR ALTERNATE JUDGE AND CLERKS THAT THEY MUST ASK EACH AND EVERY VOTER IF HE OR SHE HAS MOVED! Or, do you still reside at (whatever address is printed on the list of registered voters).** If the voter has moved, he or she needs to complete a statement of residence (in the election kit).
 3. **ALSO, remind your workers that there is no longer an election worker affidavit.** No longer can an election worker see their neighbor walk into the polling place and say “Oh, hey Kim”, and Kim votes. Kim can vote, IF Kim has her voter registration certificate, or an acceptable form of ID. If she doesn’t, then she can vote provisionally, but the ballot will not be counted.
 4. **“Early” notation** = indicates that the voter voted early, either by mail, or in person during the early voting period.
- ⌚ Set out all of the election forms that you will need (pre-filled out by the election judge).
- ⌚ Post your sample ballot—you should post it near the entrance to the polling place so voters can see the ballot and review it prior to proceeding to the qualifying table.
- ⌚ Post your distance markers. Remember they need to be 100 feet from the entrance of the polling place. There is no electioneering or loitering within these boundaries.
- ⌚ Post the Voter Information Poster (enclosed in your election kit).
- ⌚ Post the toll-free number for the Office of the Secretary of State to call regarding election problems, irregularities.
- ⌚ Set up the voting area and place indelible markers in each voting booth.
- ⌚ Post list of declared write-ins (if applicable).
- ⌚ Set up the voting system if it wasn’t already done by other officials.

- ⌚ Power up voting equipment.
- ⌚ Make sure to get zero tape *before* any voting is allowed.
- ⌚ Follow any additional instructions provided for your specific type of voting system.
- ⌚ Set out the ballot box (if needed)—be sure to inspect the inside of the ballot box (paper ballot) to make sure it is empty; check the lock and seal (for electronic) and place the ballot box in view of the workers.
- ⌚ The election judge should sign the backs of all of the ballots, and be sure to mark a few ballots provisional (those should be kept separate). Ballots are to be placed face down on the table, non-sequentially (not in numerical order), with judges signature showing. Be sure to place the ballots in a convenient spot on the table for the voter to pick up after he or she has been qualified to vote. **Remember and remind your workers, do not hand the voter a ballot. The voter must pick up his or her own ballot.**

Election Day—Open the Polls at 7 a.m.!

- ⌚ **Persons allowed in the polling place:** Election Judges and Clerks, voters, children under the age of 18, Assistants, Interpreters, Poll watchers, State Election Inspectors, Peace Officers, Federal Observers, Secretary of State and his/her staff, and persons approved to assist with electronic voting equipment.
- ⌚ **Qualifying Voters and Types of Voters:** There are basically 10 types of voters that you will encounter on Election Day. Examples of these types of voters are discussed in detail in the Texas Poll Worker Online Training Program and in the *Handbook for Election Judges and Clerks 2006-6007*. Please review these prior to Election Day, but also keep the handbook close by to use as a reference during the day. Remember--help or clarification is only a phone call away. You can always call on the political entity that hired you as the judge, alternate judge or clerk. In addition, you can always call on your Local County Clerk, Elections Administrator, Voter Registrar, or the Office of the Secretary of State toll-free at 1.800.252.8683 for questions on Election Day.
- ⌚ **Provisional Voting**
This was a new procedure in 2004; it replaced the challenge procedure. This procedure is discussed in detail in the training video, and also in the Handbook for Election Judges and Clerks. Please see the handbook for instances where provisional voting is used. Remember that these ballots are **not** counted on Election Day or night, but instead fall under different procedures, are put in a special envelope, and are verified *after* Election Day.
- ⌚ **Revealing Information**
It is unlawful to reveal the names of voters, number of votes cast for or against a candidate/proposition, candidates' position relative to others, or whether or not a proposition is passing. You should be posting the Number of Voters Who Have Voted during the Day at scheduled intervals throughout the day. There is a form for this in your Election Kit.
- ⌚ **“Work the Line”**
If you have lines of voters throughout the day, announce what precinct you are in, so voters standing in line can determine if they are in the right location. Have precinct maps on hand to show the voter where he or she should vote if they are not in the proper polling place. We know that you are anxious to close those polls as it approaches 7 p.m., it's been a long day, but start working the line early. If you have voters lined up near closing time, again, announce the precinct. If you have a map on hand of the voting precincts, try and help voters find his or her proper polling place. Be sure to give the voter plenty of time to travel to their proper polling place. There's nothing more frustrating to a voter than to take the time to go to their polling place, only to find out that it's not really their

polling place! And, if you do have voters in line at the time of closing, we suggest that you bring the voters into the polling place, if possible, and close the door at 7 p.m., allowing any and all qualified voters in line to vote. If it is not possible to bring the voters into the polling place, you may want to position an election worker at the end of the line at 7 p.m. telling any voters that walk up after 7 p.m. that the polling place is closed.

🕒 **Poll Watchers**

A poll watcher no longer has to be present at the polling place by 7 a.m. on Election Day. Poll watchers may also leave and come back after they have been at the polling place for 5 consecutive hours. If a poll watcher leaves after serving 5 consecutive hours, he or she is allowed to return, as long as you haven't started counting ballots. If they leave *before* 5 hours, even with your permission, they may not return.

Poll watchers still need to present themselves as poll watchers, and must countersign their certificate of appointment in your presence. They may sit near you and the workers, and are permitted to observe. A poll watcher may not talk to voters, and should only be conversing with the election judge to call attention to an irregularity or violation of law.

🕒 **Using English and Interpreters**

Election workers must speak English, except if the voter cannot understand English. An election worker, state inspector or poll watcher can request a translation.

An interpreter may be used when the voter and the election workers cannot communicate in the same language. (If an interpreter is provided, a voter may choose another person to interpret).

The voter may select a registered voter of the county to act as interpreter, and an interpreter may interpret for multiple voters. Remember that they have to take the oath of interpreter (the oath is in your election kit).

☐ **Closing of the Polls**

It's 7:00 p.m.--finally time to close the polls. But wait a minute! We know that you are anxious to close those polls, but start "working the line" if you have a line of voters at or after 6:30 p.m. If you still have voters in line at 7:00p.m., we suggest that you bring the voters into the polling place, if possible, and close the door at 7:00 p.m., then allow any and all qualified voters in line to vote. If it is not possible to bring the voters into the polling place, we recommend that you position an election worker at the end of the line at 7:00 p.m. telling any voters that walk up after 7:00 p.m. that the polling place is closed.

The procedures for closing of the polling place are covered extensively in the training video for Election Judges and Clerks. In fact, by popular demand, the video contains two different closings—one for paper ballot and one for optical scan voting systems. So, please view the video for complete instructions on what to do, how to do it, and which forms go in which envelopes.