

# Poll Watchers

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
- C. A candidate's spouse

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

- A. Upon arrival at the polling place, a poll watcher shall display his appointment 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 should provide the badges (labels) for candidates or campaign committees to use so 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 they are 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

**X. May Poll Watchers Engage in Campaign Activities?**

- A. In the polling place - **NO**
- B. Outside the 100' boundary -
  - 1. Yes; *after removing the poll watcher badge or credentials*, he or she may engage in campaign activity outside of the campaign free zone.
  - 2. **NOTE:** Once the poll watcher resumes his or her duties as a poll watcher, he or she must cease the campaign activity.

## 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.

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

# Poll Watcher Appointment Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

To the \_\_\_\_\_ County Election Commission:

I hereby appoint \_\_\_\_\_ to serve as a poll  
watcher in the \_\_\_\_\_ Election at the following location(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Candidate Information:

**OR**

Political Party or Organization Information

\_\_\_\_\_  
Candidate's Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Party Chair / Representative of Organization's Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Candidate's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Party Chair / Representative of Organization's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title of Office Sought

\_\_\_\_\_  
Political Party / Organization's Name

## Contact Information of the Appointing Authority:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State and Zip Code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-Mail Address (Optional)

**POLL WATCHER REGISTER**  
**Precinct Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

TO: The Officer of Elections

Upon arrival at the polling place, a poll watcher must display his appointment to the officer of elections and sign the register of watchers.

	Name of Appointing Organization or Candidate	Printed Name of Poll Watcher	Signature of Poll Watcher
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____	_____

*Any questions regarding the appointment or activity of a poll watcher should be directed to:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_