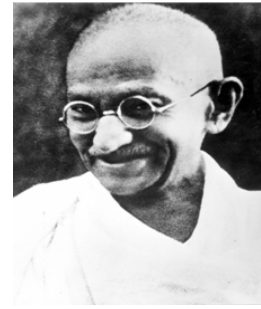




# Pollwatcher Etiquette

**MANTRA:**  
**"Less Storm Trooper,  
More Gandhi"**



Pages 1-3 of the  
<http://ballot-integrity.org/toolkit-Chicago.pdf>

Generally, election judges conduct the election to the best of their abilities, given the extent of their training. Since experience may vary with each judge, it is best to give them the benefit of the doubt. A judge may have forgotten a particular procedure, may not know election law or may just be inexperienced.

Please be respectful. The election judges are appointees of the circuit court and as such are the *highest authorities in the poll*. The election code even gives the judges the power to, by consensus, eject a pollwatcher from the poll for interfering with the election.

The election code does **not** require a pollwatcher to **mutely observe** the election. You may talk to the judges as so long as you do NOT interfere with the election or touch election materials. If you notice a procedure that affects the voter, please **talk to the judge rather than to the voter**.

## ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING:

- **DO NOT** immediately ask questions when you arrive, or ambush the judge in what appears to be an Inquisition. Otherwise, the good will or comfortable dialogue you later try to cultivate will be strained. ("Less Storm Trooper, More Gandhi.") Imagine yourself in the same situation. Try to empathize with the judge's long, busy, complicated day.
- **DO engage in easy conversation when you arrive, if the poll is not busy.** When there's a break in the action, ask them how they're doing. Afterwards you can begin asking questions.
- **Consider bringing food for the judges! It's a long day.**

## BEFORE THE POLLS OPEN, AND DURING EARLY MORNING: (May be useful later in the day, too)

### Some conversation openers:

1. "In some jurisdictions, the judge sets up the election machines the day before. Is that the case here?"
2. "You can set them up *that early* the day before?"
3. "Did the janitor/secretary/owner help you lock up the room after all that setting up?"
4. "That was a flurry of activity—I wonder if it'll be like this all day long!"
5. "Did you ever run out of ballots? Or get some wrong ones?"
6. "It's such long day...how do you ever do it? Can I get you a cup of coffee?"

## DURING THE DAY: (note that some questions are repeated for the sake of documentation)

1. "Did the janitor/secretary/owner help you lock up the room after all that work, setting up?"
2. "Have the touch-screen and op-scan machines been behaving for you today?"
3. "When did the problem occur? They seem to be pretty complicated." (Follow up later—if a technician made repairs or changes to the machines or memory cards, document his or her name. Check whether a judge's report sheet with the problem written up may be available.)
4. "I'm surprised so many people are coming to the wrong poll—did the location change?"
5. "I'm wondering if it would be easier to post a sign so voters can go over to the other precinct?"
6. "Now that it isn't busy, could you please print your name here on this Wrapup Report?" (Check spelling)
7. "May I check the voter turnout?" (Ballot-application book should have consecutive numbers of voters)
8. "Were more ballots spoiled during this election than the last?"
9. "May I see the count of federal, provisional, and spoiled ballots?"

**DO NOT ASK** the judge their political affiliation. Some may take offense and say it is electioneering.

**DO ASK** the judges to write their names under the appropriate affiliation heading on the Wrapup Report form.

### **DURING THE CLOSE:**

1. "Was it busier than you expected? "
2. "I know you're busy, but I just need to see a few papers before you put them away."  
(Provisional affidavits, change of address, federal ballots issued, spoiled ballots.)
3. "You know, I'm not permitted to touch materials, so if you could turn this page for me, that would be great."
4. "I don't want to be in your way, so if you can show me the Judge Suggestion Sheet, thanks. "
5. "I'd like to see the tallies of federal ballots, provisional ballots, and changes of address. I'll write them down as fast as I can!"
6. "I'd like to have a copy of the poll tapes from the machines."
7. "May I take a picture of the sealed ballot box?" (Taking pictures, video, audio in the poll is at the judges' discretion)

### **JUDGES' ATTITUDE TOWARD THE POLLWATCHER**

Most judges are friendly and receptive to pollwatchers. However, some judges may be grouchy or may resent the presence of the pollwatcher. Some may be in a bad mood before you even engage them. It happens. Try to realize that other factors may have contributed to their mood—fatigue, frustration, or sickness.

***Please be understanding!***

The judge may just be unaware of a particular procedure or law. Politely suggest the correct one, showing the judge the citation in the pollwatcher toolkit. Let's face it—no one likes to be told they are doing something wrong!

### **WHAT TO SAY IF A JUDGE IS NOT COMPLYING WITH A PROCEDURE OR LAW**

1. "I'm sorry, I see that the election code here says that...." (Point to and read the correct law)." **In particular: Judges must never ask for a voter's Social Security number, not even when a photo ID is required.**
2. "I know that it may be confusing to determine the correct ballot, but this sheet from the State Board of Elections states that the correct ballot is...." Point out the correct ballot—full, federal, or provisional—**ONLY** if you are sure that it **IS** the correct ballot.
3. "I don't mean to interfere, but the voter has two forms of ID and doesn't need to show a photo ID."
4. "I know that you were busy, but that ballot didn't get initialed. I would hate to see the ballot get disqualified."
5. "I notice that you're pushing the touchscreens over the optical scan machines. Judges aren't permitted to promote one type of voting machine over another."
6. "I see that the count of ballot applications does not match the machine counts plus the paper ballot counts."
7. "I see that a voter is talking on a cellphone while voting. Please tell the voter to cease, the voter seems to be receiving assistance on how to vote without his aide having signed an affidavit."

### **IF A JUDGE CONTINUES TO VIOLATE A LAW OR PROCEDURE AFTER THE POLLWATCHER HAS POINTED OUT THE CORRECT ONE—**

**DO NOT ARGUE WITH THE JUDGE. FILL OUT AN AFFIDAVIT and AN INCIDENT REPORT.**

Tell the judge:

1. "I've pointed out to you the election-code section that covers this procedure. Now I'm filling out an affidavit to document the violation. I have your name as.... I have the violation as.... I have the time of the violation as...."
  2. "I am sorry, but I have no choice but to call the election authority [or 'the States Attorney office', etc]."
- Most often the judge will relent rather than get reported.

### **CHALLENGING A VOTER OR OTHER PERSON IN THE POLL**

Rarely, you may need to challenge a voter or other person in the poll. Challenge anyone who is--

- misrepresenting their eligibility to vote.
- attempting to persuade others how to vote.
- unauthorized to be in the poll.
- voting for a disabled person without their permission.
- tampering or interfering with the election.

On the other hand, you can dispute an invalid challenge made by a judge, a pollwatcher or a voter.

Note: According to the Brennan Center for Justice, VOTER FRAUD IS EXTREMELY RARE.

## POLLWATCHER CHECKLIST (Partial)

**BE RESPECTFUL OF THE JUDGES AND KNOW ELECTION LAWS !**

### Preparation: Bring--

- ☐ **Pollwatcher credentials.**
- ☐ **Folder of pollwatching materials;** pens; one set of report forms for each precinct.
- ☐ **Phone numbers** of co-workers.
- ☐ **Map** of route to your polling station(s).
- ☐ **Food/snacks** for self, judges, others.
- ☐ **Cell phone**, fully charged.
- ☐ **Audio/video equipment;** extra storage media; extra batteries, fully charged.

### Before Polls Open

- ☐ **Arrive** at poll as early as judges if possible.
- ☐ **Give your Credentials** to the judges.
- ☐ **Observe** the zero tape, serial numbers of machines and memory cards, and all seals.
- ☐ **Record** machine & memory-card serial #'s.
- ☐ **Verify** that early-voter application blanks get stamped as "Already voted."

### During Voting Hours

- ☐ **Sign in** upon entering or leaving the poll.
- ☐ **Record** the names and affiliation of judges, and of *all technicians and couriers*.
- ☐ **Jot down** the names of other pollwatchers.
- ☐ **Check the color code** on the voter's ballot application: White = Regular, Grey = Mail-in Registration, Pink = Challenged.
- ☐ **Fill out** Incident Report forms as needed.
- ☐ **Don't touch ANY poll materials!** No papers, machines, books, pencils--nothing!

### Judges Actions

- ☐ Judges must clearly **announce the name and address** of each voter.
- ☐ Judges must **allow you to observe** ballot-applications, voter signatures, and all other materials. (Stand behind judges' table?)
- ☐ A judge must **initialize the paper ballot** right before handing it to the voter.
- ☐ If a voter is **not in the poll book**, the judge must check the regular and the supplemental registration list, then call the Board of Elections, if necessary.
- ☐ In **multi-precinct** polling places, judges must direct voters to the correct precinct.
- ☐ In **split precincts** (those straddling two legislative districts), judges must give the voter the ballot for the right district.
- ☐ Judges must **not promote** one type of voting machine as better than the other.
- ☐ Judges must not permit **unauthorized persons** to linger in the poll. Ask judges whether suspicious persons have credentials. Authorized personnel---

pollwatchers, election authorities, states attorneys, reps of the attorney general.

- ☐ If the voter is in the **wrong precinct**, the judge must direct them to the right precinct.

### Voter Assistance

- ☐ **Make every effort to enfranchise voters if they are eligible to vote.**
- ☐ Watch that the **provisional ID number** gets put onto provisional voter's affidavit.
- ☐ **Don't initiate** talking with a voter; instead, direct your remarks to a judge.
- ☐ **Help** a voter only if they ask you.
- ☐ Verify that voters who get help voting, and their aides, sign **affidavits**.
- ☐ **Help given in the polling both** must be monitored by a judge from each party.
- ☐ **Politely alert judges** if they are not following the law.
- ☐ **Call authorities** if judges don't correct a problem they have been alerted to.
- ☐ **Record names of voters** who were harassed, disenfranchised, not informed of their poll location, had other problems.
- ☐ **Allow such voter to fill out** an Incident Report Affidavit, if they desire.

### Voter Challenges

**Contest a voter** if they--

- ☐ Have already voted.
- ☐ Are otherwise not eligible.
- ☐ Appear to be tampering with equipment.
- ☐ Are getting assisted without an affidavit.
- ☐ Are taking a **VERY LONG** time to vote. (If they are using a cell phone, they may be getting assisted without an affidavit!) Every effort must be made to allow enough time to vote, though Illinois law states that four minutes is max.

### **In the Polls, After Closing**

- ☐ Watch for **any irregularities**.
- ☐ Ask for **a printout of all poll tapes**.
- ☐ If poll tapes are not issued to you, try to take **photos** of posted poll-tape results.
- ☐ **Note names** of the bipartisan judges who will transfer ballots to tabulation location.
- ☐ Fill out the **Wrapup Report**.

### **Tabulation of votes at Election Central**

- ☐ Illinois law states that a reasonable number of pollwatchers may observe at the central office--
  - o All vote tabulations.
  - o All verification of provisional ballots.
  - o All processing of ballots.