Keep It Fair

Polling Place Rules for Election Day and Early Voting

This is your guide to fair elections in the polling place, both on Election Day and for Early Voting.

Learn about:

» Where campaigning and electioneering are permitted or prohibited.
» Proper roles for election judges and official observers inside and outside the polling place.

Cook County Clerk's Office

Elections Department

The Campaign-Free Zone

The Campaign-Free Zone provides an intimidation-free election environment for voters approaching the polling place.

» Electioneering such as wearing campaign buttons, badges, t-shirts, or hats asking voters to vote a particular way, or leafleting is strictly prohibited within a perimeter 100 feet from the door to the polling place.
» If a polling place is inside a church or school, the campaign-free zone extends AT LEAST to the outside of the building, even if this is more than 100 feet from the entrance to the polling place room.
» Campaign workers must remain outside the 100 foot protected area, or "Campaign-Free Zone" if they want to electioneer.
» The election judges determine the exact boundary of the Campaign-Free Zone.

Voter Intimidation

As a rule, voter intimidation has occurred if a voter feels pressured, threatened or harassed by campaign workers or officials at the polling place. Intimidation is a felony under both federal and Illinois law.

Who are those people at the polling place?

Election judges, including Early Voting workers, are official paid employees of the County Clerk's office. They conduct the election, run the polling place and have the ultimate authority over everything that happens there. They greet voters, check them in and instruct them on voting. Judges are the only people permitted to handle election equipment or official election materials.

Other County Clerk employees may observe, supervise, or assist the judges.

Law enforcement observers include State's Attorneys, U.S. Justice Department officials, and, if requested by the judges or the Clerk's office to keep order, sheriff's officers or local police.

NOTE: Uniformed police or plain-clothes police officers wearing badges and guns may not stand or sit in the polling place as observers.

» They may enter the polling place only if the judges or the Clerk's office invite them in to resolve a disturbance.
» Police must leave the polling place when the disturbance is over.

Pollwatchers

Pollwatchers are official election observers with special credentials allowing them to watch the proceedings inside the polling place.

Pollwatchers serve a valuable election monitoring function. They represent candidates, political parties, civic organizations or stakeholders in ballot referenda.

» All pollwatchers must give a valid credential from the Cook County Clerk's office to the election judges upon entering the polling place. All credentials remain with the election judges.

» They may observe before polls officially open, during the day, and after the polls close but they can not assist with setting up or taking down of election equipment.

» They have the right to hear the names and addresses of voters as they announce themselves to the judges.

» Pollwatchers have no supervisory role in the polling place. This specifically includes precinct captains and other campaign workers.

» A pollwatcher who observes something improper must notify the judges, and not confront the voter directly.

» Pollwatchers cannot interfere with the work of the judges in any way and must not block voter access to the judges' table.

» Pollwatchers must not touch official election materials at any time, including materials on the judges' table or in the storage cabinet or bag. They must not touch any voting equipment.

» Pollwatchers must not escort the voters to the voting booths or voting machines.

» They cannot discuss politics or candidates with voters.

Remember

Candidates must not campaign in the polling place. They must present the judges with a pollwatcher credential from the Cook County Clerk's office with the 'candidate' box checked.

The precinct captain is a pollwatcher like any other—and may observe only if he or she has a credential. A precinct captain does not have any special privileges in the polling place. They may not set up a table at the door to greet voters.

Journalists from newspapers, television and radio stations, blogs and other outlets may observe voting in a polling place.

- » Members of the media should have ID from their news outlet such as a business card or broadcast outlet ID.
- » No interviews can be conducted in the polling place, nor can judges or voters be photographed or filmed without their consent (including through the use of a cell phone camera).

Electioneering, or any type of campaigning, is prohibited in the Campaign-Free Zone during voting hours.

Election judges are the sole authority in the polling place.

No person, except a judge, may handle or touch election supplies and materials.

No person, except a judge, may set up or break down a precinct or voting equipment.

Election judges may expel observers who violate these rules from the polling place. If they persist, judges may have them arrested.

Nobody—voters, pollwatchers nor judges—may leave campaign materials or candidate guides in voting booths or on touchscreens.

Pollwatcher Credentials

*(NOTE: There are separate pollwatcher credentials for **Early Voting** and political parties.)*

Election Day Pollwatcher Credential

(See reverse side for more information)

Consolidated Election
April 2, 2019

3/13

Pollwatcher:

- Write the name of the township and precinct where you are pollwatching.
- Print your name, address, city/village and sign.
- Write the name of your sponsoring group or committee, and obtain the appropriate signature. *
- Present a credential to the election judge at every precinct you visit.

This form must be signed by a candidate or an official of your committee or group.

Under Illinois law, pollwatchers are entitled to:

- Observe the conduct of the voting process
- Protest any action that he or she regards as a violation of the law to the election judg

Under Illinois law, pollwatchers may not:

- Interfere with the election judges
- Touch official election materials including computers and voting machines
- Electioneer, which includes any type of political advocacy

If you violate these rules you may be removed from the polling place.

Pollwatcher credentials may be obtained at any of the Clerk's six locations (see the back of this pamphlet).

**This does not include political party credentials, which must be obtained from the party chairmen.*

SAMPLE

(Front)

(Back)

Election Day Pollwatcher Credential

(See reverse side for more information)

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Type of pollwatcher (check one):

❒ Candidate pollwatcher

❒ Proponent/opponent of public question

❒ Independent organization (community/civic groups)

The person named below has been appointed as a pollwatcher during the casting of ballots in this polling place. The signer of this certificate certifies, under the penalties in the Election Code, that he/she lives in Illinois and is registered to vote in this state.

township | precinct # | ward # (Berwyn and Evanston only)

name of pollwatcher (please print) | signature of pollwatcher

street address | city/village

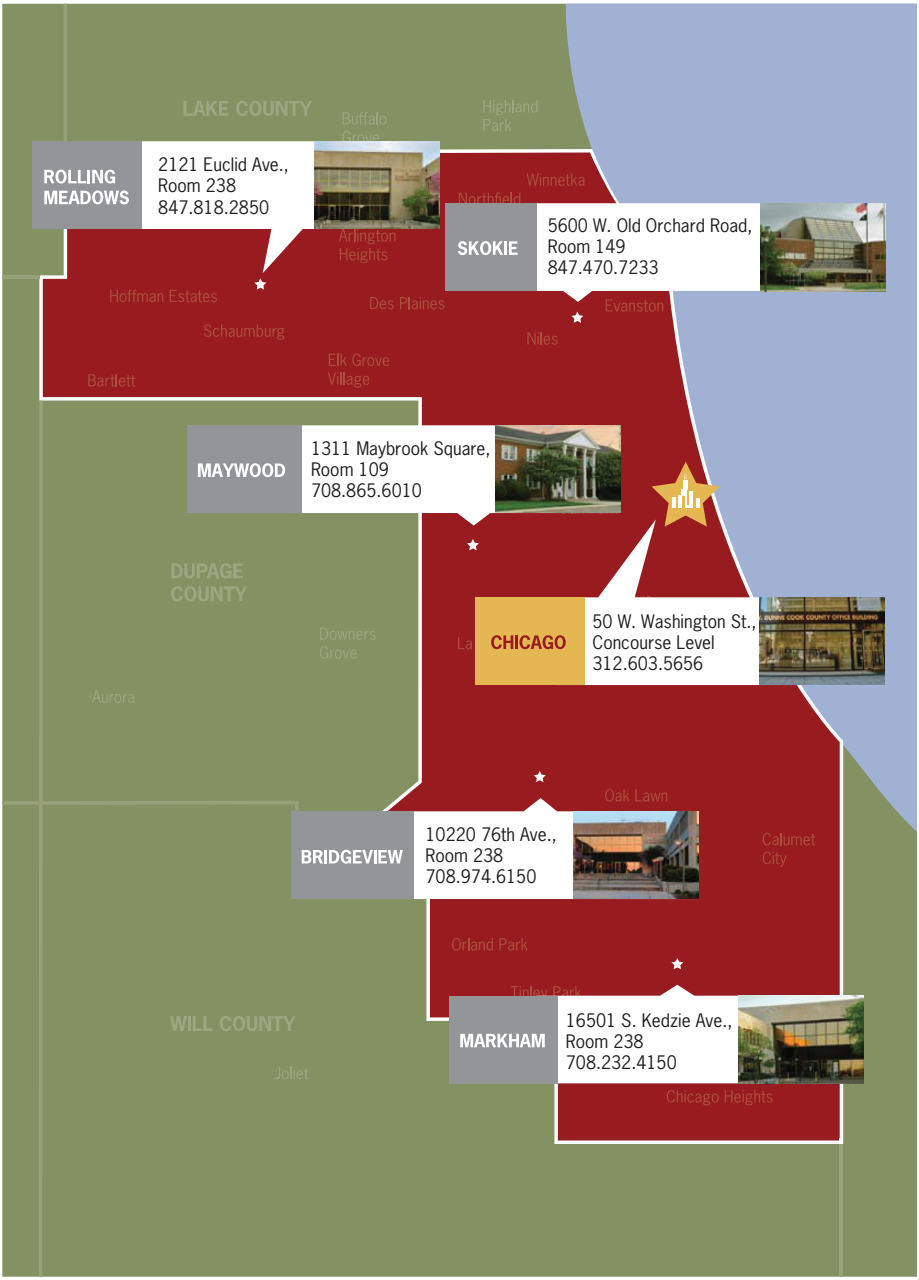
name of sponsoring organization/candidate | signature of organization official/candidate

Attention election judge:

- ***Accept this credential only if it is completed and signed.***
- ***Place this credential in Envelope 604.***

Cook County Clerk

SAMPLE



KAREN A. YARBROUGH
COOK COUNTY CLERK

Vital Records, Elections, Ethics*, Real Estate & Tax Services* and Clerk of the Board*

cookcountyclerk.com *Chicago office only