

Poll Watcher Instructions

Before you go

- Bring the Authorized Representative Designation form from the county GOP Chair, a printed copy of the Poll Watcher Report form (available here: <https://pwcgop.gov/report>), a charged cell phone, a pen, water, and any food you may need. Do not eat food that is not your own.

General Poll Watcher Responsibilities

- Arrive on time and check in with the Chief, presenting your party chairman's Authorized Representative Designation form.
- Always wear your poll watcher badge or identification clearly.
- Observe quietly and professionally—do not interfere with voters or election officers.
- Take detailed notes on voter flow, procedures, and any issues. Report concerns promptly to the Chief, without confrontation. If the situation is not satisfactorily resolved, contact Denny Daugherty of the PWC GOP at 703-405-6154 or call the HOTLINE at 804-409-8350.
- Follow all instructions from election officers and keep a respectful distance from ballot marking areas. No photos or videos are allowed. Do not talk to voters or help them in any way. Do not touch machines, ballots, or official forms.
- Check occasionally that election officers compare the ballot scanners' public count totals with the pollbook totals, and note any discrepancies.
- Watch that the Chief and all election officers treat all voters equitably and in a non-partisan manner.

Arrival Times

- Early Voting: On the first day the early voting location is open, **arrive one hour before opening—March 6** for the Office of Elections and **April 11** for other sites. On other days, arrive at your regular shift time.
- Election Day: Arrive 45 minutes before polls open at 6 AM to observe opening procedures, including the unsealing of voting equipment, verification of seals and serial numbers, and zero counts on voting machines.

Basic Counts & Observations to Track

- Number of voters checked in pollbooks.
- Number of ballots issued or cast (including provisional ballots).
- Number of provisional ballots issued.
- Number of ID Confirmation Statements.
- Number of voters waiting in line when polls close.
- Proper chain of custody: sealing and handling of ballot boxes, voting materials, and voting machines.
- Availability and use of curbside voting, including signage and procedures.

Early Voting Process

- **On the first day the early voting location opens:** confirm that the ballot scanner(s) public count is 0 and that all pollbooks/electronic pollpads show no voters checked in.
- **Voter Check-In and ID Verification:** Voters present acceptable ID (photo ID such as a Virginia driver's license, passport, or other election-approved identification) or sign an ID Confirmation Statement if they do not have ID. Refusal to present ID or sign the statement requires voting a provisional ballot. If the voter's name is not in the pollbook, the Chief may contact the General Registrar's office to verify the voter's status.
- **Ballot Printing on Demand:** The voter receives a precinct-specific ballot printed by the Ballot On Demand (BOD) printer after check-in. Poll watchers observe that ballots are only printed for properly checked-in voters.
- **Voters Needing Assistance:** Voters who need help to vote must sign a Request for Assistance form, and their helper must also sign, unless the helper is under 15 years old.
- **Absentee Ballot Surrender:** A voter who received a mailed absentee ballot and appears to vote in person should be asked to surrender the mailed absentee ballot and its envelope before receiving a regular ballot. The surrendered absentee ballot and envelope are marked "SURRENDERED", reinserted together, and placed in the Chief's spoiled/voided ballot envelope. If the voter has received the mailed absentee ballot but refuses to return it, the voter must vote a provisional ballot. Voters who report that they lost or never received their mailed absentee ballot must complete the required affirmation form (often called the "Gold Form") before voting a regular ballot.
- **Spoiled Ballots:** Spoiled ballots must be marked "Spoiled" and secured with other spoiled ballot materials in the designated Spoiled Ballot Envelope.
- **Voting Booth:** Voters mark ballots privately; poll watchers do not interact with or communicate with voters and must never be in a position to see a marked ballot.
- **Ballot Scanning and Casting Vote:** Voters scan ballots into the voting machines. Poll watchers observe that ballots are accepted or rejected as appropriate and that scanner counts match voter check-ins over the course of the day.
- **Curbside Voting:** Poll watchers may observe curbside voting from a location where they can hear and see the process without seeing any marked ballot or interacting with voters. Voters who are 65 or older, or who have a disability, may vote curbside. They must present acceptable ID or complete any required ID confirmation to the curbside election officers at check-in, and a ballot is then brought to the voter to be marked inside the vehicle.
- **Same Day Registration (SDR) – Starts April 15, 2026.** Eligible voters can register and vote provisionally after this date during early voting and on Election Day. Poll watchers should carefully observe SDR processing and confirm that provisional ballots are used for SDR voters.
- **Closing & Counts (Early Voting):** Remain in the polling place and observe the closing process and record: total voters checked in on pollbooks; total ballots issued during the day; number of provisional ballots issued and cast; total ballots scanned and counted by machines; voters still in line at official closing time (allowed to vote); verification that ballots counted match pollbook and issuance counts; and accounting for and securing of all unused, spoiled, and provisional ballots. Ask the Chief for numbers of Gold Forms, ID Confirmation Statements, Affirmations of Eligibility, etc. Note in your report, then enter the data in the digital form on your computer or phone. Use the Chief's Statement of Results (SOR), if needed, to complete your Poll Watcher Report. NOTE: No final tallies are done during early voting. Early voting final tallies are done only on Election Day. On the last day of early voting, enter data into your report form and observe final packing of remaining materials, including voted ballots, blank ballot paper, and all Chief's desk envelopes.

Election Day Process

- **Polls Open:** 6 AM to 7 PM (unless extended by a court order).
- **Opening Shift:** Poll watchers should arrive early (minimum 45 minutes) to observe polling place set-up and opening the ballot scanners. Verify public count is zero on the scanners and on each poll pad.
- **Opening Procedures:** Observe the unsealing of voting equipment by officers, verification of tamper-evident seals and serial numbers, and running of zero vote counts before polls open.
- **Check-In Stations:** One GOP poll watcher is allowed for each pollbook station (maximum of 3). Observe voter check-in and provisional ballot issuance.
- **Same Day Registration on Election Day:** Eligible new registrants vote provisionally after registering onsite. The voter must vote in the precinct in which they reside.
- **Ballot Issuance and Voting:** Ballots are issued only to registered and checked-in voters. Voters mark ballots privately without interference. Absentee Mail-in Ballots: If a voter fails to surrender a mailed absentee ballot and wants to vote in person, the voter must vote a provisional ballot.
- **Spoiled Ballots:** Spoiled ballots must be marked “Spoiled” and secured with other spoiled ballot materials in the designated Spoiled Ballot Envelope. Observe proper handling and secure storage
- **Provisional Ballots:** Provisional ballots are not scanned but instead placed in the Provisional Ballot Envelope for later adjudication by the Electoral Board.
- **Chain of Custody and Closing Procedures:** After polls close, observe officers sealing voting machines and equipment with tamper-evident seals for secure transport and storage.
- **Closing & Counts to Observe:** After all votes are tallied, poll watchers should remain in the polling place as the equipment is packed and the Statement of Results (SOR) is prepared. Observe the closing process and record: total voters checked in on pollbooks; total ballots issued during the day; number of provisional ballots issued and cast; total ballots scanned and counted by machines; voters still in line at official closing time (allowed to vote); verification that ballots counted match pollbook and issuance counts; final zero counts on machines if available; and accounting and securing of all unused, spoiled, and provisional ballots. Ask the Chief for numbers of Gold Forms, ID Confirmation Statements, Affirmations of Eligibility, etc., and note in your reports, then enter the data in the digital form on your computer or phone. Use the Chief’s SOR, if needed, to complete your shift report form.
- **Curbside Voting:** Poll watchers may observe curbside voting from a location where they can hear and see the process without seeing any marked ballot or interacting with voters.
- **Poll Watcher Report Submission:** Poll watchers should submit their digital Poll Watcher Report within 24 hours after their shift ends. If you call the Hotline, clearly document your call in your poll watcher report, including the time, reason, details, and any advice received. Prompt and accurate reporting is essential for oversight and quick response. Submit your report using the digital form here: <https://pwcgop.gop/report>
- **HOTLINE:** 804-409-8350 (Early Voting & Election Day). If you encounter an issue, first address it promptly with the Chief. If the situation is not satisfactorily resolved, contact Denny Daugherty of the PWC GOP at **703-405-6154** or call the GOP HOTLINE at **804-409-8350**.

Your respectful, professional observation is critical to election transparency and integrity. Represent the Prince William County GOP with pride and vigilance! Thank you.

Election Integrity Subcommittee
Prince William County Republican Committee

March 5, 2026