



★ VIRGINIA ★  
DEPARTMENT *of* ELECTIONS

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OFFICIAL GUIDANCE

RE: Authorized Representatives and Neutral Observers

Several localities have received requests to authorize non-voting observers to the polls for Election Day. This supplemental guidance addresses questions regarding authorized representatives and neutral observers as provided in Code § 24.2-604(C).

**Authorized Representatives**

Officers of election shall admit authorized representatives for the Democratic and Republican parties and independent candidates to the polling place as long as the total number of representatives complies with § 24.2-604(C). Code § 24.2-604(C) limits the number of representatives for each political party or candidate to either one authorized representative per pollbook, or up to three representatives for each in the room – whichever number is greater.

*Requirements for Authorized Representative*

Each authorized representative must be a qualified voter in the Commonwealth (of any jurisdiction). Each authorized representative must present a written statement authorized and signed by the party chair or independent candidate. Photocopies of the written statement are acceptable.

**Neutral Observers**

The local electoral board or general registrar may authorize *in writing* the presence of additional neutral observers as may be deemed appropriate. Local electoral boards and registrars should consider adopting a consistent policy for responding to such requests and objective criteria for making a determination. This will help ensure fair treatment of requestors.

If a local EB or GR grants authorization to neutral observers in addition to the authorized representatives, please keep in mind the optics of granting permission to one group without also providing notice and the opportunity to other similar or opposing groups that may wish to be present. Other factors that may be considered by the electoral board or general registrar are the number of voters expected, the amount of equipment allocated, and the number of officers scheduled to be in each precinct.

While a general policy denying requests from any group not required to have access to polling places is allowable, you should consider if there are other options that would assist in making the election process more transparent. These options include limiting neutral observers to the less busy times of day and offering to allow access during a non-presidential election.

Please keep in mind the restrictions applicable to any person in the polling place, outlined in §24.2-604(A) and (D).



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No person in the polling place may hinder or delay a qualified voter, give, tender or in any manner try to influence a voter, be in a position to see the marked ballot of any voter, or otherwise impede the orderly conduct of the election.

Do not allow observers to provide any assistance to any voter. Make sure observers are not wearing any indication that they are authorized to help voters.