

Overview

The New York State Election Law has made provisions for each political party or independent body duly nominating or entitled to nominate candidates to appoint no more than two (2) watchers to attend meetings held for the registration of voters. Election Law **(8-500.1)** has made a provision that any party committee or independent body whose candidates are on the ballot, and at any primary election, any two or more candidates and any political committee may have for each election district three (3) watchers at any one time.

Watcher's Identification

Watchers at Election Sites:

The appointment of watchers for any election shall be by a watcher's certificate signed by the duly authorized candidate for office or chairperson or secretary of the county, city, town, or village committee of a political party or independent body. Such certificate must be filed with an inspector at the election district appearing on the certificate. The inspector shall retain such certificate and return it with their supplies on election night. It is sufficient for a watcher to file one certificate which shall remain in effect throughout Election Day at the election district appearing on the certificate. **(5-206.1)**

A watcher must wear a bright colored sticker provided by the inspectors at table indicating which district being watched along with first name of watcher and candidate or party represented, see table inspectors for more details.

Poll Watcher Qualifications

Each watcher must be a qualified voter in the jurisdiction in which he/she is to serve.

Poll Watcher Limitations

The Poll Watcher may not:

- ✓ **Be a candidate for public office to be voted for by the voters of the election district in the same election district in which the watcher is to serve**
- ✓ **Electioneer in any manner**
- ✓ **Assist in the conduct of the election**
- ✓ **Question any voter in any manner**
- ✓ **Remove or handle any election materials on the board of inspectors table**
- ✓ **Impede the election process in any way**

Poll Watcher Rights

The Poll Watcher may:

- ✓ **Be present at the polling place at least 15 minutes before the unlocking and examination of any voting machine or ballot box at the opening of polls, until after the signing of the inspector's canvass at the close of polls. (8-500.2)**
- ✓ **Before any voter casts his/her vote, a watcher may challenge voters through the board of inspectors whom they believe are not qualified to vote. (8-502)**
- ✓ **Notify the Board of Inspectors that they have observed an individual soliciting votes or electioneering (distributing posters or banners, wearing or carrying buttons) within the polling place or within the 100 - foot distance markers immediately outside of the polling place.**
- ✓ **Ask the board of inspectors to repeat a voter's name as he/she approaches the table.**
- ✓ **Sit at a close proximity to the inspector's table but not at the inspector table.**

Sample Watcher's Certificate

Watcher Certificate

For use on Election Day

By a Party Committee, Candidate or Independent Body
Section 8-500, Election Law

I/We, the undersigned, being _____ of the
(chair/candidate)

_____ party, do hereby appoint
(political party/independent body)

_____, County of _____
(watcher's name)

to be a watcher for the election to be held on _____ in the
(election date)

_____ election district, in the _____ ward (if applicable) of the

town, city, or village of _____.

DATE

Chairman/Secretary/Candidate

Title

Poll Watcher's Guide



Orange County Board of Elections

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