

OHIO

**BRENNAN
CENTER
FOR JUSTICE**
at New York University School of Law



apbco
The Association of Pro Bono Counsel



HOW TO BECOME A POLL WORKER

PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO VOTE



Ohio

Precinct Election Official Toolkit

Disclaimer

This guide provides basic information and should be used as a reference only. It is not a substitute for legal advice, and it does not purport to provide a complete recitation of the relevant local, state or federal laws. The law changes frequently. The information provided may not be current and may not apply to your specific set of facts or circumstances. If you require legal advice, please consult your attorney.

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	1
II.	Overview of Ohio’s Election System	2
III.	Description of Roles	3
	<i>a. Qualifications</i>	<i>3</i>
	<i>b. Categories of Poll Workers/Responsibilities and Duties.....</i>	<i>6</i>
	<i>c. Party Affiliation</i>	<i>7</i>
	<i>d. Term of Office</i>	<i>7</i>
	<i>e. Compensation</i>	<i>7</i>
IV.	Application Process	9
	<i>a. How to Apply.....</i>	<i>9</i>
	<i>b. Deadlines for Filing</i>	<i>11</i>
V.	After Applying.....	12
	<i>a. Following Up</i>	<i>12</i>
	<i>b. Overcoming Objections</i>	<i>12</i>
VI.	Training Resources	13
VII.	High-Priority Issues	15
	<i>a. Options for Voters Without Accepted ID.....</i>	<i>15</i>
	<i>b. Voters Who Have Moved</i>	<i>15</i>
	<i>c. Voters Who Are Not on the Rolls</i>	<i>15</i>
	<i>d. Provisional Ballots.....</i>	<i>16</i>
	<i>e. Right to Voting Assistance</i>	<i>17</i>
	<i>f. Voter Mistakes on Paper Ballots</i>	<i>18</i>
	<i>g. Voting Machine Breakdowns</i>	<i>18</i>
	<i>h. Every Voter Standing in the Line by 7:30 p.m. Must Be Permitted to Vote</i>	<i>18</i>
	<i>i. Polling Place Accessibility.....</i>	<i>19</i>
	<i>j. Campaigning at the Polling Place</i>	<i>19</i>
	<i>k. Voter Intimidation and Disruption</i>	<i>20</i>
	<i>l. Student Voters</i>	<i>20</i>
	<i>m. Recent or Potential Changes in Election Law to Consider</i>	<i>20</i>
	<i>n. COVID-19 Concerns</i>	<i>21</i>
VIII.	Be a Proactive Poll Worker	22

I. Introduction

Thank you for your interest in becoming a poll worker, known in the state of Ohio as a Precinct Election Official (PEO). By coming this far, it's clear that you cherish the principle of "one person, one vote" — a bedrock of our democracy. At the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law (BC) and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (LCCR), we also cherish that principle. Therefore, we work every day to preserve and protect the right to vote for every eligible citizen. PEOs are an essential part of the voting process. Informed and engaged PEOs contribute to that process, benefit their communities, and help ensure the right to vote is not unduly impeded. Indeed, a lack of qualified PEOs (different from poll watchers) has been a serious impediment to voter access. When states face difficulties attracting and hiring qualified poll workers, polling places are often understaffed or mismanaged, resulting in long lines, the spreading of misinformation, and even incidents of bias and intimidation. Additionally, PEOs are often the only election officials with whom voters interact, so they play an important role in how voters experience and think about the voting process.

To address these issues, we have teamed up with the Association of Pro Bono Counsel (APBCo) to create state-specific guides to encourage qualified candidates to become PEOs — PEOs who know the relevant laws and processes, how to assist and troubleshoot effectively, and how to help voters have a positive experience on Election Day.

This toolkit for Ohio provides an overview of the process for becoming a PEO. We hope it is useful to you as both a technical and practical guide, including pointers that we have gleaned from experience. It is NOT a substitute for training materials provided by the state, county, or local government. Instead, it is meant to equip qualified people like you with the information you need to become a PEO and enjoy the important job of serving your fellow voters well. We hope this guide encourages you to join the movement and make a difference!

II. Overview of Ohio's Election System

Elections in Ohio are overseen by the Ohio Secretary of State and each of the 88 county's own board of elections (BOE).¹ A four-person board, comprised of two members from each major political party, governs each BOE.² The Secretary of State's Office provides, in part, legal guidance, election procedures, and campaign finance information to BOEs, and provides training for BOE members and staff.³

Each county's BOE is committed to conducting fair and impartial elections. In Ohio, each county BOE hires precinct election officials (PEOs) to work at the polling locations for each election.⁴ The number of poll workers varies by county and is determined by the number of precincts and polling locations.⁵

This document will guide you through the process of becoming a PEO, including the necessary requirements and qualifications. To aid in this endeavor, this document will examine three counties as examples: Franklin County (urban), Warren County (suburban), and Hancock County (rural). The Franklin County BOE (Franklin County is one of the largest counties) typically recruits about 5,500 individuals to staff and operate the polling locations prior to each election.⁶ In contrast, the Warren County BOE hires approximately 700 individuals,⁷ and the Hancock County BOE hires approximately 300 individuals.⁸

The importance of a PEO's role cannot be overstated. Their job is vital to the voting process and essential to the well-being of our democracy. Accordingly, well-trained and qualified PEOs are desperately needed. This Ohio Poll Worker Guide will present you with an easy guide on how to become an Ohio Precinct Election Official:

- ✓ Part III explains the roles and duties of PEOs on Election Day. In addition, it details the necessary qualifications needed to become a PEO under Ohio election law.
- ✓ Part IV describes the process for applying to be a PEO.
- ✓ Part V outlines the process after you file the application to become a PEO, such as how to make sure your application is properly filed, tips to overcome objections, and the timeline of the appointment process.
- ✓ Part VI provides a list of available resources for PEO training.
- ✓ Part VII details some hands-on issues that a PEO should be particularly prepared to handle, with tips on how to respond.
- ✓ Part VIII describes steps a PEO should take to make voters feel more comfortable in the polling place.

III. Description of Roles

a. Qualifications

General Qualifications:

There are just a few qualifications to become a precinct election official in Ohio. Under Ohio law, you must be a qualified voter to be a PEO.⁹ To be a qualified voter:¹⁰

1. You must be a U.S. citizen.
2. You must be at least 18 years of age.
3. You must also be a registered voter in the county in which you plan to work as a PEO.
 - The voter registration requirements are:¹¹
 - ✓ Be a citizen of the United States;
 - ✓ Be at least 18 years of age on or before Election Day (general election, not primary);
 - ✓ Be an Ohio resident for at least 30 days before the election;
 - ✓ NOT be imprisoned for a felony conviction (NOTE: voting rights are restored upon release from incarceration);
 - ✓ NOT be declared incompetent to vote by a probate court; AND
 - ✓ NOT be permanently disqualified for violating an election law.
4. You must not have been convicted of a felony.
5. You cannot be running as a candidate for the election in which you are working.

There are three ways
to register to vote:

- ✓ In person
- ✓ Online
- ✓ By mail

Voter Registration and Information Update Form

Please read instructions carefully. Please type or print clearly with blue or black ink.
For further information, you may consult the Secretary of State's website at: www.OhioSecretaryofState.gov or call (877) 767-6446.

Eligibility

You are qualified to register to vote in Ohio if you meet all the following requirements:

1. You are a citizen of the United States.
2. You will be at least 18 years old on or before the day of the general election.
3. You will be a resident of Ohio for at least 30 days immediately before the election in which you want to vote.
4. You are not incarcerated (in jail or in prison) for a felony conviction.
5. You have not been declared incompetent for voting purposes by a probate court.
6. You have not been permanently disenfranchised for violations of election laws.

Use this form to register to vote or to update your current Ohio registration if you have changed your address or name.

NOTICE: This form must be received or postmarked by the 30th day before an election at which you intend to vote. You will be notified by your county board of elections of the location where you vote. If you do not receive a notice following timely submission of this form, please contact your county board of elections.

Numbers 1 and 2 below are required by law. You must answer both of the questions for your registration to be processed.

Registering in Person

If you have a current valid Ohio driver's license, you must provide that number on line 10. If you do not have an Ohio driver's license, you must provide the last four digits of your Social Security number on line 10. If you have neither, please write "None."

Please see information on back of this form to learn how to obtain an absentee ballot.

Registering by Mail

If you register by mail and do not provide either an Ohio driver's license number or the last four digits of your Social Security number, you must enclose with your application a copy of one of the following forms of identification:

Current and valid photo identification, a military identification, or a current (within the last 12 months) utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or government document (other than a notice of voter registration mailed by a board of elections) that shows the voter's name and current address.

Residency Requirements

Your voting residence is the location that you consider to be a permanent, not a temporary, residence. Your voting residence is the place in which your habitation is fixed and to which, whenever you are absent, you intend to return. If you do not have a fixed place of habitation, but you are a consistent or regular inhabitant of a shelter or other location to which you intend to return, you may use that shelter or other location as your residence for purposes of registering to vote. If you have questions about your specific residency circumstances, you may contact your local board of elections for further information.

Your Signature

In the area below the arrow in Box 14, please write your cursive, hand-written signature or make your legal mark, taking care that it does not touch the surrounding lines so when it is digitally imaged by your county board of elections it can effectively be used to identify your signature.

WHOEVER COMMITS ELECTION FALSIFICATION IS GUILTY OF A FELONY OF THE FIFTH DEGREE

I am: Registering as an Ohio voter Updating my address Updating my name

1. Are you a U.S. citizen? Yes No
 2. Will you be at least 18 years of age on or before the next general election? Yes No
 If you answered NO to either of the questions, do not complete this form.

3. Last Name: _____ First Name: _____ Middle Name or Initial: _____ J., S., etc.: _____

4. House Number and Street (Enter new address if changed): _____ Apt. or Lot # _____ 5. City or Post Office: _____ 6. ZIP Code: _____

7. Additional Mailing Address (if necessary): _____ 8. County (where you live): _____

9. Birthdate (MMDDYYYY) (required): _____ 10. Ohio Driver's License number OR Last Four Digits of Social Security number (one form of ID required to be listed or provided): _____ 11. Phone Number (voluntary): _____

12. PREVIOUS ADDRESS IF UPDATING CURRENT REGISTRATION: Previous House Number and Street: _____ Previous City or Post Office: _____ Previous County: _____ Previous State: **Ohio**

13. CHANGE OF NAME ONLY Former Legal Name: _____ Former Signature: _____

14. I declare under penalty of election falsification I am a citizen of the United States, will have lived in this state for 30 days immediately preceding the next election, and will be at least 18 years of age at the time of the general election.


Your Signature ↓ Date (MMDDYYYY)

FOR BOARD USE ONLY
 SE-C4210 (rev. 4/15)
 City, Village, Twp.
 Ward
 Precinct
 School Dist.
 Cong. Dist.
 Senate Dist.
 House Dist.

Figure 1: Ohio Voter Registration Form

TIP: Make sure you are registered to vote before you file your application by checking the Ohio My Voter Information website at: <https://voterlookup.ohiosos.gov/voterlookup.aspx>

[skip to content](#) | [skip to navigation](#)



[Home](#) | [Secretary LaRose & the Office](#) | [Elections & Voting](#) | [Campaign Finance](#) | [Legislation & Ballot Issues](#) | [Businesses](#) | [Notary](#) | [Records](#) | [Media](#)

VOTER SEARCH

CHECK YOUR VOTER REGISTRATION AND/OR FIND YOUR VOTING PRECINCT AND POLLING LOCATION BY ENTERING THE INFORMATION BELOW.

All fields are required.

First Name:

Last Name:

County:

Search

Figure 2: Ohio My Voter Information website

Opportunities for Students:

Many Ohio counties have instituted programs allowing high school students under the age of 18 to apply for and serve as precinct officers at a primary, special, or general election.¹² To be eligible to participate in a youth program, students must be selected through the application process and must meet the following requirements:¹³

- ✓ Student must be at least 17 years old;
- ✓ Student must be enrolled in the senior year of high school;
- ✓ Student must be a US citizen;
- ✓ Student must be a resident of the county in which they wish to serve as a PEO;
- ✓ Student must complete and submit an application form;
- ✓ Each student applying to participate must declare his or her political party affiliation as part of the application process.

Some counties list additional requirements to become a student PEO. For example, in addition to satisfying the criteria listed above, Warren County requires that students seeking to become PEOs through its local “Youth @ the Booth” program satisfy the following criteria:¹⁴

- ✓ Student must have written parental approval;
- ✓ Student must provide their Social Security Number to county BOE to be paid for work as a PEO;
- ✓ Student must attend a required training session (3.5 hours);
- ✓ Student must have access to reliable transportation and be willing to work at any polling location in the county; and
- ✓ Student must be willing to work the entire day, from 6 a.m. until excused or after the close of polls at 8:30 p.m.

Warren County also encourages that students who are fluent in other languages to be placed in a location where such language skills would be an asset.

Warren County further highlights that through its Youth @ the Booth program, students will have an opportunity to:

- ✓ Better understand the election and voting process;
- ✓ Earn a sense of pride by serving their country, state and local community;
- ✓ Join a new generation of PEOs;
- ✓ Earn \$165.50 for attending training and working on Election Day (or donate earnings toward a school club or project);
- ✓ Obtain service experience for job resumes and college applications; and
- ✓ Help democracy work by making sure every eligible voter can vote.

Check your local county BOE’s website to determine if they have a student precinct officer program and any county-specific requirements for serving as a student PEO.

b. Categories of Poll Workers/Responsibilities and Duties

Ohio law requires each county board of elections to appoint at least four residents for each precinct as PEOs.¹⁵ Not more than one-half can be of the same political party.¹⁶

Precinct Election Official (PEO)

Precinct election officials shall perform all the duties provided by law for receiving the ballots and supplies, opening and closing the polls, and overseeing the casting of ballots during the time the polls are open, and any other duties required by Ohio law.¹⁷

Voting Location Manager

The voting location manager is a PEO from the dominant political party and has the responsibility to deliver the returns of the election and all supplies to the office of the BOE.¹⁸

Greeters (select locations)

Greeters assist with poll management, making certain that voters know the correct line in which to enter in order to vote. They will also assist voters in making sure that the voter has come to the correct voting location.¹⁹

The responsibilities of poll workers are similar throughout Ohio. For example, in Warren County, duties include the following:

- PEOs report at 6 a.m. on Election Day and serve until all duties are completed after the closing of the polls at 7:30 p.m.²⁰
- The voting location managers must pick up the election supplies at the BOE and return election materials to the proper location as designated by the board.
- PEOs are responsible for:²¹
 - ✓ Verifying voter eligibility
 - ✓ Processing voters
 - ✓ Issuing ballots to voters
 - ✓ Performing other miscellaneous clerical duties
 - ✓ Dismantling voting machines and packing up all supplies after the polls close at 7:30 p.m.

The duties of a poll worker in Hancock County include the following:²²

- **Monday Evening Meeting (Pre-Election Day Meeting)**
 - ✓ Hold organizational meeting at polling location from 7-8 p.m.

- **Election Day**
 - ✓ Arrive by 5:30 a.m.
 - ✓ Engage voting machines and set out supplies
 - ✓ Sign in voters
 - ✓ Write name and address of voter in poll book
 - ✓ Check off each voter in polling list
 - ✓ Pass out “I VOTED” stickers
 - ✓ Shutdown voting machine at the end of the day

c. Party Affiliation

Ohio law is structured to place equal numbers of people from the two major political parties on local boards of elections to ensure fairness in the electoral process. Each precinct in Ohio must have no more than half of its PEOs from the same political party.²³

Precinct Election Officials

Ohio law provides that the county BOE selects, generally, four residents of the county in which the precinct is located to serve as PEOs. Counties are permitted to assign more than four PEOs to a precinct, and often they do when they expect high voter turnout.²⁴

Voting Location Managers

One PEO will be selected to act as the voting location manager with overall responsibility for overseeing the election process, including overseeing opening and closing the polling place, and transporting ballots and voting materials to the BOE after the polls close. The law requires that the voting location manager be from the “dominant political party in the precinct,” meaning they must have the same political affiliation as the party whose candidate for governor received the most votes in that precinct during the last state election for governor.²⁵

d. Term of Office

PEOs are appointed in the fall of each year to serve a one-year term beginning in September and ending the following September.

e. Compensation

Compensation for PEOs varies slightly by county. However, all PEOs within a county are paid the same rate, which must be no less than the minimum wage²⁶

- In Warren County, the compensation is as follows:²⁷
 - Voting Location Manager
 - Election Day: \$140.00
 - Training: \$35
 - Travel: \$10

- Precinct Election Official
 - Election Day: \$130.50
 - Training: \$35
- In Franklin County, the compensation is as follows²⁸:
 - Voting Location Manager
 - Election Day: \$133.72
 - Training: \$50
 - Travel: \$15
 - Precinct Election Official
 - Election Day: \$133.72
 - Training: \$15
- In Hancock County, the compensation is as follows²⁹:
 - Voting Location Manager
 - Election Day: \$140
 - Training: \$8.50
 - Travel: \$5 for mileage county to city or city to county
 - Precinct Election Official
 - Election Day: \$130
 - Training: \$8.50
 - Travel: \$5 for mileage county to city or city to county

IV. Application Process

a. How to Apply

In Ohio, anyone interested in being a poll worker can apply online or according to county procedures.

A statewide online application can be found at: <https://www.sos.state.oh.us/elections/precinct-election-officials/sign-up/>

The screenshot shows the Frank LaRose Ohio Secretary of State website. At the top, there is a search bar and a navigation menu with links: Home, Secretary LaRose & the Office, Elections & Voting, Campaign Finance, Legislation & Ballot Issues, Businesses, Notary, Records, Publications, and Media. Below the navigation is a breadcrumb trail: Home / Elections and Voting in Ohio / Precinct Election Officials. The main heading is "DAY FOR DEMOCRACY" followed by "SIGN UP TO BE A PRECINCT ELECTION OFFICIAL".

The form is divided into three main sections:

- CONTACT INFORMATION:** Includes fields for First Name (required), Middle Name or Initial, Last Name (required), and Suffix - Jr. II, etc.
- ADDRESS INFORMATION:** Includes fields for House Number (required), Street Name (required), Street Description, Apt. or Lot, City/Village (required), Select County (required), Pre-Street Direction, Post-Street Direction, Apt. or Lot Number, and Zip Code (required).
- ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Includes fields for Telephone Number (required), E-mail Address, Party Affiliation, and a section for language fluency: "Are you fluent in a Language other than English?" with radio buttons for Spanish, Somali, and Other. Below this is a field for "If other, please specify:" and a dropdown for "How did you hear about being a PEO in Ohio?:".

At the bottom of the form are two buttons: "Clear Form" and "Submit Form".

Figure 1: Apply to Become an Election Official Additionally, the websites for most county BOEs also have online forms.

- For example, the Warren County form requests the following information: name, address, phone number, where you are willing to work, and your party. An email address is optional. https://www.warrencountyboe.us/Pollworkers/Pollworker_App/Default.aspx

How do I sign up?

- [Signup online Click Here](#)
- Persons interested should contact:
 - Democratic Precinct Election Official Coordinator at 513.695.1764
 - Republican Precinct Election Official Coordinator at 513.695.1754

Precinct Election Official Application Form

You must be registered to vote in Warren County in order to be a Precinct Election Official

*Yes, I am interested in being a Voting Location Manager or Precinct Election Official.
Please contact me for the next election*

Required = *

Name: *

Address: *

City: *

Zip Code: *

Phone Number:

Where are you willing to work?:

E-mail:

E-mail address is not required, however it will assist us in contacting you in the future.

Party
 Democrat
 Republican

Figure 4: Warren County Precinct Election Official Application

- Similarly, Hancock County residents interested in becoming precinct election officials can either fill out the online application form or call the BOE directly.³⁰

IF INTERESTED:

PLEASE CALL 419.422.3245 OR STOP BY OUR OFFICE AT 201 E. LINCOLN STREET – REAR IN FINDLAY. YOU CAN ALSO EMAIL LORI MILLER (DEMOCRATS) OR JODY O'BRIEN (REPUBLICANS) FOR MORE INFORMATION.

WE WILL ASK:

- YOUR NAME
- ADDRESS
- PHONE NUMBER
- PARTY AFFILIATION
- WHAT AREA YOU ARE WILLING TO WORK

b. Deadlines for Filing

There is no statewide deadline for applying to be a PEO, although by statute, the county BOE must select PEOs on or before September 15 each year to serve for a one-year term.³¹ You do need to apply early enough to be able to take the training provided by the Secretary of State. You will want to note the training dates, if listed, on the county BOE website.



JUST APPLY



V. After Applying

a. Following Up

After applying to be a PEO, interested persons can follow up with their local BOE. The Secretary of State's website lists all 88 county BOEs, along with each BOE's address, telephone number, office hours, email addresses, and website information.

<https://www.sos.state.oh.us/elections/elections-officials/county-boards-of-elections-directory/>

b. Overcoming Objections

There is no formal appeal process as most people who apply will be placed. If a PEO is refused placement, it is generally due to a competency issue, a behavior incident, or because there are no openings to place the person.³²


VI. Training Resources

Training materials are provided by the Ohio Secretary of State on their website:

<https://www.sos.state.ohus/elections/precinct-election-officials/training-materials/>

The training materials provided include:

- ✓ PEO Training Manuals
- ✓ PEO Quick Reference Guides
- ✓ PEO Primary Election Training Supplements
- ✓ PEO Online Training Course
- ✓ ADA and Disability Resources



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ELECTION OFFICIALS' RESOURCES

ADA RESOURCES	CALENDARS	ELECTION ADMINISTRATION PLANS	ANNUAL EXPENSE REPORTS
GENERAL HANDBOOKS, MANUALS, GUIDES & INSTRUCTIONS	MAPS	MILITARY AND OVERSEAS VOTERS INFORMATION	NVRA MATERIALS
PRECINCT ELECTION OFFICIALS TRAINING RESOURCES	POLLING LOCATION RESOURCES	STATE ISSUES REPORTS	WIDGETS

- **Absentee Voting / Vote by Mail**
 - [Click here for all Absentee Ballot Request form options](#)
 - [Absentee Voting / Vote by Mail information](#)
 - [Uniformed & Overseas Citizens Absentee Voters UOCAVA information](#)

STATE ISSUES REPORT

- [2018 Ohio Issues Report \(PDF\)](#)
- [2018 Primary Ohio Issues Report \(PDF\)](#)
- [2017 Ohio Issues Report \(PDF\)](#)

▶ [Historical Issues Reports](#)

PEO TRAINING RESOURCES

- [Precinct Election Official Online Training Course](#)
- [PEO Training Manual \(PDF\)](#)

PEO RECRUITMENT RESOURCES

- [Day for Democracy Tabloid-Sized Poster \(PDF\)](#)
- [Day for Democracy Information Card \(Four-up, PDF\)](#)
- [Day for Democracy Recruitment Card \(PDF\)](#)
 - [Click here for a link to sign up to be a Precinct Election Official](#)

Online Training ³³

Each PEO, new and returning, must attend a training session. The training sessions are scheduled by the county BOEs prior to the election and take approximately three hours to complete.³⁴ Some counties now offer the option of taking the Secretary of State’s training session online, while other counties require that prospective PEOs attend an in-person training at designated times.³⁵ While the county BOEs determine the training mode of administration and training schedule, the content for each of the 88 counties is the same.

Ohio Precinct Election Official Training

Welcome. This site provides access to the online Precinct Election Official training program that many County Boards of Elections are making available to Precinct Election Officials. Although Boards of Elections have added tracking features to confirm Precinct Election Official participation and some of the functionality is slightly different in each county, the content is exactly the same as that being used in all 88 counties.

[Precinct Election Official Course Login - follow this link](#)

[I want to be a Precinct Election Official - follow this link](#)

[I am a member of the public - follow this link](#)

Practice Training

Some counties have open practice hours. During open practice hours, PEOs can practice processing voters on the “ePollbooks,” or electronic pollbooks.³⁶ This training is non-mandatory and is unpaid.

VII. High-Priority Issues

a. Options for Voters Without Accepted ID

Voters in Ohio must show an election official an acceptable proof of identification to vote. If the voter's name is in the poll book but they forget their identification (ID), the voter MUST cast a provisional ballot.³⁷

Types of valid ID include:³⁸

- ✓ Photo ID issued by the U.S. government or the State of Ohio
- ✓ Military ID
- ✓ Utility bill
- ✓ Bank statement
- ✓ Government check
- ✓ Paycheck
- ✓ Other government document

Prohibited types of ID include:³⁹

- ✓ Driver's license or photo ID issued by a state other than Ohio
- ✓ Social Security card
- ✓ Passport
- ✓ Birth certificate
- ✓ Insurance card
- ✓ Registration acknowledgement from the county BOE

If a voter says they do not have the accepted ID, the PEO's job is to help them make the best decision for themselves about their next steps. If the voter has compliant ID at home (or elsewhere), one option would be to go home (or elsewhere) to retrieve an accepted form of ID and then return to the polling place to vote.

b. Voters Who Have Moved

A voter who has moved, but still resides within the same precinct, may vote on a regular ballot. However, the voter must also complete a Voter Registration Form so that the county's records can be updated.⁴⁰

If a voter who has moved to a new precinct has not updated their voter registration at least 30 days prior to the election, the voter will be issued a provisional ballot.⁴¹

c. Voters Who Are Not on the Rolls

If a voter's name is not in the poll book, the PEO should review the Supplemental Voter List to find the voter's name (if applicable).

If the voter's name is in neither the poll book nor the supplemental voter list (if applicable), the PEO can check the precinct voting location guide to verify if the voter's current address is in, or out of, the precinct.⁴²

d. Provisional Ballots

Provisional ballots are issued when a voter's eligibility cannot be established.⁴³ This protects a voter's right to vote but also protects the integrity of the electoral system against possible fraud. Some reasons a voter would be issued a provisional rather than a regular ballot include:⁴⁴

- The voter does not have valid or accepted ID.
- The voter's name is not found in the Poll Book or the Supplemental Voter List.
- The voter has been marked as either provisional or absentee (indicating the voter may have already voted).
- The voter has changed their name and did not provide legal proof of the name change.
- The voter has moved within Ohio and did not update their address at least 30 days prior to the election.

Before a provisional ballot is issued:⁴⁵

- The PEO checks whether the voter's address is in that precinct.
- If the voter's address is in another precinct, the PEO will direct the voter to the correct precinct (so that the voter may vote by regular ballot instead of by provisional ballot).

After a provisional ballot is issued:⁴⁶

- The identification envelope — provisional ballot affirmation must be given to the voter.
- The voter must complete the provisional ballot affirmation. In order to be eligible to be counted, this must include the voter's printed name, valid signature, date of birth, current address, and acceptable identification.

NOTE: The completed identification envelope — provisional ballot affirmation will serve as a voter registration update form for the provisional voter so that the voter's residential address will be printed in the poll book for future elections.

- PEOs provide a copy of the provisional ballot notice⁴⁷ at the time the voter casts their provisional ballot. The notice provides the voter with information on how to follow up on whether their provisional ballot was counted and any additional steps that the voter needs to take to have their ballot counted.⁴⁸
- The voted ballot is placed inside the identification envelope — provisional ballot affirmation and is then placed by the voter in a secure ballot box or bag provided by the board of elections.

e. Right to Voting Assistance⁴⁹

An individual who has a disability that prevents them from being able to cast a ballot on their own should not be prevented from voting. The voter has the option of casting an absentee ballot⁵⁰ or voting at the polls⁵¹ – and in both circumstances receive assistance from precinct election officials.

- For disabled individuals voting at polling places, Ohio law requires local BOEs to provide the following accommodations:⁵²
 1. Polling places that are accessible and free of barriers that would prevent “handicapped persons” from voting
 2. A minimum number of special parking locations available to disabled voters
 3. Doors that are at least thirty-two inch wide
 4. The option of casting a ballot from the vehicle or the door of the polling place with the assistance of two precinct officials
- For disabled individuals voting absentee, Ohio law permits the local BOE to send two precinct election officials each from a different political party to:⁵³
 1. Deliver an absentee ballot to the voter
 2. Help the voter mark the ballot if they declare a physical infirmity
 3. Return the ballot to the board before the close of polls on Election Day.
- Assistance for disabled voters physically voting at the polling location or casting absentee ballots may be provided by:
 1. Two precinct election officials — each from a different political party.⁵⁴
 2. Any other individual of their choosing so long as they are not:⁵⁵
 - The voter’s employer or an agent of the voter’s employer;
 - An officer or agent of the voter’s union; or
 - A candidate whose name appears on the ballot



If asked specific questions about candidates or issues, PEOs should respond that they cannot:

- **Advise**
- **Instruct**
- **Educate voters**



f. Voter Mistakes on Paper Ballots⁵⁶

- If a voter tears, soils, defaces, or erroneously marks a ballot, the voter may return it to a PEO and a second ballot must be issued to the voter. Before a voter turns in a torn, soiled, defaced, or erroneously marked ballot, the voter must fold it to conceal any marks the voter made.
- If the voter tears, soils, defaces, or erroneously marks a second ballot, the voter may return it to the PEO and a third ballot must be issued to the voter. In no case may more than three ballots be issued to a voter.
- When a PEO receives a returned torn, soiled, defaced, or erroneously marked ballot, they should write “Defaced” on the back of the ballot and place the stub and the ballot in the separate containers provided by your board of elections for that purpose.
- No voter voting a paper ballot may leave the polling location until they return to a PEO every ballot issued to them, regardless of whether the voter has made any marks on the ballot.

g. Voting Machine Breakdowns⁵⁷

If touchscreen voting machines (called “DREs”) malfunction, break down, run out of power, or stop working properly for any other reason, the PEO must offer voters backup optical scan paper ballots.

A PEO must contact the Board of Elections immediately to notify someone of any issues with the voting machines.

h. Every Voter Standing in the Line by 7:30 p.m. Must Be Permitted to Vote⁵⁸

Polls in Ohio close at 7:30 p.m. unless ordered by a court to stay open longer. Everyone in line at the poll closing time will have an opportunity to cast a ballot.

- One half hour before poll closing time, poll workers should repeatedly announce the name of the precinct to ensure that voters standing in line are at the correct precinct and be prepared to assist voters in finding their correct polling location.
- As the time approaches 7:30 p.m., announce that the polls are closing soon and reassure voters that everyone in line at closing time will be able to vote.
- At 7:30 p.m. one precinct election official should loudly declare, “The polls are closed!” To accommodate voters waiting in line who have a right to vote, you should:
 - Move the line inside the polling location and lock the door; or
 - Place a PEO at the end of the line to prevent additional people from joining.

i. Polling Place Accessibility

Provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Help America Vote Act, and Ohio law all require that voters with disabilities have access to polling locations (also discussed above briefly in section (e) “Right to Voting Assistance”).⁵⁹

- Some common barriers to accessibility are:⁶⁰
 - Lack of designated accessible parking spaces.
 - Lack of vertical signage or access aisles at accessible parking spaces.
 - Sidewalks without curb-cuts.
 - Steps at polling place entrances.
 - Thresholds or steps that have an extreme change in height.
 - Gravel, grates, or cracks in the sidewalk.
 - Heavy interior doors.
 - Doors not operable with a closed fist
 - Tripping hazards, such as loose mats or unsecured electrical cords.
 - Obstructions that protrude from the wall and are undetectable by a cane or are sitting in a walkway that make maneuvering difficult.

- Some simple solutions to accessibility suggested by the Ohio Secretary of State include:⁶¹
 - Use temporary signs to designate accessible parking spaces.
 - Use directional signs to designate accessible entrances.
 - Post directional signage inside the building designating the specific room being used for voting.
 - Use temporary ramps to mitigate the lack of curb-cuts.
 - Prop open doors that are heavy, or not operable with a closed fist.
 - Leave a 36-inch passageway throughout the room being used for voting.
 - Place chairs, trash cans, or cones underneath protruding objects attached to a wall above the floor (objects protruding more than four inches from the wall) to make them cane-detectable.
 - Set up voting machine(s) to be used by voters with a disability in an accessible and private location within the room being used for voting
 - Tape down or remove loose mats, electrical cords, or wires
 - Remove obstacles in the route of travel

j. Campaigning at the Polling Place

The polling location is a neutral zone. Campaigning is part of the political process but is prohibited within 100 feet of the entrance to a polling location, or within 10 feet of voters waiting in line if the line extends past those 100 feet.⁶² Voters must be free to make their choices without pressure from candidates, campaigns, PEOs, or fellow voters — even if those fellow voters are friends or family.⁶³

k. Voter Intimidation and Disruption

Precinct Election Officials must contact the Board office or the appropriate law enforcement official immediately if they experience a problem with the conduct of any person at a polling location.⁶⁴ All voters have the right to vote without fear of intimidation or disruption.

l. Student Voters

Voting in Hometown Elections

College students living on or near campus, even if the university is out of state, may participate in hometown elections by maintaining their permanent home address as their voting address and casting a ballot by:

- Requesting an absentee ballot and voting by mail;
- Voting in person in the 28 days before the election at your home county Board of Elections if not home on election days; OR
- Voting in person at assigned polling place for home precinct if home on Election Day⁶⁵

Voting from Campus Address

A college student may vote using their Ohio school residence address if the student does not intend to return to a different permanent address.⁶⁶

- When a college student registers to vote from their school address, the school residence is considered to be the place to which the student's habitation is fixed and to which, whenever the student is absent, the student intends to return, and is considered by the student to be his or her permanent residence at the time of voting. Any other previous residence for voting purposes is no longer valid.
 - It is illegal for a person to register and vote from two different addresses.⁶⁷

m. Recent or Potential Changes in Election Law to Consider

House Bill 41 was introduced in February 2017 and went into effect on March 20, 2019. It modifies the law concerning challenges to voter registration, the appointment of observers, and the procedures for processing absent voter's ballots and for casting absent voter's ballots in person. This bill streamlines the in-person early voting process. Early voters are no longer required to fill out a ballot application or ID envelope if they present a valid ID. If early voters do not have a valid form of ID, they can provide the last 4 digits of their Social Security number and fill out a ballot application.⁶⁸

HB 166, Ohio's biennial budget bill, went into effect on July 19, 2019. This bill includes a provision that gives local boards the option to reduce the number of poll workers at voter centers serving multiple precincts and where electronic poll books are used. The provision states that the board may appoint not less than two precinct election officials for each precinct, so long as the board approves the decision to reduce the number of precinct election officials by the affirmative vote of at least three of its members.⁶⁹

n. COVID-19 Concerns

The spread of COVID-19 means that information and election practices are changing rapidly. You should contact your local election administrator to verify all information in this guide before relying on information contained herein. In Ohio, the spread of COVID-19 forced state election officials, voters, and poll workers to grapple with a new reality and questions around how to hold a safe and inclusive primary election. On March 9, 2020, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine declared a state of emergency “to protect the well-being of the citizens of Ohio from the dangerous effects of COVID-19.”⁷⁰ On March 27, Governor DeWine signed into Law H.B. 197, which set the primary date to April 28, 2020 and instituted a vote-by-mail only system with limited in person voting for those with disabilities who needed to use a voting machine and those who could not receive mail (including homeless individuals). It remains to be seen how future elections will be conducted in Ohio, including the upcoming general election in November 2020. Again, we recommend confirming all information about election administration practices with your local elections office.

VIII. Be a Proactive Poll Worker⁷¹

A good PEO is proactive and focused on the voter's experience. You should be sensitive to voters' needs and treat every voter like a valued guest. When in doubt, err on the side of protecting the voters' right to vote. If you are prepared, respectful, positive, attentive, and courteous, voters will come away satisfied and more eager to return for the next election.

Be Prepared

Preparation is key to ensure Election Day runs smoothly at your polling place. One of the most common voter complaints on Election Day is the long line at the polling place. You can significantly reduce this hassle through organization, anticipating issues, and quickly resolving problems as they arise. For example, a PEO can be prepared by:

- Regularly checking the supplies (like ballots or pens) to prevent a shortage that would halt the voting process;
- Ensuring that entryways are not blocked;
- Researching available resources in advance;
- Having a cheat sheet with answers to frequently asked questions and references you can contact immediately for help; and
- Having alternatives at hand (what alternative IDs are valid, etc.).

The Voter Is Your Guest:

- ✓ Be Prepared
- ✓ Be Respectful
- ✓ Be Positive
- ✓ Be Attentive
- ✓ Be Courteous

Be Respectful

Be respectful to each and every voter. Treat all voters with courtesy, regardless of differences in political affiliation, race, gender, age, ethnicity, or religion. The voter has the right to vote without feeling uncomfortable or discouraged.

Be Positive

The voter's experience, whether good or bad, is marked by your attitude. Work to de-escalate tension if there is confrontation or frustration. If you are supportive and solution-oriented, the voters will have a positive impression of the voting process.

Be Attentive

As is the case with any customer service, be attentive and responsive. If a voter seems confused, ask if he or she needs help. Be inquisitive, but not disruptive, to make sure voters who want assistance can get it quickly. But be mindful of cues that a voter may want some space.

Be Courteous

When the voters enter, offer a warm greeting, make eye contact, introduce yourself and let them know you are there to help. Welcome voters by name, if you know them. By making the voters feel valued, they will have a positive impression of the election process and will be more likely to return.

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- ¹ Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3501.04 (“The secretary of state is the chief election officer of the state, with such powers and duties relating to the registration of voters and the conduct of elections as are prescribed in Title XXXV [35] of the Revised Code. He shall perform these duties, in addition to other duties imposed upon him by law, without additional compensation.”), § 3501.05; see also [U.S. Census Bureau & Association of Public Data Users, Guide to State and Local Census Geography, 131](#), https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/reference/guidestloc/All_GSLCG.pdf (last visited January 22, 2020).
- ² Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3501.06.
- ³ *Id.* at § 3501.05; Ohio Secretary of State, Elections and Voting in Ohio – Election Officials – County Boards of Elections Directory, <http://www.sos.state.oh.us/sos/elections/electionofficials/boeDirectory.aspx> (last visited January 22, 2020).
- ⁴ Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3501.11(D).
- ⁵ *Id.* at § 3501.22.
- ⁶ Franklin County Board of Elections, *Poll Workers*, <https://vote.franklincountyohio.gov/poll-worker/> (last visited January 22, 2020).
- ⁷ Warren County Board of Elections, *Want to Be a Precinct Election Official?*, <https://www.warrencountyboe.us/pollworkers/default.aspx> (last visited January 22, 2020).
- ⁸ Hancock County Board of Elections, *Precinct Election Officials*, http://hancockboardofelections.com/?page_id=66 (last visited January 22, 2020).
- ⁹ Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3501.22.
- ¹⁰ *Id.* at §§ 3503.01, 3503.011
- ¹¹ Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3503.06(A), 3503.07, 3503.21; see also Ohio Secretary of State, Elections and Voting in Ohio – Voter Eligibility and Residency Requirements, <https://www.sos.state.oh.us/elections/voters/voter-eligibility-residency-reqs/> (last visited January 22, 2020).
- ¹² Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3501.22(C).
- ¹³ *Id.*
- ¹⁴ Warren County Board of Elections, *Youth @ the Booth*, <https://www.warrencountyboe.us/pollworkers/youth.aspx> (last visited January 22, 2020).
- ¹⁵ Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3501.22(A)(1).
- ¹⁶ *Id.*
- ¹⁷ *Id.*
- ¹⁸ *Id.*
- ¹⁹ See e.g., Cuyahoga County Board of Elections, *Election Official Flip Chart 2018*, https://boe.cuyahogacounty.us/pdf_boe/en-US/pollworkers/2018/FlipChart.pdf (last visited January 23, 2020).
- ²⁰ Warren County Board of Election, *Want to be a Precinct Election Official?*, <https://www.warrencountyboe.us/Pollworkers/Default.aspx> (last visited January 23, 2020)
- ²¹ *Id.*
- ²² Hancock County Board of Elections, *Precinct Election Officials*, http://hancockboardofelections.com/?page_id=66 (last visited January 23, 2020)
- ²³ *Precinct Election Official Training Manual* (hereinafter “*Precinct Manual*”), at 1, <https://www.ohiosos.gov/globalassets/elections/eoresources/peo-training/peotrainingmanual.pdf> (last visited February 4, 2020); Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3501.22(A)(1).
- ²⁴ Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3501.22(A)(1).
- ²⁵ *Id.* § 3501.22(A)(1), § 3501.01(G); see also *Precinct Manual*, at 3, <https://www.ohiosos.gov/globalassets/elections/eoresources/peo-training/peotrainingmanual.pdf> (last visited February 4, 2020).
- ²⁶ Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3501.28
- ²⁷ Warren County Board of Elections, *Want to Be a Precinct Election Official?*, <https://www.warrencountyboe.us/pollworkers/default.aspx> (last visited February 4, 2020).
- ²⁸ Franklin County Board of Elections, *Poll Workers Frequently Asked Questions*, <https://vote.franklincountyohio.gov/Poll-Worker> (last visited February 4, 2020).
- ²⁹ Hancock County Board of Elections, *Precinct Election Officials*, http://hancockboardofelections.com/?page_id=66 (last visited February 4, 2020).
- ³⁰ *Id.*
- ³¹ Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3501.22(A)(1).
- ³² Interview with Jan Kelly, Montgomery County Board. of Elections Director of Elections, 2017.
- ³³ Ohio Secretary of State, *Ohio Precinct Election Official Training*, <https://ohopwt.ohiosos.gov/> (last visited February 4, 2020).
- ³⁴ See e.g., Greene County Board of Elections, *Precinct Election Officials/Election Day Workers Information*, <https://www.co.greene.oh.us/134/Precinct-Election-OfficialsElection-Day-> (last visited Apr. 2, 2020).

³⁵ See e.g., Warren County Board of Elections, Precinct Election Official Training, <https://www.warrencountyboe.us/pollworkers/dates.aspx> (last visited February 4, 2020); but see Franklin County Board of Elections, Poll Workers, <https://vote.franklincountyohio.gov/poll-worker/> (last visited February 4, 2020).

³⁶ See e.g., Warren County Board of Elections, *Precinct Election Official Training*, <https://www.warrencountyboe.us/Pollworkers/Dates.aspx> (last visited February 4, 2020); Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3506.05(A)(1).

³⁷ *Precinct Manual*, *supra* note 22 at 17 and 25); Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3505.18(A).

³⁸ *Precinct Manual*, *supra* note 22 at 25-26; Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3505.18.

³⁹ *Precinct Manual*, *supra* note 22 at 28.

⁴⁰ *Id.* at 17; Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3503.16(B)(1)(a).

⁴¹ *Precinct Manual* *supra* note 22 at 17-18; Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3503.16(B).

⁴² *Precinct Manual* *supra* note 22 at 19.

⁴³ Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3505.181(A)(2).

⁴⁴ *Precinct Manual* *supra* note 22 at 17-18; Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3505.181(A).

⁴⁵ *Precinct Manual* *supra* note 22 at 17.

⁴⁶ *Id.* at 17; Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3505.181(B).

⁴⁷ *Precinct Manual* *supra* note 22 at 17; Ohio Secretary of State, Provisional Ballot Notice Form No. 12-H, https://www.sos.state.oh.us/globalassets/elections/forms/12-h_english.pdf (last visited February 4, 2020).

⁴⁸ See *id.*

⁴⁹ *Precinct Manual* *supra* note 22 at 11; Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3505.24.

⁵⁰ Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3509.08(A).

⁵¹ *Id.* at § 3501.29(C).

⁵² *Id.* at § 3501.29.

⁵³ *Id.* at § 3509.08(A).

⁵⁴ *Id.* at § 3504.24; *Precinct Manual* *supra* note 22 at 45.

⁵⁵ Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3504.24; *Precinct Manual* *supra* note 22 at 45.

⁵⁶ Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3505.23; *Precinct Manual* *supra* note 22 at 44.

⁵⁷ *Precinct Manual* *supra* note 22 at 25.

⁵⁸ *Id.* at 5, 47-48; Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3501.32.

⁵⁹ *Precinct Manual* *supra* note 22 at 11-12 and 46.

⁶⁰ *Precinct Manual* *supra* note 22 at 11-12; Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3501.29.

⁶¹ *Precinct Manual* *supra* note 22 at 11-12.

⁶² *Precinct Manual* *supra* note 22 at 39-40; Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3501.35.

⁶³ *Precinct Manual* *supra* note 22 at 39-40; Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3501.35).

⁶⁴ *Precinct Manual* *supra* note 22 at 43; Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3501.33.

⁶⁵ Ohio Secretary of State, *College Voters*, https://www.sos.state.oh.us/secretary-office/office-initiatives/grads-vote-ohio/college-voters/? t_id=1B2M2Y8AsgTpgAmY7PhCf%3d%3d& t_q=student+voters& t_tags=language%3aen& t_ip=144.121.157.66& t_hit.id=SOS_Web_Models_Pages_ChildPage/ 86889684-9407-41c5-8050-acc8c6e9529d_en& t_hit.pos=2 (last visited February 4, 2020); Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3503.02.

⁶⁶ Ohio Secretary of State, *College Voters*, https://www.sos.state.oh.us/secretary-office/office-initiatives/grads-vote-ohio/college-voters/? t_id=1B2M2Y8AsgTpgAmY7PhCf%3d%3d& t_q=student+voters& t_tags=language%3aen& t_ip=144.121.157.66& t_hit.id=SOS_Web_Models_Pages_ChildPage/ 86889684-9407-41c5-8050-acc8c6e9529d_en& t_hit.pos=2 (last visited February 4, 2020); For residency requirements, see Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3503.02.

⁶⁷ Ohio Secretary of State, *Voter Eligibility – Residency Requirements* <https://www.sos.state.oh.us/elections/voters/voter-eligibility-residency-reqs/> (last visited February 4, 2020); see also Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3503.02.

⁶⁸ 2017 Bill Tracking OH H.B. 41, <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA132-HB-41> (last visited February 4, 2020).

⁶⁹ 2019 Bill Tracking OH H.B. 166, <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA133-HB-166> (last visited April 2, 2020).

⁷⁰ The Office of Governor Mike DeWine, *Executive Order 2020 01D*, (March 9, 2020), https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/OHOOD/2020/03/09/file_attachments/1396418/Executive%202020-01D.pdf.

⁷¹ We credit BOARD OF ELECTIONS IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK, *POLL WORKER’S MANUAL 9-11* (2012) for many of the tips included here. Special thanks to Sharon Dolente, ACLU of Michigan, for her insight and direction on this section.