



Being A Poll Worker by Minerva

Why would I want to be a pollworker? There is a shortage of Pollworkers in LA County and new workers are deeply needed. Please note the phone number and email address at the bottom of this blog to call to help boost the Pollworker Pride initiative in the LA County area.

I'd like to start off by saying that I believe in working hand-counted paper ballot voting methods and/or airtight hand count sampling protocols at the state and local levels. I appreciate Secretary of State Debra Bowman's efforts to make sure that all ballots are slowly and deliberately counted versus quickly and inefficiently. As of Tuesday she has approved the reexamining of American Independent, Green, Declined to state and the second bubble on the ballots yesterday.

By definition, pollworkers are gatekeepers for a day. They are the only human contact that the voter usually has before and after they cast their votes. The average age of US poll worker is 72 years of age. I found that the day I participated as a pollworker that we were all unemployed professionals between jobs or careers. The second poll was all older ladies in their 70's with a lot of spunk and vigor all wearing various shades of green pantsuits. These ladies were professional pollworkers and have worked together for over five years.

We had one lady whose employer was paying her for the day because her State employer knew about the poll shortage. So we teased her that she should be buying everyone's lunch since she was being paid twice by taxpayers anyway. We were obliged with cookies instead.

Facts about Poll Workers:

1.) are a huge regional need: 11,200 poll workers to run an election. 2,186 of them will be bilingual in the six required languages, in addition to English.

2.) Are paid a stipend for Election Day Service by doing a community good deed: You'll make \$105 Clerk and \$175.00 Inspector. For the wealthy of you out there, you may donate your earnings for the day to a nonprofit organization before hand. In some cases, several members of the Ventura County Democratic Club do just that, all proceeds go back to the club for the one day. With 20 retired and elderly people participating they command upwards of \$2380. To do this locally would require going to the registrar's office in Norwalk for details.

3.) comes with Training: \$25 and is included in the amount I just said. You must attend a Power Point presentation and Video class explaining the election process and your expected duties. As an election "CLERK" you will be asked to assist the "Inspector" with their duties and assist with the provisional ballots for the day and may accompany Inspector to the Return Center at the end of the day. The return center where the ballots were dropped off early in the morning and returned at the end of the day and is determined by the Voter registration administrator.

The second position is an "Inspector/Precinct Captain" or "Top Dog". You are given more details, a video of "The Perfect Polling place" which is shown by all the clerks earlier in the month and you supervise the polling place operations; attend the clerk's training class; picks up supplies; sets up/takes down polling place; displaying all required signs, and handicap assistance, delivering all supplies to an assigned Return Center. You must have a car, driver's license and insurance, a cell phone to contact the "Inspector" if there are any problems with the machines or someone comes in "too unruly". You also have to be the arbitrator or willing to call the police if there are strong altercations at the poll. You are also asked to be responsible for the individuals on your team to set lunch and dinner breaks. Ideally you will have four clerks to work with. However, you are all sworn official responsible for the polling place to operate and

control the elections on the local level. To be an Inspector you must have been a clerk at least twice.

A typical night before you all go and meet. We decided not wear the colors of your group which was marked on the outside of the Clerk's envelope (orange, green, yellow, and brown). Clean up and dust, set up the two six feet tables and five chairs, all indoor signs, mark the floor with colored tape to show the wait line, walking directions and return to the computer table.

A typical day: The poll usually begins at 6:00AM with workers taking the oath of office. Pollworkers swear to adhere to all election laws, that they will perform their duties honestly to the best of their abilities, and that they have no bets or fiduciary interest on the outcome of the election! And sign a "present" roster to this effect. Next is set-up of the machines; sometimes additional furniture or machines must be moved about to facilitate a good layout for voters. Every polling room must have a United States flag. HAVA and other laws require the posting of multiple notices and most states require a sample ballot to be hung on the wall or otherwise available. Once the machines are opened up, they need to be zeroed. Depending on the system, this means that a "zero tape" is printed, or the counters must be checked. Everything must register zero. The public counter (record of voters who voter on that machine that day) must say zero, we had eight to zero out, and the "protective counter" (a sort of lifetime count of votes cast on that machine) is also recorded.

There are many paper forms to be signed and more sworn statements to make. At the appointed hour, the doors are opened and the voting begins! This may include handling the poll book and signing in voters, machine work (depending on the system) such as pushing buttons or preparing cards to set up the machine for each voter, demonstrating machines and training voters, dealing with pollwatchers, and avoiding voter intimidation by anyone. We continuously kept the area clean and free of campaign materials. Making sure all electrical wiring was taped to the floor. And doors were kept opened even though it was a very chilly day. Pens, badges, hats, clothing with candidates' names had to be removed.

4.) aren't to be confused with Pollwatchers: Some people confuse pollworkers with pollwatchers (people who observe the electoral process in and around the poll, often representing a candidate or party), and sometimes even with pollsters (people who take polls, such as exit polls.) These are all important positions, and all contribute greatly to our voting process, but in most jurisdictions only the pollworker is "the true public election official".

5.) are cheerleaders for Democracy: The tone, good will and caring about the voter are set by the pollworker. You are literally the energy and enthusiasm about voting. You are also the recipient of the complaining, surly and discouraged voters also. If you haven't received adequate training, read the books provided, pay attention to the video and in class presentations you can also be a polling place's greatest nightmare. In that ineptness you can "accidentally disenfranchise voters by failing to completely follow election codes".

6.) has a Bad side: Often the long lines are due to overwhelming response by the voters to vote, voters all showing up at the same time, machine failure, people didn't mark their mailed ballots so they are taking longer to decide, electrical failures-- due to the weather, cutting in line, the nearest poll doesn't have enough people to run it so more than one poll has been merged, not enough ballots, parking is bad, and "nefarious pollworkers who deliberately break election laws are being challenged. Sometimes due to the driving time and location of polls some individuals can ask up to two hours off to vote. Early mail in and absentee voting also assists the voter so the ballot can be mailing in advance. The long hours of the day are often deterrents to acquiring more pollworkers. Our elections fall generally on Tuesdays, historically a great day for colonial farmers, but now one of the busiest days of the modern workweek. Reports of employees being demoted or even fired because they took time off to work the polls are not uncommon. Subsequently, some states have actually proposed leave of absence and job protection laws for pollworkers.

7.) have minimum requirements: Polling is an opportunity to help serve the general community 6:00AM to 9:30PM one day to “the struggle to allow American citizens the right to vote and to convey how important voting is to our way of life”. Poll workers are expected to assist those who have physical, hearing and visual disabilities as they vote. Pollworkers must have basic reading writing English and clerical skills. Those with a second language or more are highly encouraged to apply. There are often 1st year voters at the polls and at the one I sat in we made a lot of noise, rang a bell and clapped for that person after they voted.

**ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORES, JUNIORS AND SENIORS: Through the Student Poll Worker Program, California law allows high school sophomores, juniors and seniors to work as election officers on election day. You must be 16 by the time of the election, a United States citizen, and a student in good standing with your school earning at least a 2.5 grade point average on a scale of 4.0. I Contact the voter registration office for more details.*

8.) offers purposeful responsibility: Being a pollworker adds a sense of pride and purpose. You must be registered in the LA County. You must be 18 years of age unless you are in the High Student Poll Worker Program. As the backbone and safeguard of the electoral processing, it is part of our civic duty to the community.

I can remember when Native Americans and African Americans in particular were required to read passages out loud, take writing, spelling and comprehension tests before they could vote. So to some of us it meant taking part of a privilege our forbearers didn't get to exercise.

It allows you an opportunity to meet new individuals in your immediate living area. I found that often that the pollworkers didn't even realize that they were neighbors.

9.) polling places are diverse: Precincts can be in a lobby of a public or private residential area, lounge, cafeteria, restaurant dining room, a church class room, synagogue, home owners association, gymnasium, garage, library, fire station, school hallway, senior center and community multipurpose room, that is wheelchair friendly, bathroom access, ability to provide curbside assistance, well lit with electricity area. A minimum of a Democratic party, a Republican party, American Independent party, Green party and Decline to State booth to register in. Two 6 ft tables to accommodate two name checkers, 1 signature checker, 1 provisional ballot, a physical assistant, multi-lingual speaker(s) and 1 to post the ballots to enter into the computation machine.

10.) must be incredibly non-partisan. You may have to nearly bite your tongue off a few times, but you must never let a voter know that you are for or against any candidate or party. If you become a pollworker, be ready to answer lots of questions at elections. Voters ask and do really dumb things sometimes. Don't laugh or make fun. Be ready to go crazy with work or be bored out of your mind, perhaps both on the same day. Bring lunch and dinner, because in most places you aren't allowed to leave. Snacks and a coffee pot are good too. When it is time to close the polls, every voter in line by closing time gets to vote in most states. Laws vary, but in most jurisdictions, when all voting is done pollworkers close the door. Space should be made for any pollwatchers to observe as the workers lock out the machines from further voting, record public and protective counters, and prepare return sheets or printouts (which involves more signing and sworn statements.) In some systems, memory cards or cartridges are removed for transport. The workers collect all materials as per county instruction, and take to their county as provided by their law. The day of election is the last day to drop off your ballot. If you loose your ballot you are allowed a provisional ballot which is the usually process for any unanswered questions when problems arise. If you are like most of us, you will be dog-tired, but exhilarated that you had a good day and got this chance to share in our Democracy.

DEAN C. LOGAN, Acting Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (562) 462-2509

1-800-815-2666 option 7

<http://www.lavote.net/locator>

http://vote.caltech.edu/media/documents/wps/vtp_wp10.pdf;