



# POLL WATCHER'S GUIDE

## Putnam County Board of Elections

25 Old Route 6  
Carmel, New York 10512  
(845) 808-1300  
Fax (845) 808-1920  
[www.putnamboe.com](http://www.putnamboe.com)

### WATCHER CERTIFICATE (Election Law, Section 8-500)

Date of Election: \_\_\_\_\_

Appointing authority: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Insert name of political party/political committee/ independent body/ candidate here)

Name of watcher: \_\_\_\_\_

County or city of watcher's residence: \_\_\_\_\_

Poll site where watcher is to appear: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Insert town/village/city and the election district number here)

Signature of Appointing Authority Individual: \_\_\_\_\_

Print name of Appointing Authority Individual: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Appointing Authority Individual: \_\_\_\_\_

#### GUIDELINES

- At a General Election or special election, watchers shall be appointed by: the chair or other officer of any party committee, independent body whose candidates are upon the ballot, or political committee supporting or opposing a ballot proposal.
- At a Primary Election, watchers shall be appointed by the chair or other officer of any party committee or any candidate on the ballot.
- Each watcher must be a qualified voter of the city or county in which he/she is to serve.
- Watcher certificates must be delivered to an inspector at the election district.
- Not more than three watchers for any appointing authority may be appointed to serve at the same election district at the same time.
- Watchers may be present at the polling place at least fifteen minutes before the unlocking and examinations of any voting machine or ballot box at the opening of the polls, until after the signing of the inspectors' returns and proclamation of the result.
- Not more than one watcher for any appointing authority may be within the guard rail at any one time.
- No person shall be appointed or act as a watcher who is a candidate for any public office to be voted for by the voters of the election district in the same election in which the watcher is to serve.

(Sample prepared by the State Board of Elections for use on Election Day or days of Early Voting)  
Rev. 10/29/2019

## OVERVIEW

To ensure fair and honest elections, New York State law provides for appointing poll watchers to observe voting at the polls. Poll watchers are designated by candidates, political parties, independent organizations which have candidates on the ballot and/or political committees.

The role of the poll watcher is to observe elections at the polling sites on behalf of the particular candidate, political party or organization and where they observe irregularities, report these observations to either the Elections Inspector and/or the Board of Elections.

## POLL WATCHER QUALIFICATIONS

Watchers shall be appointed by the chairman or secretary of the political party or independent body.

At a Primary Election any two or more candidates may designate Poll Watchers.

Each watcher must be a qualified voter in Putnam County to serve.

Watcher certificates must be delivered to an inspector at the election district.

Not more than three watchers for any party committee or independent body or candidates whose names appear on the ballot may be appointed to serve at the same election district.

## POLL WATCHER LIMITATIONS

The Poll Watcher **may not**:

**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 inspector's table.**

**Interfere with the election process.**

**Be a candidate for office in the election district in which they are running.**

## 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 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 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's table.**