Polling Place Guidelines for Neutral Observers

Neutral Observer: An organization which has demonstrated recent history as being non-partisan and must not have taken an advocacy position for or against a candidate or issue on the ballot for the election to be observed.

Whenever possible, the Electoral Board and the Virginia Beach Office of Voter Registration & Elections will accommodate requests for neutral observers (§24.2-604.5) to visit its polling places. However, we must also ensure that elections are conducted in an orderly manner, according to law, and that the voters are not intimidated or delayed when voting.

Prior to Election Day:

To be authorized as a neutral observer for a Virginia Beach election, the requesting organization shall:

a. Request authorization from the Director of Elections / General Registrar at least 10 days prior to the election to be observed.
b. Specify the name(s) and email(s) of their representatives for the election.
c. Request the precincts and times desired for their representatives to observe.

Election Day

Authorized neutral observers:

a. Shall provide the Chief Election Official with a copy of their authorization letter from the Virginia Beach Director of Elections / General Registrar upon arrival at their assigned polling location.
b. Observers are asked as a courtesy to voters to answer and make phone calls outside of the voting area.
c. Visitors must check in with the Chief Election Official and present their authorization letter from the Electoral Board or the General Registrar while the polls are open, 6am 7pm.
d. The Chief Election Official will answer questions; however, time may be limited if the polling place is busy.
e. Visitors must stand away from the check-in table(s) and the voting machines. They may not invade a voter's privacy or compromise his/her right to cast a secret ballot. Visitors may not film or take photos unless they are representing a news organization.
f. Visitors may conduct interviews with voters and others outside the 40-foot prohibited area as long as they do not hinder voters or block the entrance/exit to the polling place.
g. Shall not in any manner attempt to influence any person in casting their vote (Code of Virginia COV §24-604A and C).
h. Shall not provide assistance to a voter as permitted under COV §24.2-649.
i. Follow guidance and directions of the Chief Election Official.

Review general election bulletins and portions of Virginia Election Laws including but not limited to: § 24.2-604, § 24.2-604.5, § 24.2-607, and §24.2-649.

Questions or Concerns? Contact the Virginia Beach Voter Registration and Elections at 757-385-8683