

# ASSISTANT ELECTION OFFICIAL INFORMATION

Lincoln, Vermont

## Who does what?

1. Board of Civil Authority (BCA): This board is responsible for making decisions about, and overseeing elections in the Town of Lincoln. The board is made up of up to thirteen elected officials: 7 Justices of the Peace (JP's), 5 Selectboard members, and the Town Clerk. BCA members have a statutory duty to help with running elections.
2. Presiding Officer: This is usually the Town Clerk, but the BCA has the authority to appoint someone else to do the job. This person is responsible for all of the election activities on the day of the election, and for reporting the results of the election after it is over. The Presiding Officer recruits and oversees the Assistant Election Officials, but the BCA must approve of all of the proposed election workers.
3. Assistant Election Officials: These are legal voters of the Town of Lincoln who are not members of the BCA. The only non-resident who can help run an election, is an Assistant Town Clerk. Youth Election Officials are welcome, as long as they are 16 or 17 years of age, and reside in Lincoln.
4. Entrance Checklist:

This job is for a very attentive person. The Presiding Officer will bang a gavel and open the polls at the appropriate hour. You keep track of every voter who enters the polling place. Ask each person to state their name out loud, so that all in the room can hear (even if you know who they are), then you repeat their name out loud to confirm that you heard them correctly. If you read their address to them, that will help us find errors. Be sure that the voter is on the checklist and their name has been checked before they get ballots. It is important to notice if the checklist indicates that the voter is *inactive* (any highlighted color marked next to the name), or if the person has already requested an *absentee* ballot, or if a person is *not on the checklist*, consult the Presiding Officer; do not let the person receive ballots. Before your shift is over, you should reconcile the number of voters on your checklist with the number of voters on the exit checklist; these numbers must be exactly the same. Different shifts of checklist workers will be indicated by using different colored pencils, so it is easier to reconcile the voters you have seen during your shift. Checklist errors make our night time vote counting challenging, so do your best work! [If you work this shift at the end of the day, you will be asked to stay for at least another hour to reconcile and total up the number of voters for the entire day.]
5. Ballot Distributor:

Your job is to hand one of each ballot to the voter. (Except during the Presidential Primary every 4 years, or if there are 17-year-old voters.) Be sure that the voter's name has been verified on the checklist. You can help the entrance checklist worker by reminding the voter to check in first. Sometimes voters don't want to vote on everything there is to vote on. Hand them all the ballots anyway, and tell them that it's ok to leave blanks. We need to offer all ballots and collect them all back at the end. If a person makes a mistake, and asks for another ballot, be sure to collect their spoiled ballot before giving out another one. Fold the ballot and write "replaced" on it, then tear it in half and put it in the "Replaced Ballots" box. A voter can request up to 3 ballots due to mistakes. 17-year-olds can vote in a Primary Election if they will

turn 18 on or before the November General Election. These voters can only vote on the Primary ballot, not on Town or School ballots. They will be clearly identified on the checklist. Pay attention to the entrance checklist person, so you don't hand them the wrong ballots.

**November General Elections:** All active voters will be mailed a ballot by the VT Sec. of State. If people prefer to vote in person, they will hopefully bring the ballot that was mailed to them. If not, the voter will have to complete an "Affidavit of no ballot cast" before they can get another ballot. It is important not to skip this step.

Please remind voters to look on both sides of their ballot if appropriate, and tell them not to fold their ballot.

6. Exit Checklist:

This person must also be very attentive to who is coming and going. This person asks the voter to state their name, and marks the voter on the checklist before they deposit voted ballots into the ballot box(es). Voters are often in a hurry to leave after they are done voting. Your job is to stop them and get their name before they disappear. Before your shift is over, you should reconcile the number of voters on your checklist with the number of voters on the entrance checklist; these numbers must be exactly the same. Checklist errors are our biggest challenge when counting ballots at the end of the day. Ideally everyone who cast a ballot should be checked in and checked out, and that number should match the total number of ballots counted. Careful work is really important! [If you work this job for the last shift of the day, you will be asked to stay for at least another hour to reconcile and total up the number of voters.]

7. Ballot Box Assistant:

This job is more important than it appears. You help people by pointing out which box is for which ballot. This expedites sorting at the end of the day when we count them. Some people are color blind, or don't pay careful attention to the different boxes. **Be sure the voter returns all the ballots they were given.** (Each election can have a different number of ballots) Remind them that it is ok to leave something blank, but don't let them take their blank ballots home with them. Most of the time, the voter should be placing the voted ballot in the box by themselves. It's ok to ask the person if they need assistance (such as voters with disabilities, but under no circumstances should you grab the ballot from someone). **Be sure the voter can trust that you are not looking at their ballot and trying to read how they voted.** This is the number one complaint! You can give instructions without hovering. You will also be asked to assist the Presiding Officer with processing absentee ballots. You will work closely with the exit checklist person, to make sure that everyone gets checked off before they leave. Remember: NO PEEKING AT VOTED BALLOTS!

8. Ballot Counters:

This is an extremely important job, and basic math skills are important. The Presiding Officer will bang a gavel and close the polls at the appropriate hour. As soon as all voters standing in line have voted, the Entrance and Exit Checklist people will reconcile the number of voters who voted. The Presiding Officer will unlock the ballot boxes and you will assist with dumping the ballots onto tables. Ballots will be unfolded and counted into stacks of 25. After the ballots have been sorted, you will be asked to pair up with another Ballot Counter. Please team up with someone who might be of a different political persuasion, or someone who is not in your family. If you have been invited to count ballots and you are related to someone who is running for office, if you worked on a campaign, or if you are paid by a budget we are voting for, please disclose this information to the Presiding Officer and do not count those ballots. If you have never done this before, we try to pair you up with someone who has.

One person in each pair will read the ballots and the other person will mark them on the tally sheet. Lay the ballots and the tally sheets on a table facing each other, so that you can eyeball the other person's paper at anytime. If a voter has left something blank, report it as a "blank" on the tally sheet. Each race will have instructions to vote for not more than (number). Be sure that races are not over-voted. [For example, if it says, vote for not more than 7 JP's, and the voter marked 8, you can not take the first seven and disregard the last. You would enter "7 overvotes" on the tally sheet.] Votes for fictitious characters or deceased people, are now counted as blanks (ie: Mickey Mouse or George Washington). If a voter writes on a ballot and indicates who voted the ballot, the entire ballot is defective. There are a few other reasons for counting something as blank, so if you have a question, always consult the Presiding Officer or another Board of Civil Authority member.

**NEVER WRITE OR MARK ON A BALLOT WHILE YOU ARE COUNTING.** If you need scrap paper, the Presiding Officer will provide it, or use the back of your tally sheet to do math. In the case of a recount, you could essentially be creating a spoiled ballot, without that being the voter's intent.

After you have finished counting a bundle of 25 ballots, check your math and enter totals for each race. Bundle the ballots with the tally sheet, and each counter should write their name legibly on the tally sheet (Do not sign on the ballots!) Hand the bundle to the head table for totaling and continue with another stack of 25 until all the ballots have been counted.

If the head table totaling team finds a problem with your totals, they will send the stack of ballots back to you to re-work and make corrections. If you are still stuck, please don't hesitate to ask for help.

\*\* Ask Sally if you want to learn a way to tally with less risk for errors. \*\*

### **Poll watchers and the Press**

The BCA has adopted a Polling Place Policy about poll watchers and visitors to the polling place. The Presiding Officer will go over this with people who wish to observe our election.

### **Campaigning in the Polling Place**

Campaigning or talking about campaigns or candidates is not allowed in the polling place. Election workers and voters should not be wearing candidate T-shirts, hats, buttons, or other campaign signage. Voters can bring notes and literature or stickers with them into the voting booths, but they must be removed upon exiting. The BCA has made guidelines for outdoor campaigning in our Polling Place Policy. Voters may try to tell you their opinions about voting. If this happens, kindly remind them that the polling place is a neutral space and campaigning can occur outside. Any questions, talk to the Presiding Officer or a member of the BCA.

### **Voters with Disabilities**

Voters with disabilities have several options for how to vote.:

- Two JP's can bring a ballot to the voter's home
- An absentee ballot can be taken home for voting
- Ballots can be mailed to the voter
- We have an accessible ballot-marking tool which anyone can use. Please ask and we will assist you with it. (Only available for statewide and federal elections at this time.)

- Curbside voting can be requested: two election workers will bring a ballot to a voter in their car outside the polling place. The same two election workers will return the voted ballot to the ballot box.
- Voters can bring a person of their choice to help them vote, or ask two election workers to assist them.

Do not assume that a voter with disabilities needs help, but it is ok to ask someone if they would like assistance. We have a few voting booths with chairs, and we have a table that is wheelchair accessible for voting.

**The deadline to request an absentee ballot is 2:00 p.m. on the day before the election.**

### **No Guns in the Polling Place State Law**

Pursuant to 13 V.S.A. § 4027 and 17 V.S.A. § 2510, a person shall not knowingly possess a firearm at a polling place or on the walkways to a building in which a polling place is located on an election day. This law applies to the Town Office during the early voting period as well. There are exceptions for law enforcement officers. Election workers are not expected to enforce this law. The clerk is required to post notice of this law. If you see someone carrying a weapon or if you feel threatened by someone with a weapon, please let the presiding officer know. Firearms may be stored in your motor vehicle.

### **What if I get stuck and don't know what to do?**

If there is ever a question about something that comes up, please consult the Presiding Officer. Don't make it up as you go. I am trained to solve nearly every election issue that might arise. If I get stuck, I will contact the VT Secretary of State's Office. If you make a mistake, let me know; I will help you solve it. I keep notes about things that don't happen the way they should, so I can explain later if the numbers don't add up. All elections should be able to be audited.

### **IT'S ALL ABOUT TRUST**

Think about your actions and be sure that they appear trustworthy to either side of a vote. Thank you for volunteering to help out, I appreciate your help. If you have further questions, feel free to call me at (802) 453-2980 or e-mail: [clerk@lincolnvermont.org](mailto:clerk@lincolnvermont.org).

–Sally Ober, Town Clerk