

Elections Commission: Wisconsin Needs Poll Workers for November!

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MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Elections Commission will be participating in National Poll Worker Recruitment Day on September 1 to encourage more people to sign up to become election workers for the November election.

Established by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, National Poll Worker Recruitment Day aims to raise awareness about the benefits and importance of poll working and inspire more Americans to volunteer.

“Wisconsin needs thousands of its citizens to step up and become poll workers for November,” said Meagan Wolfe, Wisconsin’s chief election official. “We know there are Wisconsinites looking for ways to serve their communities through this difficult time. If you are a state, county or municipal employee, a student or someone who is looking for temporary work, municipal clerks need you to make a difference.”

To sign up, anyone interested should contact their municipal clerk’s office or visit the MyVote Wisconsin website: <https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/PollWorker>.

“Working the polls on Election Day is a great way to strengthen our democracy, participate in the democratic process, and make it easier for vulnerable people to stay home,” said Wolfe.

For a November General Election, Wisconsin municipalities typically need approximately 30,000 poll workers, Wolfe said. Because significant numbers of existing poll workers are in their 60s, 70s and 80s or have health conditions, clerks have experienced shortages at elections in April, May and August, Wolfe said.

In the August 11 Partisan Primary, clerks in 40 counties and 141 municipalities were more than 700 workers short. Luckily, the Wisconsin National Guard was able to

deploy service members in civilian clothes to fill those gaps, but there is no guarantee they will be available in November, Wolfe said.

By encouraging more people to become poll workers in their communities, National Poll Worker Recruitment Day aims to address the critical shortage of poll workers, strengthen our democracy, inspire greater civic engagement and volunteerism, and help ensure free and fair elections in November and beyond.

“Poll workers are the unsung heroes of the democratic process, and right now we’re facing a critical shortage of these dedicated volunteers,” said EAC Chairman Ben Hovland. “Recruiting poll workers is a challenge for many election officials across the country and the COVID-19 pandemic has made this need even more critical. We encourage Americans, who are able and willing to serve, to sign up to help America vote and work the polls on Election Day.”

Municipal clerks are primarily responsible for recruiting and training their own poll workers, but Wolfe said the WEC is also working with state partners to augment local efforts by publicizing the need for poll workers. WEC has posted resources and hosted webinars encouraging clerks to reach out to eligible poll workers in their communities. Clerks are encouraged to reach out to various organizations and groups to recruit poll workers including government organizations. Government entities, be it at the state, county or municipal level, often have the authority to shift the responsibilities of their employees on election day to serve as poll workers while still offering them their standard pay and wages.

WEC also encouraged municipal clerks to work with community organizations, school boards and students, as well as professional associations and private industry to recruit additional poll workers.

How to Serve as a Poll Worker in Wisconsin

In Wisconsin, poll workers, also known as election inspectors, are appointed at the municipal level. Anyone who is interested in working should contact their municipal clerk’s office or visit the MyVote Wisconsin website: <https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/-PollWorker>.

Wisconsin law allows people to serve as election inspectors in other municipalities within their county. If you are willing to serve in a municipality outside of your own, let your clerk know and they can alert the county about your availability. You can

also contact the county directly and can find contact information for county clerks here: <https://elections.wi.gov/clerks/directory>.

Municipal clerks will provide training for any new election inspectors before the election and online training is available through the WEC, if needed. Poll workers will also be supplied with personal protective equipment and public health procedures designed to keep voters and poll workers safe have been developed and provided as training.

What are the responsibilities of a poll worker?

Poll workers conduct assigned duties at a polling site on Election Day. Duties can include issuing ballots to registered voters, registering voters, monitoring the voting equipment, explaining how to mark the ballot or use the voting equipment, or counting votes.

Other positions at a polling place include a greeter who assists with answering questions and directing voters to the voting area, an election registration official to a polling place to register voters, and tabulators to assist at the polling place after it closes.

What are the hours of work?

Polling places are open statewide from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Poll workers can work a full day, generally from 6:30 a.m. until approximately 9:00 p.m. or later in the case of November elections. In many municipalities, election inspectors can work a split shift.

Are poll workers (election inspectors) paid or volunteers?

Poll workers are compensated for working at polling places at a rate determined by the appropriate municipal governing body, and, in some municipalities, are also compensated for attending any required training sessions. Poll workers may also choose to volunteer their services by filing a written declination of compensation with the municipal clerk

What are the training requirements for poll workers?

Municipal clerks are required by state law to provide training. This training provides all of the necessary information and knowledge to be a successful poll worker.

(Many municipalities require poll workers to attend a comprehensive training course prior to each election.)

What length of commitment will be expected?

Poll workers are usually appointed to two-year terms and are generally asked to make a minimum two-year commitment. However, given the current circumstances volunteers for only the November 3 election are appreciated and they will not be expected to meet the full two-year commitment.

Where will I be assigned?

In smaller municipalities, there is often only one polling place. However, in larger municipalities there are multiple polling places. In these municipalities, every effort is made to assign a poll worker to their neighborhood voting site. However, poll workers in larger municipalities such as large cities must be willing to be flexible and consider assignments at other sites. You may also be asked to serve in another municipality in your county if there is a greater need to volunteers outside of your municipality.

What are the qualifications to be a poll worker (election inspector)?

To be a poll worker, a person must:

- Be a qualified elector of the county in which the municipality is located (i.e., an adult citizen of the United States who has resided in the election district for 28 consecutive days and is not otherwise disqualified to vote)
- Be able to read and write fluently in the English language
- NOT be a candidate for any office to be voted on at the polling place at that election.

How do I become a poll worker?

If you are interested in becoming a poll worker you should apply directly to your town, village or city clerk. Find information about contacting your clerk's office here: <https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/PollWorker>.

Can I be excused from my regular job to be a poll worker?

Wisconsin law requires every employer to grant an unpaid leave of absence to each employee who is appointed to serve as an election official, if the employee who serves as an election official provides their employer with at least seven days' notice. The leave is for the entire 24-hour period of each election day in which the employee serves in their official capacity as an election official. Upon request of any employer municipal clerks must verify appointments.

How do state employees become poll workers?

Wisconsin Statutes provide that state employees appointed by a municipal clerk to serve as election officials must be granted leave without loss of pay or benefits for the entire 24-hour period of each election day in which the employee is serving as an election official. Employees must provide at least seven days' notice of the need for leave.

State employees may certify to the municipality that they choose not to be paid as poll workers. Alternatively, those state employees who receive pay as election officials must certify in writing to the (state) payroll office the amount of compensation received. The agency must deduct that amount from the employee's pay earned for scheduled work hours during the 24-hour period of the election day.

State employees who "volunteer" but are not appointed to be poll workers must take vacation or leave without pay if authorized by supervisory staff.