

Poll Book Management

Goal

To train election inspectors on the voting process and proper maintenance of the poll books at the polling place on Election Day.

Overview

Two election inspectors maintain two duplicate poll books, also known as poll lists, voter lists or registration lists, for each reporting unit. A reporting unit is a ward or combination of wards that reflect the way election results are tabulated and transmitted to school districts, the county and the Wisconsin Elections Commission.

The poll books contain the names and addresses of registered voters in a reporting unit. The poll books are generated by WisVote, Wisconsin's statewide database for tracking voter registrations. Each reporting unit will have two poll books, which must be maintained identically by the election inspectors on Election Day. Poll books may consist of up to four parts: (1) regular poll list, (2) pre-printed supplemental poll list, (3) handwritten supplemental poll list and (4) the confidential voters poll list.

Some municipalities split their poll book alphabetically to keep voter lines more manageable in high turnout elections. Election inspectors need to carefully issue and document the voter number issued to each voter on each poll book to ensure they are correctly distributed to voters.

Tip: Splitting the poll books alphabetically between A-K and L-Z helps keep lines even.

Signs and verbal directions that instruct voters to state their name and address, provide photo ID and sign the poll book can make the check-in process more efficient.

1. Election inspector asks the voter to state their name and address.

- Wis. Stat. 6.79 (2) (a) requires a voter to state name and address. Voting is a public activity and observers and other voters have a right to know who is casting a ballot.

Tip: Confidential voters are not required to state their name and address. They will provide a card with a unique voter number that matches their voter number in the confidential voter section of the poll book.

- A voter may be assisted with stating their name and address, if unable to do so, by an election inspector or other individual.
- If the voter refuses to state their name and address, and is able to do so, the voter is not issued a ballot.
- Election Day registrations should be entered into both copies of the supplemental poll list.

2. Both inspectors locate the voter's name and address in their respective poll books.

- If the voter has an “absentee issued” watermark next to their name, the voter should be asked if their ballot was returned. If the voter indicates the ballot was not returned, the voter is issued a ballot. If the inspectors subsequently find an absentee ballot in the voter's name, the absentee ballot is not counted, and the clerk is notified of a possible double voting situation.
- If the voter has an “absentee returned” watermark next to their name, the voter should be informed that they cannot vote a new ballot at the polls the election inspectors should review the absentee ballot certificate envelopes to determine if the voter returned their absentee ballot. If the voter casts a ballot at the polling place, the election inspectors may choose to challenge the ballot.
- If the voter's name does not appear in the poll book, the voter should be asked if they registered recently in the clerk's office and have a copy of the Certificate of Registration (EL-133). If they do not, the clerk or the WEC should be contacted to determine if the voter is registered. If there is no record of an EL-133 for the voter, he or she will need to register to vote and is added to the supplemental poll list.
- A confidential voter will have a notation by their confidential voter listing in the poll book.

3. Election inspector asks voter for a photo ID.

- Election inspectors together compare the name on the photo ID to the name on the poll book
- The inspector verifies that the name on the ID conforms to the name on the poll list. The name on the photo ID may be a variation of the name on the poll list. For example, “Robert” vs. “Bob,” variations of initials or upper or lower case letters, hyphenated names, etc.
- The inspector verifies that any photograph on the ID reasonably resembles the voter.

Tip: Appearances change over time. Poll workers should not comment on a voter's appearance in the photo or in person – even if the comment is intended as a compliment.

- The inspector verifies that the photo ID is unexpired or, if expired, meets the expiration specifications listed below.
- If the election inspectors do not believe that either the name conforms to the name of the registered voter or the photograph does not reasonably resemble the person in front of them, they may refuse to accept the photo ID.

Tip: The address on the photo ID does not have to be current.

Tip: The election inspectors do not have to determine that the voter's signature matches the signature on the poll list

- If voter does not have acceptable photo ID, they must be offered a provisional ballot.

Acceptable Photo ID

(must include the voter's name, photograph and expiration date)

The following photo IDs are acceptable for voting purposes, **and can be unexpired or expired after the date of the most recently general election (currently the November 8, 2018 election):**

- A Wisconsin DOT-issued driver license, even if revoked or suspended
- A Wisconsin DOT-issued identification card
- Military ID card issued by a U.S. uniformed service (including retired military)
- A U.S. passport book or card

The following photo IDs are also acceptable for voting purposes, but must be unexpired:

- A certificate of naturalization that was issued not earlier than two years before the date of an election at which it is presented
- A driver license receipt issued by Wisconsin DOT (valid for 45 days)
- An identification card receipt issued by Wisconsin DOT (valid for 45 days)
 - IDPP (valid for 180 days)
- A veteran's photo ID issued by the Veterans Health Administration of the federal Department of Veterans Affairs.

The following types of documents may be expired:

- A photo identification card issued by a Wisconsin accredited university, college or Tech College that contains the following:
 - Date of issuance
 - Signature of Student
 - Expiration date no later than two years after date of issuance
 - The university or college ID must be accompanied by a separate document that proves enrollment

The following photo IDs are also acceptable for voting purposes, regardless of the expiration date:

- A Tribal ID

4. Election Inspector asks the voter to sign one copy of the poll book next to their name.

Tip: The voter can sign using their “mark,” an “X” or a signature stamp.

Tip: PWs can offer the signature guide to assist voters with signing in the correct spot in the poll book.

- If a voter refuses to sign the poll book and does not claim to be unable to do so, the voter does not receive a ballot.
- If the voter signs the poll book using anything other than their or mark, the voter does not receive a ballot.
- If a voter is unable to sign the poll list, inspectors mark “exempt” in the signature block.
- If another person signed the voter’s registration form because the voter was unable to sign due to disability, the inspector writes the word “Exempt” on the signature line.
- If both inspectors do not waive the signature requirement, the voter shall be allowed to cast a challenged ballot and the inspectors should document the situation on the Inspectors’ Statement (EL-104).
- If another voter has mistakenly signed the poll list next to the voter’s name, the inspectors should document the discrepancy on the Inspectors’ Statement.

5. The voter is issued a voter number, which is written down on the poll book next to the voter’s name.

Tip: Different municipalities may use different methods of issuing voter numbers, such as a voter slip, voter ticket, or color coded based on ballot type.

Tip: Periodically reconcile poll lists throughout the day

- Check voter numbers between poll books to ensure they match
- Compare notations beside voter name to determine if they match
- Circle the last voter number on both poll lists in red

6. The voter is issued a ballot and directed to the voting area.

Tip: Your polling place may be set up with a separate ballot table.

Tip: PWs should let voters know that the accessible voting equipment is available for all voters.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if a voter does not want to state their name and address?

If a voter is unwilling to state their name and address and does not indicate they are unable to do so, they are not issued a ballot.

Can anyone assist a voter in marking their ballot or signing their name?

Anyone other than the voter’s employer or representative of the voter’s labor union may assist a voter marking their ballot or signing their name, including a poll worker.

Does the address on the photo ID have to be current?

No, the address on the voter's photo ID does not have to be current to be acceptable.

Can a voter who returned an absentee ballot vote a new ballot at the polls?

No, a voter who has returned an absentee ballot cannot vote a new ballot at the polls on Election Day.

Do both election inspectors managing the poll books need to view the voter's photo ID?

Yes, both election inspectors must view the voter's photo ID and agree that the photo reasonable resembles the voter, the voter's name conforms with the name on the poll list and the photo ID meets expiration date standards.

Does the voter's signature in the poll book have to be legible?

No, the name does not have to be legible and does not have to be compared to the voter's signature on any other document.

What if the voter failed to sign the poll book?

The poll worker should note it on the Inspectors' Statement, but it does not negate or otherwise affect the voter's ballot.

Related Training Resources

Election Day Manual

Photo ID Picture Guide

POR vs. POI Standards Guide

Poll List

How to Use the Accessible Voting Equipment

How to Issue a Provisional Ballot