

Maintaining Order in the Polling Place

Guidance for Massachusetts Law Enforcement

150-FOOT RULE

prohibits electioneering, campaigning, signature-gathering, and other specific political activities in and around polling places on Election Day & early voting sites, during voting hours.

INCLUDES:

- the actual polling place
- the building (including the walls) in which the polling place is located
- the premises on which the building stands
- the area within 150 feet of the building entrance door to the polling place
- any further distance warranted by public safety concerns

EXCLUDES:

- central tabulation facilities
- advance ballot processing locations
- ballot drop-boxes
- local election officers that are not located in the same building as a polling place or early voting site
- any event that takes place after Election Day, including post-tabulation and post-election audits

PROHIBITED

- holding certain political signs
- wearing certain political apparel
- handing out campaign literature
- distributing stickers for write-in campaigns
- candidates shaking hands or greeting voters
- asking voters to vote in a certain manner
- hindering or interfering with voters
- soliciting signatures on any type of petition
- displaying, holding, wearing, or handing voters materials that include: the name of a candidate's policy proposal, a candidate's slogan or image, or a political party name

ALLOWED

- campaigning for a candidate or ballot question not on the ballot in that location
- campaigning for a candidate or issue on the ballot in a future election
- political signs or apparel not intended to aid or defeat someone or something on the ballot
- exit polling
- display of materials, phrases, and slogans promoting an issue, position, or ideology not explicitly tied to a campaign or political party on the ballot

Additional information is provided in Election Advisory #24-02 Regarding Electioneering and Signature Gathering within 150 Feet of Voting Locations, Secretary of the Commonwealth, Elections Division (February 23, 2024).

Provided by:
Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, Inc.
Office of the General Counsel

Rev. (08.27.2024)



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ROLE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

- police officers assist, when requested, the presiding officer and aids in enforcing the laws relating to elections
- the presiding officer may direct the police officer to enforce any and all of the presiding officer's lawful orders and may request that the police officer take into custody any person who, by disorderly conduct, interrupts or disturbs the proceedings of the election or the work of an election officer or worker
- police officers must enforce lawful orders as directed by the presiding officer
- enforcement of the 150-foot Rule should occur in a manner which plainly and directly addresses the violation(s) of the Rule without stating or implying bias or prejudice on the part of the presiding officer
- officials invoking the 150-foot Rule must make every effort to emphasize that the voter's right to vote is not being infringed upon and that the voter will be allowed to vote if and when they comply with the Rule
- for clothing and other wearable campaign materials, voters should be asked to remove or cover the prohibited materials.

VOTER INTERFERENCE

- No person or group of people is allowed to hinder, delay, or interfere with a voter during an Election without lawful authority.
- No person or group may attempt to induce a voter to disclose how they have voted before depositing their ballot.
- Further, no person or group of people may aid, assist, or induce another person to hinder,delay or interfere with a voter during an Election without lawful authority.
- These prohibitions protect voters who are on their way to an Election, who are within the guard rail at a polling place, who are marking their ballot, who are voting or attempting to vote, and who have not yet cast their ballot.
- These prohibitions extend to all voters on Election Day, regardless of whether the voters are within 150 feet of a polling place.
- Violations are punishable by a fine of up to $500 or imprisonment for up to one year. G. L. c. 56, § 29

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