

# **ELECTION PROTECTION** **YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE**

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: District of Columbia**

### **Questions Involving Access to the Ballot:**

**1. It is after 7:00 AM and the polling place is not open.**

Immediately contact the Board of Elections and Ethics Office to report the problem. You can find information at <http://www.dcboee.org/>.

If the polling place is open at 7:00 a.m. but the voting machines have not arrived, call headquarters immediately. Voters should be permitted to vote by paper ballots (preferably) or by special ballots if there are no machines available. Special ballots are a LAST resort.

**2. It is 8:00 PM and my polling place is closed or closing and they will not let me vote.**

Immediately contact the County Elections Office to report the problem. You can find information on County Election Offices at <http://www.azsos.gov/election/county.htm>.

**3. There are equipment problems at my precinct and I cannot vote. What should I do?**

Encourage the voter to ask to vote by a back-up paper ballot or by provisional ballot. If a caller reports problems with machines, immediately contact the Electronic Frontier Foundation representative at the call center to walk you through the appropriate steps to solve the machine problem.

### **Identification and Provisional Ballots:**

**1. I do not have my identification with me. Can I vote?**

Yes. If the voter is a first-time voter who registered by mail and did not present acceptable identification at that time, the voter may vote by special ballot. If possible, a voter should be encouraged to go and get an ID and NOT cast a special ballot.

**2. I am a registered voter who is not on the rolls at my polling place. Can I vote?**

Confirm that the voter is qualified to vote (i.e., meets the age, criminal status and durational residency requirements) and that the voter registered in time to vote in this election. Next,

using the online polling place locator tool, make sure the voter is at the correct polling place. Polling place locator: [http://www.dcboee.org/voterreg/ppl\\_step1.asp](http://www.dcboee.org/voterreg/ppl_step1.asp)

If the voter has registered on time, is eligible and is in the correct polling place, direct the voter to ask the poll worker to call the Board and confirm their registration. If the voter still is not on the rolls, let them know that the voter can vote provisionally by special ballot. Special ballots are a LAST resort because they are not automatically included in the final tally of votes cast.

**3. Poll workers are turning voters away if they don't have photo ID.**

Alert a commander immediately to report the problem. An attorney will be dispatched to the polling place. Encourage the voter to go back inside the polling place and demand the right to vote by a REGULAR ballot (unless the voter is a first time voter who registered to vote by mail and has not previously provided a copy of their ID, in which case they can vote by special ballot).

**4. I have been offered a special ballot. What should I do?**

Special ballots are a LAST resort.

Any voters whose eligibility cannot be determined at the polls on Election Day may vote by special ballot. A voter who submits a special ballot must sign an affirmation that states the voter's address, date of birth, and belief that the voter is a registered voter or meets the qualifications for a voter registered voter.

The election official shall mark the ballot "SPECIAL" and provide the voter with the ballots, an inner envelope to ensure the secrecy of the ballot, and written notification of appeal rights if the Board does not count the special ballot. The election official must also notify the voter on designating choices on the ballot, placing the voted ballot in the inner envelope, placing the inner envelope in the special ballot envelope, and placing the sealed envelope in the ballot box.

Election officials must provide the voter with a written notice indicating the manner in which he or she may learn whether the Board has accepted the voter's special ballot, and of the dates scheduled for hearings for voters whose special ballots are rejected to contest the Board's determination if they petition to do so.

The Board conducts hearings at which a voter may contest the Board's decision to reject his or her ballot. These hearings are held no earlier than 8 days, and no later than 10 days, after the election. A voter must petition the Board before appearing at such a hearing. At the hearing, the voter may appear and give testimony regarding the rejection of the special ballot. The Board must make a final determination whether to count or reject the special ballot within 2 days after the hearing. The voter may appeal the Board's final determination to the Superior Court for the District of Columbia within 3

days after the date of the Board's decision. The Court's decision is final and may not be appealed.

### **Where to Vote:**

**1. Where do I vote (for voter who have not moved)?**

You can look up polling locations at [www.dcboee.org](http://www.dcboee.org) or [www.vote411.org](http://www.vote411.org). You may also call the Board at 202-727-2525 or at 1-866-328-6837.

**2. I have moved within the District of Columbia and have not updated my address for voter registration purposes. Where should I vote?**

If the voter has moved within the District of Columbia, the voter should go to the appropriate polling place for their new address. If the voter was registered at their previous address, they may vote by special ballot at the polling place for their new address, even if they have not updated their registration.

### **Assistance at the Polls:**

**1. I am physically disabled and need assistance; will my polling place be accessible?**

District of Columbia law requires that each polling place be accessible to physically disabled voters, but many are not. If a voter reports that a polling place is not accessible to the handicapped, alert a commander so an attorney can get in touch with the responsible election official to report the problem immediately.

**2. I am blind; physically disabled or can not read English and require assistance at the polls in order to vote. Can I get assistance at the polls?**

A voter requiring assistance at the polls for any of the reasons stated above can take a person of their choice into the voting booth, including a poll worker. Election Protection volunteers can serve as assistants to disabled or language minority voters if asked to do so by the voter. If a poll worker refuses to allow a disabled or language minority voter to bring a person of their choice into the voting booth, alert a commander.

The District of Columbia is not covered by the language minority provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. However, the Board intends to have Spanish ballots and voting materials at every polling location.

### **Miscellaneous Issues:**

**1. I have been approached by candidates or others at the polls.**

All poll monitors, including Election Protection volunteers, must stay at least 50 feet from the entrance to the polling place; they can solicit you if they comply with this rule.

If they are violating the 50-foot requirement, alert a commander to report the problem, let them know the extent of the problem and work with them to assess if calling an election official is necessary.

**2. What if I requested an absentee ballot but I want to vote in person on Election Day?**

As long as the voter has NOT already submitted the absentee ballot, and is otherwise qualified, they should be allowed to vote in person by REGULAR ballot.

**3. There are people at the polls trying to intimidate voters.**

Alert a commander immediately. An attorney will be dispatched to the polling place. If the voter agrees, put them on hold while you call the Legal Command Center so they can send an attorney to the location immediately. Then, gather as much information from the voter as possible. After hanging up with the caller, call back the Legal Command Center and fill the attorneys there in on the details. Also, alert the call center manager.

**4. I have a felony conviction. Can I vote?**

Yes. District of Columbia law permits convicted felons to vote so long as they are not currently serving a felony sentence of incarceration. This includes those who are on probation, on parole, or who have completed a felony sentence in the past.

**5. I am a college student, can I vote where I go to school?**

College students may register and vote where they go to school provided that they consider that location their voting residence. A voting residence is the residence the student claims as their home; the residence which qualifies them to vote on a particular ballot. Students must be held to the SAME eligibility requirements as any other voter in the jurisdiction. If a student has been turned away at the polls, ascertain if they have fulfilled all of the registration requirements (age, criminal status, durational residency requirements) and that they have registered on time for this election. If so, alert a commander to dispatch an attorney to the location and contact the appropriate election official.