



Voter Intimidation is Real and Illegal.

How to spot it and what to do.

Whether you're planning to vote in-person early or on Election Day this year, you need to know your voting rights, including the right not to be harassed about which candidate you've cast your ballot for, or if you're allowed to vote at all. This is voter intimidation, and it is illegal.

Voter intimidation is not new and has been going on for decades. Historically, voter intimidation practices have focused on Black communities, communities of color, and economically struggling communities in an illegal practice to deter them from exercising their constitutional right to vote. While voter intimidation is federally illegal, many states have passed their own laws prohibiting voter intimidation.

The National LGBTQ Task Force wants to ensure you are prepared to cast your vote in an environment in which you are safe from both COVID-19 and violence. While it is our hope that you don't experience voter intimidation, here are a few examples to help you gauge the situation should you need it.

Examples of intimidation may include:

- Aggressively questioning voters about their citizenship, criminal record, or other qualifications to vote, in a manner intended to interfere with the voters' rights
- Falsely presenting oneself as an elections official
- Spreading false information about voter requirements, such as an ability to speak English, or the need to present certain types of photo identification (in states with no requirement)
- Displaying false or misleading signs about voter fraud and the related criminal penalties
- Other harassment, particularly toward non-English speakers and voters of color

WHO CAN I REPORT INTIMIDATION TO?

You can report intimidation to:

- The Election Protection Hotline: 1-866-OUR-VOTE or 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA (en Español)
- The U.S. Department of Justice Voting Rights Hotline: 800-253-3931; TTY line 877-267-8971
- Local and state officials, including poll workers; your county clerk, elections commissioner, elections supervisor; or your state board of elections.

WHO CAN BE A POLL MONITOR?

In many states, poll monitors must be trained and certified by a political party or a candidate, and must carry their certification paperwork with them. In many states, poll monitors must also be registered voters in the state or county where they are monitoring the polls.

WHAT CAN POLL MONITORS DO?

Generally, certified poll monitors are allowed inside the polling place, but states may limit the number of poll monitors per candidate/ party at any given time. In many states, certified poll monitors may inspect the pollbooks. In many states, certified poll monitors can challenge the qualifications of voters. Unofficial/self-designated election observers are not permitted inside a polling place.

WHAT CAN POLL MONITORS NOT DO?

Poll monitors are not usually allowed in the “enclosed space” that includes the voting machines, the voting booth, or the area immediately around the poll workers’ tables. In many states, poll monitors may observe within a reasonable distance of the poll workers’ table, but not interact directly with voters. In many states, poll monitors may not inspect the poll books when voters are present.

WHAT DO I DO IF MY QUALIFICATIONS TO VOTE ARE CHALLENGED?

Laws vary. In many states, if your qualifications are challenged, you can give a sworn statement that you satisfy the qualifications to vote in your state, and then proceed to cast a regular ballot.

WHAT DO I DO IF I’M NOT ON THE LIST OF REGISTERED VOTERS?

Always ask poll workers to double check the regular list of registered voters. If you are not registered, ask if there is a supplemental list of voters (sometimes, voters who register closer to Election Day are processed after the pollbooks are printed, then placed on a supplemental list). You may also ask them to check a statewide system, if one is available, to see if you are registered to vote at a different polling place. If they still can’t find you, ask for a provisional ballot. All voters are entitled to a provisional ballot, even if you are not in the pollbook. After Election Day, election officials must investigate whether you’re qualified and registered to vote; and if so, they must count your provisional ballot.

CAN PEOPLE CAMPAIGN IN OR AROUND THE POLLING PLACE?

Campaigning is not allowed inside a polling place. Campaigning may be permitted outside the polling place – at a certain distance from the polls. Some states prohibit campaigning within 200 feet of the entrance a polling place (Alaska); others permit campaigning up to 30 feet from the entrance (Alabama).

WHAT ROLE CAN THE POLICE PLAY ON ELECTION DAY?

Police are allowed inside the polling place. If you are feeling intimidated or harassed, you can report it to the police. Police, like everyone, are subject to laws against voter intimidation.

WHAT ARE THE RULES FOR ASSISTANCE FOR VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES OR LIMITED ENGLISH?

Under federal law, voters with disabilities or limited English proficiency may get help voting from a person they choose, as long as it's not the voter's employer, or an agent of the voter's employer or union. They cannot be turned away from the polls because a poll worker thinks they do not have the capacity to vote. If someone is registered to vote, they should be allowed to vote.