



Assistant Chief Education Program – Election Day Before Open

04-Jul-2025

**This presentation has audio, make sure your speakers are not muted and
your volume is turned up.**



Election Day Before Open

- From the time you arrive at the polling place until 6:00 a.m., staying on task is essential to a Chief's success.
- There are some things a Chief has to do, and many things a Chief can delegate.
- It is important that the Chief only have oversight of the entire process and their required activities on the to-do list.
- This is when having startup assignments for your officers of election (EOs) can save you a lot of time.



Must-Dos for the Chief

- Deliver election materials to the polling place. These are the materials you picked up the day before at Stagecoach Road. Since this includes the ballots, Poll Pads and keys to the cage, this IS important.
- Swear in the EOs and your Assistant(s). Collect their signatures on the Oath page in the Election Day Binder.



Probably Should-Dos for the Chief – But could be delegated

- Ensure the Registrar's office is called to let them know you are in. They like to confirm that you are calling from a good number to reach your polling place.
- Contact any missing EOs.
- Welcome any authorized poll watchers who arrive.
- Ensure all the startup teams have the instructions they need.
- Monitor the Scanner, Poll Pad and Ballot table set up processes to ensure they are problem free.



Scanner Setup

- The Scanner is the most critical piece of hardware in the election – it is literally the thing that counts the votes. If you had to run an election without the scanner, you would spend a long time after the fact counting ballots.
 - If you could not get your scanner working, you would get a replacement scanner, so this outcome is unlikely.
- Make sure you have an excellent team on this startup.
- Breathe a sigh of relief when it is open and ready for voting.



Welcome Authorized Poll Watchers

- A poll watcher can arrive at any time, and until the poll closes, leave at any time.
- In the Chief's materials is a poll watcher kit, which includes instructions on how to process a poll watcher, rules of the road for poll watchers, and poll watcher badges.
- Poll watchers for a primary should have a letter from the candidate they represent saying they are an authorized representative. The letter may be a copy.
- Poll watchers for a regular election should have a letter signed by the county or city chairman of their political party or by the state or district chairman of the political party if the local chairman was unavailable, or by the independent candidate they represent.
- Poll watchers should be instructed to bring questions or concerns to the Chief (or Assistant Chief as appropriate). Generally, poll watchers will sign in on a sign-in sheet from the kit. They should be offered a copy of the rules of the road (they usually already have them). They should be shown where to sit – chairs behind the check-in officers being the favored position but not the only place they can be. Poll watchers are allowed to see any part of the voting process but they may not interact with voters or hinder the process.
- Poll watchers should not be treated like an enemy. Nor are they necessarily a friend. Ostensibly they have the same goals you have – to conduct an election according to the law. Most poll watchers are decent folks who will not impede your polling place operations. Sometimes they can even be a help as another set of eyes and ears.



Startup Complete

- Check with all of your startup teams to see that each startup task has been completed.
- Make sure the Poll Pads are open and ready for voter check-in.
- Make sure the scanner is open and ready to scan ballots.
- As tempting as it might be to have an EO who is registered in the precinct go through the voting process to make sure everything works, if this is done before 6:00 a.m. you have broken the law, because the polls do not open until then.



Open the Polls

- If things have gone well, 15-30 minutes before 6:00 a.m. everything is set up and everyone has a moment to take that last bathroom break before the day begins.
- If things have not gone well, then at 6:00 a.m. there will be an angry mob at the door and none of your systems will be working.
- In both cases, the polls SHALL open at 6:00 a.m. Whether you are ready for the voters or not. Opening 5 minutes later is not a choice.
- Now, if you are just breaking out the paper poll books at 6:00 a.m., then the voters may have to wait a moment while you get ready to manually process them – but you will be open.



Afterword

- The morning of the election before polls open, the Chief has a few things they have to do, and many things they probably should do.
- Having your teams prepared by education and knowing their assignments in advance is key to successful startup.
- A recurring theme here is that the Chief should be watching everything, and of necessity actually doing very little. Try hard not to get sucked into things that will take your focus away from the big picture.

