



# Massachusetts Election Protection Coalition

2014 Grassroots Poll Monitoring Training





**Every election voters nationwide are disenfranchised due to:**

- Confusion over election rules
- Long lines and under-resourced polling places
- Improper voting list purges
- Poorly administered elections
- Outright acts of intimidation and deception



## **Purpose of Grassroots Election Protection:**

- Ensure voters have access to voting and have their votes counted
- Provide voters with necessary information on voting
- Quickly identify problems and work to correct them along with the national hotline and local coalition leaders.
- Gather information to illustrate potential barriers to voting at the polls



## On Election Day, the coalition:

- Supports voters and helps solve problems reported to the 1-866-OUR-VOTE (1-866-687-8683) and 1-888-Ve-Y-Vota (1-888-839-8683) hotlines
- Coordinates legal and non-legal field deployments at targeted polling places
- Solves problems
- Litigates where necessary
- Collects data to paint a clear picture of the problems plaguing America's voters



## **Election Day: Program**

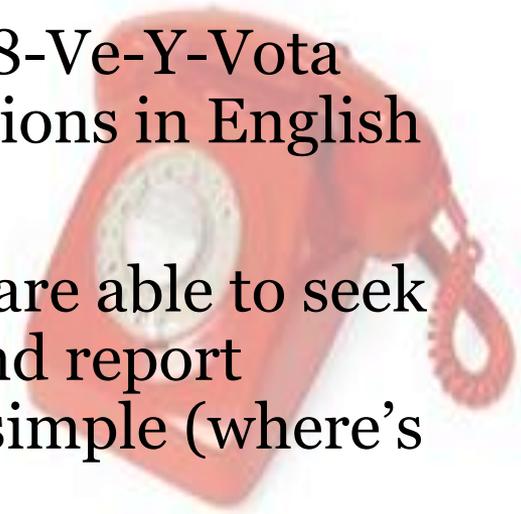
- National & Local Command Centers
- Hotline Call Centers
- Legal Field Programs
- Grassroots Field Programs
- Local Leadership
  - Election Protection Coalition: Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, Common Cause, MassVOTE, ACLU, LWV



## Hotline Overview

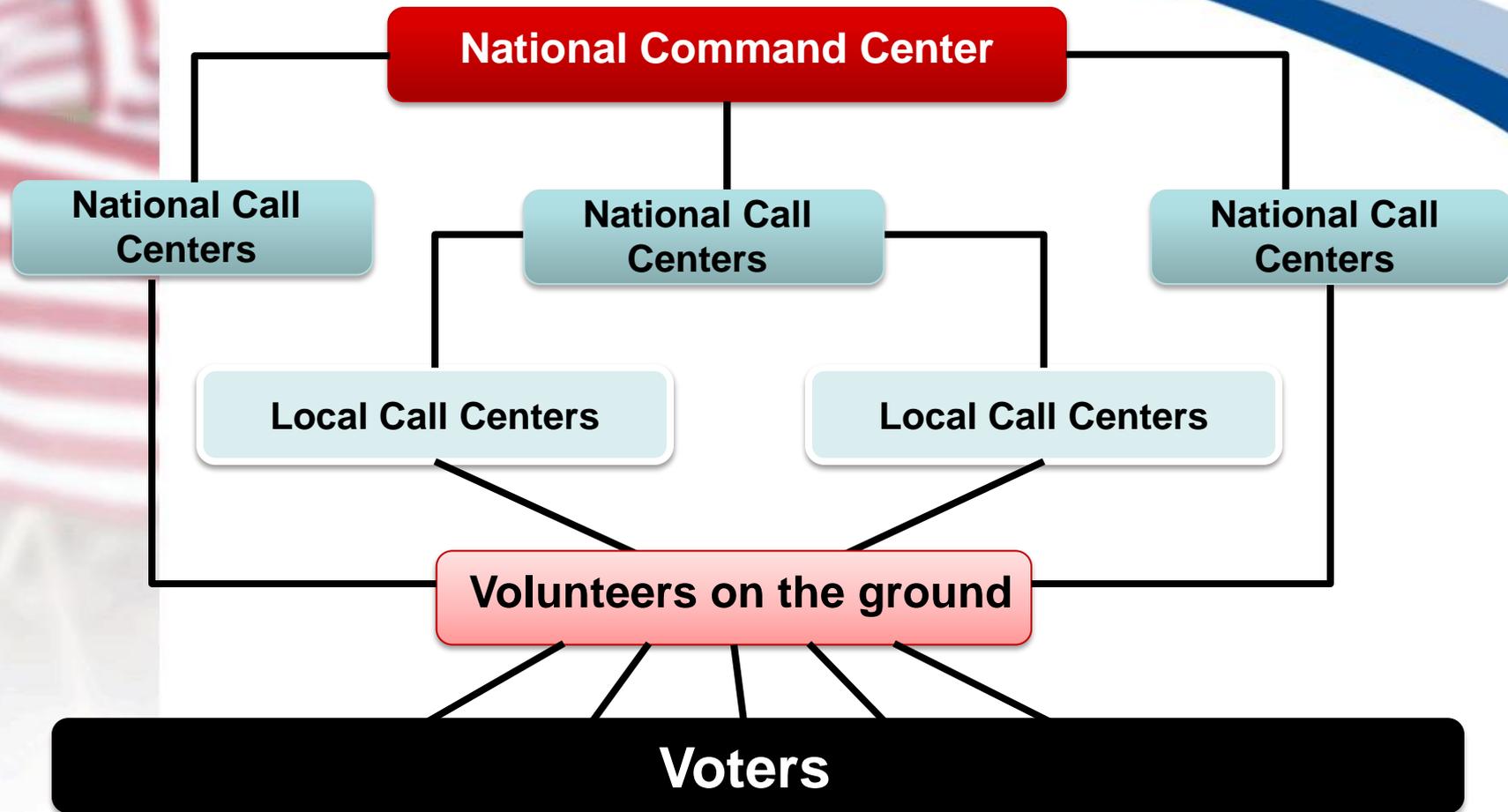
**1-866-OUR-VOTE & 1-888-Ve-Y-Vota  
(1-866-687-8683) & (1-888-839-8683)**

- Centerpiece of Election Protection
- 1-866-OUR-VOTE and 1-888-Ve-Y-Vota volunteers answer voter questions in English and Spanish
- Staffed by attorneys, callers are able to seek information, ask questions, and report problems – inquiries may be simple (where’s my polling place) or complex.





# Election Day Flow-Chart





## Role of Grassroots Poll Monitors

- **Serve as the eyes and ears of the Coalition**

Call the local Command center at 617-426-9600 if there are any problems. Alternatively call the 1-866-OUR-VOTE (**1-866-687-8683**) hotline

- **Act as a resource for voters**

- Make sure voters know their rights
- Answer basic questions about voting
- Refer voters to the 866-OUR-VOTE (**1-866-687-8683**) hotline



## Role of Grassroots Poll Monitors (Continued)

- **Gather information**
  - Assess polling places (e.g. accessibility for voters with disabilities and general operations)
  - Record information from voters who experience problems voting
  - Call and report any problem, even if you are able to answer the question/problem, in to the 1-866-OUR-VOTE hotline or to us.
- **Voter Survey “exit poll”**
  - Some volunteers will implement voter survey as part of data collection



# Poll Monitor Agreement

I, \_\_\_\_\_ [print name], agree to be a volunteer poll monitor for the Massachusetts Election Protection Coalition in the 2014 General Election.

**I understand and agree to each of the following statements:**

The Massachusetts Election Protection Coalition (MEPC) is a nonpartisan educational effort that does not endorse any candidate, political party or campaign.

I understand that my role as an Election Protection volunteer is an educational one and I understand that in that role I cannot and will not be an advocate for any candidate, political party, ballot question, or campaign.

I have received training from MEPC, I understand the training, and I agree to comply with the instructions contained in the training.

I agree that I will not engage in any electioneering activity while volunteering or wearing any MEPC T-Shirt or other item designating me as a MEPC volunteer (wear any clothing or accessories such as hats, buttons, or pins, or hold a sign or sticker or other item containing the name of any candidate, political party, ballot questions, or campaign).

I understand that I will distribute educational materials only about the voting process to voters who express an interest in receiving such information, and only outside of the polling area.

I agree that I will not challenge any voter's eligibility to vote.

I agree that I will not intimidate or interfere with any voter.

I agree that I will not ask any voter how the voter voted.

I understand that if I approach any voter to ask about his/her voting experience at a polling place I may do so only AFTER the voter has voted and only outside of the voting area.

I understand that if a voter does not want to talk to me for any reason, I will respect the voter's wishes without question or comment.

I agree that I will not engage in any adversarial or confrontational behavior with any voter, any poll worker, or with any representative from another organization stationed at a polling location. I will share only the educational mission of our work, and direct further inquiries to the voter hotline at 1-866-Our-Vote.

I agree that I will not speak to any media outlet on behalf of the MEPC and if asked for comment, I will refer all media to Pam Wilmot or Rahsaan Hall at the Massachusetts Election Protection Coalition Command Center.

—



## Strategy for Poll Monitors

- You will be assigned to 1 or more polling places within a geographic area.
- Shifts will range from 2-12 hours
- Voting locations are chosen based on the following factors:
  - History of problems
  - High percentage of traditionally disenfranchised voters
  - High percentage of likely new voters



## Serving as a Poll Monitor

- When you get to your polling place, assess the exterior of the polling place for the relevant questions on your survey.
- Then go inside and introduce yourself to the warden or other election supervisor.
- Tell the warden that you are an observer and that you are from the E.P. Coalition.
- While inside, assess the polling place for the accessibility questions on your survey.



## Serving as a Poll Monitor

- We are hoping to station one monitor on the inside of the polling place and one on the outside.
- As a monitor you are **ALLOWED** to be inside the 150 feet (from the door) electioneering boundary.
- Complete the polling place survey.



## **Outside: Be a Resource for Voters**

- Outside the polling place your goal is to make sure voters have the information they need
- Offer the palm cards to all (say “Know Your Rights as a Voter”)
- Only assist voters further if they ask for help (Do Not harass voters)
- You may ask voters if they would willing to tell you about their voting experience as they leave.



## Inside: Be an Observer

- Inside the polling place you will NOT be allowed to roam (although you can leave and come back)
- Sit or stand quietly where the warden directs you and observe.
- If you observe a problem report it to the Command Center 617-426-9600 (or 1-866-OUR-VOTE) from **OUTSIDE** of the voting area.
- You may get up to follow a voter having problems as they leave the polling area. When outside, ask them if they would willing to tell you about their voting experience. Offer help, but do not insist.



## Materials for Poll Monitors

- CELL PHONE!
- Polling Place Assessment Survey:
  - Complete for each location
  - Evaluates voting type, accessibility, and other concerns
- Contact Information Sheet
- Palm cards to hand to voters



## Tips for Poll Monitors

- Respect the Voting Process! Inside monitors should be quiet and unobtrusive.
- Be Polite! We are a resource for voters, but don't pressure them into taking our materials or talking with us.
- Video/Photography: Do NOT record voters or the voting process (except if outside recording a voters story after receiving *written* permission)
- Only answer questions that are covered on the palm card. If a voter has a more complicated question or needs special assistance, refer them to the 866-OURVOTE hotline.
- Stay in contact with the call center. If there are any problems at your location, let us know.



## Conduct as a Poll Monitor

- You are a representative of the Election Protection Coalition.
- You may NOT wear anything that indicates a preference for any candidate or ballot question while serving as a poll monitor.
- You may NOT hand out literature or hold a sign for a candidate or ballot question while serving as a poll monitor.
- You may volunteer for a campaign separately from your shift-- ideally at another polling place.



## Significant Election Laws and Issues

- Voter Registration
- Early & Absentee Voting
- Establishing Residency
- Voter Identification
- Felony Disenfranchisement
- Voter Challenges, Voter Intimidation and Deceptive Practices
- Provisional Voting
- Assistance at Polling Place
- Election Equipment and Ballots
- Other Polling Place Issues



## Potential Issues Regarding Voter Registration

- Voter's name not on voter roll due to
  - Incorrect removal procedures or clerical error
  - Voter didn't register or at wrong polling place
  - Voter did not return census card (inactive voter)
- Confusion over whether voter is properly registered



# Registration Deadline

(Postmarked by) **October 15, 2014**





## General qualifications for registration

To be eligible to vote in Massachusetts, an individual must be:

- a U.S. citizen
- a resident of Massachusetts, and the city or town of the polling location
- 18 years-old on or before election day
- NOT be incarcerated, or under guardianship, or convicted of voter fraud



## Voter Registration- Establishing Residency

### Voters Who Have Moved...

- **Within the same city or town:** should tell their election department as soon as possible, but need to vote at their old address within six months.
- **To a different Massachusetts town or city:** same six month rule applies
- **Out-of-state:** must reregister



## Election Day Example

It's Election Day. A voter who believes she is properly registered but her name does not appear on the rolls. What do you do?

- Ask the voter:
  - “Where and when did you register?”
  - “Are you a first time voter?”
  - “Have you moved since you last registered?”
  - “Did you receive a voter registration confirmation card from your city/town in the mail?”
- Questions help give background as to the root of the problem.



## Example (Continued)

- Actions
  - Check whether person is in the right precinct (i.e. look up precinct/polling place **on line**\* or call city hall)
  - Whether the person is voting for the first time after submitting a new voter registration and
- If the person is **not a first-time voter**, encourage the voter to ask a poll worker to inquire whether voter is on list of inactive voters, if this has not already happened. (It should have)
- If the person **is a first-time voter**, find out where and when they registered to vote (i.e. DMV, voter registration drive) and if they received any confirmation. You should also look up their voter registration status.
- If no one can confirm their registration, encourage them to **vote provisionally** and to call their town or city clerk to verify whether it was counted as soon as possible after election day.



Voters may now look up their *own* voter registration status at:  
<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/VoterRegistrationSearch/MyVoterRegStatus.aspx>

- ▶ Citizen Information Service
  - Commonwealth Museum
- ▶ Corporations
- ▼ Elections and Voting
  - ▼ Information for Voters
    - My Voter Registration Status**
    - Where Do I Vote?
    - Track My Absentee Ballot
    - Voter Registration Information
    - Absentee Ballot Information
    - Voting for Military and Overseas U.S. Citizens
    - Voting for Persons with Disabilities
    - Voting for Students
  - ▶ Information for Candidates
  - ▶ General Information

## Elections and Voting

### Find my voter registration status

To find your voter registration information, fill out all fields:

Important! Enter the exact information you provided when you registered to vote.

**\* Enter your name:**

Enter the name you provided when you registered to vote; do not use abbreviations.

First name:  Last name:

**\* Select your date of birth:**

Must be the exact date provided when you registered.

Month:  Day:  Year:

**\* Enter your 5-digit zip code:**

Must be the zip code for the address at which you are currently registered to vote.

This webpage is intended for use by the individual voter to determine his or her voter registration status and other information related to voting. Access or attempted access to information that is exempt from public disclosure other than to you as the voter may subject you to criminal prosecution or civil liability.



## Inactive Voting

- Voters who do not return census card become “inactive” no matter how frequently they vote (changing next year).
- Sometimes on same list marked with an “I” or often on separate list.
- Vote on REGULAR ballots (not provisionals) after providing ID or regular **challenged** ballots if no ID.
- Must fill out an affidavit



## Provisional Voting

- Federal: The Help America Vote Act of 2002
  - In all Federal elections, states must offer provisional ballots if the voter's eligibility to vote (in the precinct) is in question.
- Potential Issues:
  - How provisional ballot will count
  - Poll workers fail to complete process
  - Poll workers fail to provide toll-free number voters call to confirm whether vote was counted as required by HAVA
  - Election officials refuse to issue provisional ballot



## Provisional Voting

### Things to remember

- Make sure the voter is in the correct precinct or polling location or it is unlikely to count.
- Make sure voter is informed of “next steps” if voting provisionally
- Make sure voter verifies whether provisional ballot was counted after the election



## Provisional Voting

**EXAMPLE:** A poll worker tells a voter he must vote provisionally. The voter believes they should get regular ballot. How should you advise the voter?

- Verify voter's information
  - Registration
  - Polling location
  - Precinct
  - Follow up with city Elections Dept. or Town Clerk to verify information
- Encourage voter vote provisionally only if regular ballot cannot be obtained then to follow up to confirm whether their ballot counted



## Voter Identification

### Potential Issues:

- Disparate enforcement of voter identification laws
- Misapplication of voter identification laws causing voters to be improperly challenged, improperly receive provisional ballot, or turned away entirely
- Voters confused about requirements or lacking proper ID
- Voter does not have required ID



## Voter Identification

Restrictive Voter ID laws disproportionately affect certain voters:

- Students
- Minorities
- Elderly
- The homeless
- Persons with Disabilities
- Low-income individuals





## Voter Identification

### The Help America Vote Act of 2002

- First-time voters registering by mail must provide a form of photo or **non-photo** ID either when they register to vote *or the first time they vote*. HAVA § 15483(b)
- HAVA sets the floor for ID requirements.
- Massachusetts follows HAVA rules.



## Voter Identification

When IDs are required in MA:

- First time voters who registered by mail who did not provide an ID or whose ID could not be verified.
- Inactive voters.

First time voters who do not have an ID may cast a provisional ballot. Inactive voters cast a challenged ballot—which is a regular ballot with additional procedures.



## Voter Identification

### Examples of Acceptable IDs

Acceptable identification must include **name** and **the address at which the voter is registered to vote**, and include:

- a current and valid driver's license
- photo identification
- current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check, or other government document showing name and address.



## Voter Challenges, Voter Intimidation, and Deceptive Practices

- **“Dirty tricks”** – voters are deceived about the time, place, or manner of elections, or falsely led to believe that they will be arrested if they vote
- **Voter caging** – where a candidate or party sends a mass mailing and challenges voters (or classes of voters) whose mailing comes back as undeliverable
- **En masse challenges** to groups based on their status (such as students or the military) or their race, ethnicity or surname
- **Intimidation** – inappropriate or threatening activity



## **Voter Challenges, Voter Intimidation, and Deceptive Practices**

- Anyone may challenge a person's right to vote, and challenger **must provide a specific valid reason**
- If challenged, voter has right to sign an oath and vote a **regular** ballot. The ballot will be marked with the name of the challenger and the voter and the specific reason for the challenge.



## Reasons for Challenging Ballots

(a person):

- is not who they say they are;
- does not live where they say they live;
- is not registered in the correct district;
- is not qualified to vote by absentee ballot;
- was not registered to vote;
- has already cast a ballot.

**It is not sufficient for the challenger to simply say that a voter is not qualified**



## Assistance at Polling Place

### Potential Issues:

- Failure to provide required language assistance to voters as required by VRA (some but not all precincts require)
  - No translation or poor translation of written materials
  - Insufficient or poorly trained bilingual poll workers and election officials
- Poll workers who insist that only they can assist a voter
  - Voter **can** get assistance from a person of **their** choice
  - Voter must want assistance from the person providing it.
- Inaccessible polling locations or voting machines



## Election Equipment & Ballots

### Potential Issues:

- Inadequate response to equipment breakdowns (failure to replace machines quickly or offer regular (non-provisional) paper ballots)
- Poll worker problems with operating machines
- Poorly designed ballots (not an issue here)
- Precincts running out of ballots





## Election Equipment & Ballots

**HYPOTHESIS:** Your precinct has run out of ballots. Lines are forming. How do you respond?

- Immediately contact 1-866-OUR-VOTE and/or your Team Leader.
- Encourage voters to wait in line until the polls re-open.
- Gather as many facts as possible.
- Document the numbers of people leaving the lines.



## Other Polling Place Issues

- Insufficient resources, poor planning, poor poll worker training, or poll workers who do not follow proper procedures
- These other problems include:
  - Problems with voter lists
  - Polls opening late or closing early
  - Long lines and the failure of election officials to recognize the reason(s) for long lines and respond accordingly
  - Inappropriate poll worker behavior.



## Other Polling Place Issues

It is after when the polls should be open and the polling place is not open.

What should a voter or volunteer do?

- Immediately contact the local command center at 617-426-9600 so we can notify the relevant Election Official.
- Encourage the voter to wait in line.



## Important Numbers

**Command Center: 617-426-9600**

**Pam Wilmot:** 617-962-0034 (Eastern MA Team Co-Leader/Media/Command Center)

**Whitney Taylor:** 617-335-1841 (Springfield Team Leader)

**Chris Robarge:** 774-262-5727 (Worcester Team Leader)

**Rahsaan Hall:** 781-910-5215 (Legal Leader/Media/Command Center)

**Sara Brady:** 707-495-9372 (Eastern MA Team Co-Leader/Command Center)



**THANK YOU FOR  
VOLUNTEERING!**