

Become a Poll Worker

The Wisconsin Elections Commission encourages all private citizens to vote and to become involved in the election process. One of the most rewarding ways to do this is to become an Election Day poll worker (or “Election Inspector” as the position is formally called). The Chief Election Inspector is in charge of the polling place, and has **additional training requirements**.

Citizen involvement is essential to conduct open, accurate and fair elections in Wisconsin. We hope that you will consider participation in one of these positions.

What are the responsibilities of a poll worker?

Poll workers (election inspectors) conduct assigned duties at a polling site on Election Day. Duties can include issuing ballots to registered voters, registering voters, monitoring the voting equipment, explaining how to mark the ballot or use the voting equipment or counting votes.

What are the hours of work?

Polling places are open statewide from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Poll workers can work a full day, generally from 6:30 a.m. until approximately 9:00 p.m. or later in the case of November elections. In many municipalities, election inspectors can work a split shift. The use of shifts must be approved by the ordinance and can be done in any city, village or town.

Are poll workers (election inspectors) compensated?

Yes, poll workers are compensated for working at polling places at a rate determined by the appropriate municipal governing body, and, in some municipalities, are also compensated for attending any required training sessions. Poll workers may also choose to volunteer their services by filing a written declination of compensation with the municipal clerk

What are the training requirements for poll workers?

Municipal clerks are required by state law to provide training. This training provides all of the necessary information and knowledge to be a successful poll worker. (Many municipalities require poll workers to attend a comprehensive training course prior to each Primary election.)

An experienced chief inspector who has been certified by the Wisconsin Elections Commission must be present at each polling place for each election. Chief inspectors must receive six hours of continuing election education training during each two-year period.

What length of commitment will be expected?

Poll workers are appointed to two-year terms so you will be asked to make a minimum two-year commitment. However, committing to one election cycle (Primary/General) is also appreciated.

Where will I be assigned?

In smaller municipalities, there is often only one polling place. However, in larger municipalities there are multiple polling places. In larger municipalities, every effort is made to assign a poll worker to their neighborhood voting site. However, poll workers in larger municipalities such as large cities must be willing to be flexible and consider assignments at other sites.

What are the specific qualifications to be a poll worker (election inspector)?

To be a poll worker, a person must:

- Be a qualified elector of the county in which the municipality is located (i.e., an adult citizen of the United States who has resided in the election district for 10 consecutive days and is not otherwise disqualified to vote)
- Be able to speak, read, and write fluently in the English language
- Have strong clerical skills
- Be able to solve problems
- Be an effective communicator
- NOT be a candidate for any office to be voted on at the polling place at that election.

How are poll workers selected?

According to State Statutes **(7.30 (4))** the Mayor, President or Board Chairperson of the municipality is required to nominate poll workers to the governing body no later than the last regular meeting in December of odd-numbered years. The governing body of the municipality appoints the poll workers for a two-year term before December 31.

The nominees are to come first from lists submitted by the two dominant political parties, which are due no later than November 30 of odd numbered years, and may be supplemented at any time. Local party chairpersons are responsible for submitting these lists of names to the Mayor, President or Board Chairperson of the municipality, for each polling place.

If a local party does not submit a list, or does not submit enough names, the Mayor, President or Board Chairperson may nominate qualified individuals on a non-partisan basis, without regard to party affiliation.

Can I be excused from my regular job to be a poll worker?

Wisconsin law requires every employer to grant an unpaid leave of absence to each employee who is appointed to serve as an election official, if the employee who serves as an election official provides his or her employer with at

least 7 days' notice. The leave is for the entire 24-hour period of each election day in which the employee serves in his or her official capacity as an election official. Upon request of any employer municipal clerks must verify appointments.

How do state employees become poll workers?

Wisconsin Statutes provide that state employees appointed by a municipal clerk to serve as election officials must be granted leave without loss of pay or benefits for the entire 24-hour period of each election day in which the employee is serving as an election official. Employees must provide at least seven days notice of the need for leave.

State employees may certify to the municipality that they choose not to be paid as poll workers. Alternatively, those state employees who receive pay as election officials must certify in writing to the (state) payroll office the amount of compensation received. The agency must deduct that amount from the employee's pay earned for scheduled work hours during the 24-hour period of the election day.

State employees who "volunteer" but are not appointed to be poll workers must take vacation or leave without pay if authorized by supervisory staff.

If a municipality does not expect many primary voters and wants to use only 3 inspectors, what is the procedure for reducing the number of poll workers (election inspectors)?

Any municipality may, by resolution, reduce the number of election officials to no less than 3. S. **7.32**, Wis. Stats. Rather than create a resolution prior to each election, a resolution may be worded so that the municipal clerk is able to make the decision with respect to number of inspectors to be used at a particular election. S. **7.32**, Wis. Stats.

Remember: If a polling place utilizes only 3 inspectors, and one inspector must leave the voting area, voting stops until the inspector returns. The clerk may want to provide for an alternate who can replace inspectors for lunch or other breaks. A municipal ordinance that provides for the use of alternate inspectors is required. S. **7.30(1)**, Wis. Stats.

Are poll workers' earnings taxable?

According to the IRS: Election Workers: Election workers are common-law employees; however, under **IRC 3121b)(7)(F)(iv)** an exception from FICA is provided for election officials and workers who earn less than a specified amount for a calendar year (\$1,400 in 2008). This provision applies to employing entities that do not have a Section 218 Agreement.

If the employing entity has a Section 218 Agreement, the Agreement determines the treatment of election worker wages for social security tax. It may exclude election workers altogether from social security; it may specify a lower

threshold at which social security tax is withheld; or it may provide no exclusion for election workers, in which case social security and Medicare taxes apply from the first dollar paid.