

# TrueVoteMD.org

## Guidelines for Poll Watchers **INSIDE** the Polling Place *(Revised 10/24/04)*

TrueVoteMD is a non-partisan, non-profit, grassroots organization. Our goal is to improve the accuracy, and integrity of elections, especially during the transition to this new voting technology. Toward this end, we will observe and document problems that arise during Election Day. This is particularly important because Maryland's touch-screen machines do not provide a voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT). See [www.truevotemd.org](http://www.truevotemd.org) for information about touch-screen machines and VVPAT.

We do not endorse any candidate or political party. In order for TrueVoteMD to maintain its credibility as an unbiased, non-partisan election reform organization, poll watchers should refrain from voicing any partisan position during the performance of their poll watching duties.

Your job as a TrueVoteMD poll watcher inside the polling place is to: 1) observe and document poll opening and closing procedures with the Diebold touch-screen machines; 2) document malfunction and repair of touch-screen problem(s); and 3) document voter difficulties associated with use of the touch-screen machines.

**If you observe any significant problems with the operation of the electronic voting machines, or any apparently unusual behavior associated with the voting process, contact the TrueVoteMD Hotline immediately at 301-270-6150.**

### GENERAL GUIDELINES

- ✓ Inside poll watchers must present an official credentialing form to an election judge to obtain permission to remain inside the polling place. TrueVoteMD will make these forms available to TrueVoteMD poll watchers. If you need one, contact at TrueVoteMD Headquarters (301) 270-6150.
- ✓ Poll watchers cannot talk to, approach, or otherwise interact with voters inside the precinct.
- ✓ Introduce yourself to the election judges and be polite to them. They are not responsible for the lack of a paper audit trail. Their job is to ensure a smoothly run election, which includes helping voters vote and helping to ensure that the voting machines are working properly. They do not receive training in how to record problems related to the touch-screen machines.
- ✓ The chief election judge at each polling place has discretion over: a) how many poll watchers can be inside the polling place at one time; b) where poll watchers can sit (often behind election judges and at a distance from voters); and c) how close poll watchers can get to the touch-screen machines.
- ✓ Do not wear partisan buttons, T-shirts or other material while Poll Watching.

### CONFUSED AND/OR UPSET VOTERS

- ✓ If a voter looks confused or upset, and appears to have problems using a machine, consider following the voter out of the polling place, inform an outside poll watcher about the situation and let them gather information from the voter. If no outside poll watchers are available, talk with the voter and fill out a TrueVoteMD Voter Incident Report.
- ✓ Encourage the voter to go back inside and report the problem(s) to an election judge in order to avoid the same thing happening again, and to ensure that judges are alerted to the extent of machine problems.
- ✓ If you observe a voter talking with an election judge about a problem, do your best to listen and record information about the problem, follow the voter outside the polling place, and/or ask the election judge about it afterward. Some election judges may be more forthcoming than others.
- ✓ If you observe a voter request a provisional ballot and that ballot is refused, take notes on the encounter, then follow the voter outside the polling place and make sure that they complete a voter incident report with the assistance of an outside poll watcher.

## HOW TO HANDLE DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

- ✓ If an election official rejects your credentials and refuses you entry into the polling place, ask the official as respectfully as possible to explain precisely what is wrong with your credentials. Do not argue. Ask the official whether s/he would be willing to talk to the TrueVoteMD office. If the election official agrees to talk to TrueVoteMD, pass the telephone. If not, find out the phone number of the polling place so that TrueVoteMD can call in and try to resolve the problem.
- ✓ If an election official asks you to leave the polling place because you have allegedly violated the law with respect to poll watchers, review the list of legal prohibitions in your poll watcher material with the judge. If you do not agree that you have committed an infraction, explain respectfully that according to the Maryland State Code you have a right to act as you are doing and that there must be some mistake. You should attempt to show the pertinent law to the election official and try to clarify the situation. If this does not work, or if you have inadvertently stepped out of bounds, leave the polling place immediately and call TrueVoteMD for advice.
- ✓ If an election official asks you to leave the polling place because there are too many poll watchers present at one time, ask when it would be okay for you to return. Call TrueVoteMD to inform them about this development, and join the outside poll watchers. Election officials have the final word about how many poll watchers can be inside at once.
- ✓ REMEMBER: Always stay calm and polite and call the TrueVoteMD Hotline if you need help!

### ✓ Incident Report Forms – PLEASE RETURN TO TRUEVOTE ASAP

The form is available at [www.truevotemd.org](http://www.truevotemd.org). Please return the forms as quickly as possible, preferably on Election Day. You may fax one or more completed forms to 301-270-8984, or give them to a TrueVote pollwatcher or mail or hand-deliver them to the TrueVoteMD office at 7711 Garland Avenue, Takoma Park, MD 20912. Thank you for volunteering to protect democracy in Maryland!

## TECHNICAL ISSUES – ICING ON THE CAKE

Do not be concerned if the following information is too technical for you comfort level. Do the best you can – you are performing an important public service and are making significant contribution!!

- ✓ **Machines Failures and Repair Technicians**
  - Record how election judges respond when a machine malfunctions.
  - Record any repair technician's name and affiliation, if possible, on the incident report form.
  - Record whether s/he wears/displays any type of identification.
  - Observe and describe what you see the technician(s) do.
- ✓ **Monitor PCMCIA (Memory) Cards**
  - These cards record the votes -- they are the electronic "ballot box." Note any problems observed with election judges' treatment of memory cards.
- ✓ **Voter Access (Smart) Cards**
  - These are the cards provided to individual voters. They should be re-programmed before each use. If you see cards being reused without being re-programmed first, note it on the Voter Incident Report form.

### **SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS TO REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO TRUEVOTEMD HEADQUARTERS (301-270-6150)**

- Machine doesn't start/boot up correctly
- Machine crashes
- Machine or screen malfunction
- Vote switching – the machine selects something other than what the voter intended
- Incomplete ballot – a race or candidate's name is missing
- Voter access card (smart-card) problem

## CLOSING PROCEDURES

- ✓ The polls close at 8:00 PM. Poll watchers are allowed to remain in the polling place until the completion of all tasks associated with the close of the polls and the election judges leave the polling place.
- ✓ **Vote Total Report**
  - Ask the chief election judge if you can look at the touch-screens of each of the electronic voting machines as they are prompted to display the end-of-day vote total results report, and check them against the end-of-day vote total number that should appear on two hardcopy print-outs that are produced. (One hardcopy print-out should be posted on the outside of the polling place. The other is kept as a paper record but is not the same thing as VVPAT since it only display vote totals without voter verification. You may not be allowed to get close to the touch-screen machines to view the touch-screens.) Record the end-of-the-day vote total results report that appear on each of the electronic voting touch-screens and on the hardcopy print-outs, and note if they do not match.
  - Check the total number of voters who signed in to vote on election day against the number of total votes listed on the Total results report touch-screens and the hardcopy print-outs.
  - Record whether the end-of-day vote total results report is posted on the door of the polling place for public viewing.
- ✓ **Memory Cards**
  - If it appears that the election judge(s) are having problems loading the memory (PCMCIA) cards into the polling place accumulator machine (the one machine that accumulates all of the vote totals from each memory card), report your observations on the Voter Incident Report.
- ✓ **Modem Transmissions**
  - Record whether modem(s) are connected before the total vote accumulation process has been completed and the End-of-Day Total Report has been printed at the polling place.
  - If you observe any problems with transmitting the vote total results report and/or other related information via modem from the precinct to the county board of elections headquarters, report it on the Voter Incident Reporting form
- ✓ **Closing and Sealing of the Machines**
  - Observe the closing and sealing of each touch-screen machine and record anything out of the ordinary. Ask the election judges where the machines and memory cards and other machine-related equipment and materials are taken (is it to one or more central accumulation/collection sites.)

**If you observe any significant problems with the use or operation of the touch-screen machines, or any apparently unusual behavior associated with the voting process, contact TrueVoteMD.org Headquarters IMMEDIATELY at 301-270-6150.**

## **Additional Technical Guidelines for Inside Poll Watchers**

Inside poll watchers who are technically inclined can attempt to make the following additional observations about the operation of the DRE voting machines. However, it is not a priority for poll watchers to observe these procedures, and they should only attempt to do so if they are comfortable with the technical operation of the machines and if the election judge allows it.

If an election official refuses your request to perform specific observations, e.g., look at the serial numbers on the voting machines:

Remember that it would be a bonus if the election officials let you have access to everything you wanted! In some polling places, the local authorities are sympathetic with the flaws of the electronic voting process and will allow you more freedom to investigate. In others, the election judges will insist that you remain seated near them. The bottom line is that they have full discretion--so it is important to maintain a good relationship.

### **POLLING PLACE OPENING PROCEDURES**

- ✓ Poll watchers are allowed to enter the polling place one-half hour before the polls open. (The polls open at 7:00 AM.) If you plan to staff the inside of a polling place during for the morning shift, please arrive at 6:30 AM so that you have enough time to present your credentials, document the opening procedure, and prepare for the first voters.
- ✓ Ask the chief election judge if you can get close enough to the touch-screen machines to record the serial number on each of the touch-screen machines (printed on the left side, near the front of the machine), and check them against the hardcopy print-out that should be displayed inside the polling place and which lists the serial numbers from all of the touch-screen machines.
- ✓ Then ask the chief election judge if you can look at the touch-screens on each of the electronic machines as they are prompted to display the starting vote total number, which should be zero, and check them against the zero vote totals that should appear on two hardcopy print-outs that are produced. (One hardcopy print-out is posted in the inside of the polling place. The other remains in the machine and remains attached to the vote total record after the polls close. (These print-outs are not the same thing as VVPAT as they only display vote totals without voter verification.) If any number other than 0 appears on either the touch-screen or the print-outs, or if the touch-screen display differs from the print-outs, record that on the Voter Incident Report form provided by TrueVoteMD. (Note that election judges may not allow poll watchers to get close to the touch-screen machines.)

### **FAILED AND REPLACEMENT MACHINES**

- ✓ Record the serial number of any malfunctioning machine, if possible, as well as type of malfunction and associated observations on the incident report form.
- ✓ Record what happens to the PCMCIA (memory) card in a malfunctioning machine. Try to determine if votes previously recorded on the card are included in the precinct Vote Total Report and record your finding(s).
- ✓ Record whether someone prints and/or posts a Vote Total Report for the malfunctioning machine during the procedure.
- ✓ Record whether and what repairs are attempted on site.
- ✓ Record whether a new machine is installed. If so, record it's serial number, etc. and whether it is set at zero (see above under "Polling Place Opening Procedures).
- ✓ If a machine is taken out of service, record what is done with it.