

Setting Up a Polling Location

41st Annual Election Law Seminar for County Election Officials

JULY 31 – AUGUST 2, 2023



During visits to multiple counties, our team of Election Security Trainers observed poll workers as they opened and closed their polling locations.

Multiple layouts were observed and gathered as part of a project focused on how poll workers can effectively administer secure elections.



Keep in mind throughout this presentation...

The Lead Deputy Early Voting Clerk or the Election Day Judge should have a good view of the entire polling location at all times.

It is his or her job to preserve order and maintain the polling place.



It is recommended to provide setup checklists for the poll workers. These can include instructions for turning on the equipment; polling place layouts/diagrams; and contact lists for poll workers to reach the main office, each other, the polling place point of contact, and anyone else they may need to reach.

Consider creating a method for providing last minute instructions, reminders, or anything else you may need to communicate to the poll workers.

RECOMMENDATION! Create a binder, notebook, or color coded folder in the supply box which is easily identifiable.



From a security standpoint, the physical facilities and environment of the polling place should offer:

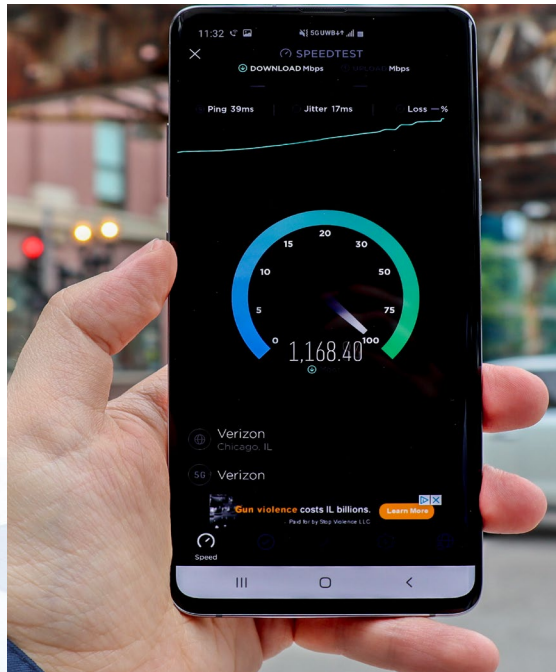
- A location that is not used for any other purpose during the time the polling place is in operation
- Communications capabilities – either reliable, fixed telephone line(s) or good mobile phone/radio network reception
- Clear lines of sight throughout the voting station area – buildings used would preferably have an open plan rather than multi-room design
- Separate entrances and exits that allow voter flow and can be monitored with minimal staff
- ADA-compliant location
- Sufficient parking, including designated curbside spaces
- Emergency exits that allow quick clearance of the voting area
- Confirm locations at least 6 months in advance



We recommend that you visit all of your polling locations before **each election** and consider the following:

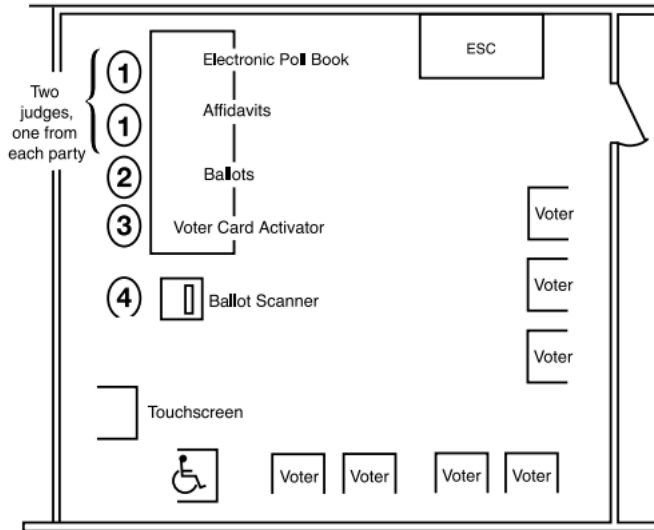
- Check for accessibility requirements. Here's the link to the ADA Checklist for Polling Places: <https://www.ada.gov/votingchecklist.htm#toc3> or scan QR code.
- Measure to see how much equipment will fit in the polling place while still keeping it accessible.
- Make adjustments to the space if needed:
 - Building temporary ramps
 - Using battery operated doorbells
 - Placing cones under obstacles





- Conduct speed tests to ensure connectivity.
- Ensure all devices, mifis, hotspots, etc., are communicating with your epollbook, if applicable.
- Make sure there is cellphone service if there is no hard-wired phone.
 - If in a rural area, or an area with poor connection, you should consider using cell phone boosters.
- Check the number of electrical outlets and test that they work. Don't forget about extension cords and surge protectors.
- Is there sufficient parking at the polling place?
- Reach out to the site's point of contact.
- Ensure you have access – key or lock box code.
 - If you do not have a key or code, see if you can borrow one for the election cycle, or make a schedule with the contact person.





We recommend you provide diagrams of each polling location to the workers. Similar to the first one on the left, but also include where the electrical outlets are, and if there are any special instructions.



Reminder! After you complete your site surveys, don't overload the space with equipment. It may no longer be accessible or manageable.



If your county delivers any equipment prior to Early Voting or Election Day, make sure that the chain of custody is documented and preserved. You can accomplish this by:

- Creating paperwork to record who accepted the equipment with his or her phone number
- Noting where the equipment is being stored, if not stored in the room reserved for voting

Train your workers to inspect the equipment for:

- Tampering
- Intact seals and correct seal numbers on chain of custody form(s)
- The number of devices on chain of custody form(s)
- What to do if there are issues/last minute room changes



Train your workers to do the following:

- Try to have a dedicated entrance and exit.
- Clearly state where the voter goes to check-in.
 - Consider signage that says, “Start Here.”
- Place the check-in station near the entrance.
 - Arrange the table so there can be a forms table aside from the main check-in station.
- Place the ballot box or scanner near the exit.
- Post a dedicated clerk to ensure the ballots are being deposited before the voter exits.
- Place the accessible unit away from the check-in station to avoid unnecessary noise.
- Make sure the Lead Deputy Early Voting Clerk or Election Day Presiding Judge has a good view of the polling place at all times.

entrance



exit



Assign Tasks to Poll Workers

- Signs and postings inside the polling place
- Signs and postings outside the polling place
- Set up the check-in table
- Set up epollbook and voting equipment



- We are guests in the polling place, so please take care of it.
- Some locations can be very particular about tape on the wall and/or they may not have enough wall space for all the postings.
 - Always ask if there are limitations about what can be placed on walls or what furniture can be moved.
- We recommend using pre-filled pop-up kiosks or a large tri-fold cardboard display to place on a table to fulfill the posting requirements.
- Please restore the room after voting ends.



The required postings are found on the SOS Opening Polls Checklist. Please contact our office if you do not have a copy of it.

electionsecurity@sos.texas.gov



Required Postings:

The following forms must be provided to post at your polling place prior to opening the polls. Forms are subject to change and additional forms may be created to post in accordance with Texas election laws or court orders.

ALL postings must be visible to the voter. Place each posting in its required area if instructed by your authority conducting the election. Pay close ATTENTION as you are positioning the postings and ensure that they are placed where they can be viewed at all times and not hidden by doors when propped open/closed. Instruction posters must be printed in English, Spanish, and any other required languages; if separate posters are used, you must post the postings side by side (see Texas Election Code 272.005(a)).

Legally required postings are noted with an asterisk *.

- Notice of Total Number of Voters Who Have Voted* (see Texas Election Code 61.007(c))
- Precinct(s) / Vote Centers Vote(s) Here
- Map of Voting Precinct(s) / Map of Polling Places
- Notice of Voting Order Priority* (see Texas Election Code 63.0015)
- Notice of Prohibition of Handguns in the Polling Place (see Texas Penal Code 46.03(a), 46.15)
- Notice of Prohibition of Certain Devices within 100 Feet of Voting Station* (see Texas Election Code 61.014, 62.0111)
- Distance Marker* / No Electioneering or Loitering within 100 feet of the entrance to the polling place (see Texas Election Code 61.003, 61.004, 62.010)
- Voter Instruction Poster* (see Texas Election Code 62.011(a)-(d)) – Poster must contain certain information in each voting station and one or more other locations in the polling place where it can be read by persons waiting to vote.
- Sample Ballot(s)* / Vote Centers: Bedsheet (see Texas Election Code 62.012)
- List of Declared Write-in Candidates* (if applicable, post near sample ballot and in each voting station)
- Notice of Acceptable Identification Poster (see Texas Election Code 62.016) – Posted in a prominent place on the outside of the polling place
- Voter Information Poster* (see Texas Election Code 62.0115)
- Voter Complaint Information Poster* (see Texas Election Code 62.0112)
- Vote Here Signs* (In order to direct voters to the polling place from the street)
- Disabled Access Postings* (Indicating the direction of an unobstructed path to nearest accessible entrance for voter with disabilities)
- Curbside Assistance Signs / Alert Mechanisms – Place in the area designated for curbside voting. Please follow the instructions provided by the authority conducting the election.
- Notices of Debt Obligation,* if applicable (May be placed in a binder and made available on the check-in table)
- Notice of Four Nearest Countywide Polling Place Locations* (Vote Center Program) (see Texas Election Code 43.007(o))
- Signs for Parties (Primary Election Only)
- Notice of Party Convention* (Primary Election Only – see Texas Election Code 172.1111) (Posted on an outside door through which a voter may enter the building)
- Sign for Joint Primary Election* (see Texas Election Code 172.126)
- Post any other additional signs provided by the authority conducting the election.



Ensure privacy shields are properly set up, and all necessary instructions are posted in each booth.

- If using hand marked paper ballots, ensure an indelible instrument is provided to mark the ballots.
- Don't forget to place the certified write-in candidate list and instructions in the booth or taped on the privacy shield.



- For outside signage, cones are a good way to post certain signs. The distance marker, for example, can be laminated and attached to a pole that can be inserted into a cone. It is weather-proof and clearly visible with the bright orange color.
- If you can't provide measuring tape to all locations, consider making 100 ft. string to send out to measure the distance.



- It's a good idea to have more staff to efficiently run the polling location if your budget allows.
- Assign someone who can walk the line to ensure voters have their IDs and turned off their phones, look for any prohibited electioneering apparel, ensure voters are at the correct polling location, etc.
- Voting Order Priority for Voters with Certain Disabilities (Sec. 63.0015, Texas Election Code) – amended by SB 477
 - An election officer ~~may~~**shall** accept a person with a mobility problem who is offering to vote before accepting others at the polling place who arrived before the person.
 - Providing voting order priority is now a requirement, not just a courtesy.
 - A person assisting an individual with a mobility problem may also be given voting order priority. (Sec. 63.0015(d))



Curbside Signage

- All polling locations must provide curbside voting.
Sec. 64.009, Texas Election Code
- Signage requirements for curbside voting were changed by SB 477 (2023), effective June 18, 2023.
- New curbside requirements include:
 - Designating an area, not smaller than the size of one parking space, for curbside voting.
 - The designated space may not be specifically designated for persons with disabilities.



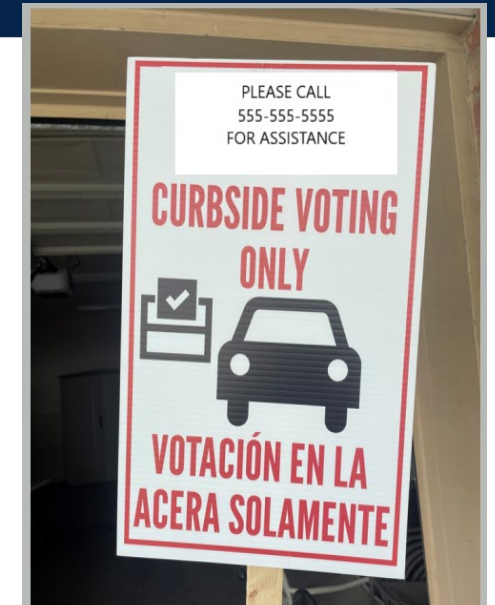
★ Texas Secretary of State SB 477 – NEW CURBSIDE SIGNAGE REQUIREMENTS

The area for curbside voting must be clearly marked with a sign:

- Indicating that the space is reserved for use by a voter who is unable to enter the polling place; AND
- Displaying, in large font that is clearly readable from a vehicle, a telephone number that a voter may call or text to request assistance from an election officer at the polling place

OR

- As an alternative to the phone number, the parking space may comply with the requirements by providing a button or intercom that the voter may use to request assistance from an election officer at the polling place.



Supplies:

- Clipboard
- Cart to hold supplies to take outside
- ePollbook
- Pens
- Ballot Stock
- Electrical Cords
- Umbrella

Forms:

- Combo Form, if applicable
- Statement of Residence
- Reasonable Impediment Declaration
- Oaths of Assistance and Interpreter
- List of Acceptable Forms of ID
- "I Voted" Stickers
- Information of Person that Provided Transportation to Seven or More Voters for Curbside Voting Form



- Allow ample time for set up the day before voting begins.
- Use signage to instruct the voter where to begin, and where to deposit their ballot before leaving. This is generally near the exit with a clerk attending to the ballot scanner or ballot box.
- Create a clear view of all processes in the voting area to maintain order.
 - The ballots, ballot boxes, and envelopes used for provisional ballots at a polling place shall be in plain view of at least one election officer from the time the polls open for voting until the precinct returns have been certified. (Sec. 61.005, Texas Election Code)
- The minimum amount of election workers should be able to set up a polling location properly. By law, each polling location must have a minimum of three workers at all times. (Sec. 32.033, Texas Election Code)
- Have a clerk at the scanner/ballot box to ensure ballots have been correctly deposited.
 - Avoids fleeing voters
 - Answers voters' questions



Double Check Supplies are Complete

- Forms and supplies
- Equipment and peripherals
- Ballot stock and marking instruments
- Envelopes and ballot boxes



Forms at the Check-in Table

Statement of Residence

Reasonable Impediment Declaration Form

Oath of Assistance and Interpreter

List of Acceptable Forms of ID

“I Voted” Stickers

Certificates of Party Affiliation (Primary Election Only)

Affidavits of Non-Participation and Affiliation (Primary Runoff Election Only)

Notice of Party Convention Handouts (Primary Election Only)



Forms and the Resolution Table

- Provisionals:
 - Affidavit of Provisional Voter Envelope
 - Notice to Provisional Voter
 - Notice to Provisional Voter for ID Voters
 - Secrecy Envelope
 - List of Provisional Voters
- Request to Cancel Ballot by Mail for Use in the Polling Place
- Standard Affidavit
- “I Voted” Stickers
- Chain of Custody Form(s)
- Statement of Compensation and Oaths/Timesheets
- Poll Watcher Name Tags
- Register of Official Ballots
- Ballot and Seal Certificate
- Combined Register of Official Ballot / Ballot and Seal Certificate (if applicable)
- Register of Spoiled Ballots
- Register of Surrendered Ballots by Mail
- Registration Omissions List
- Problem Log Sheet
- Envelope for Spoiled Ballots
- Envelope for Requests and Cancelled Ballots
- Secure container for Provisional Ballot Affidavit Envelopes

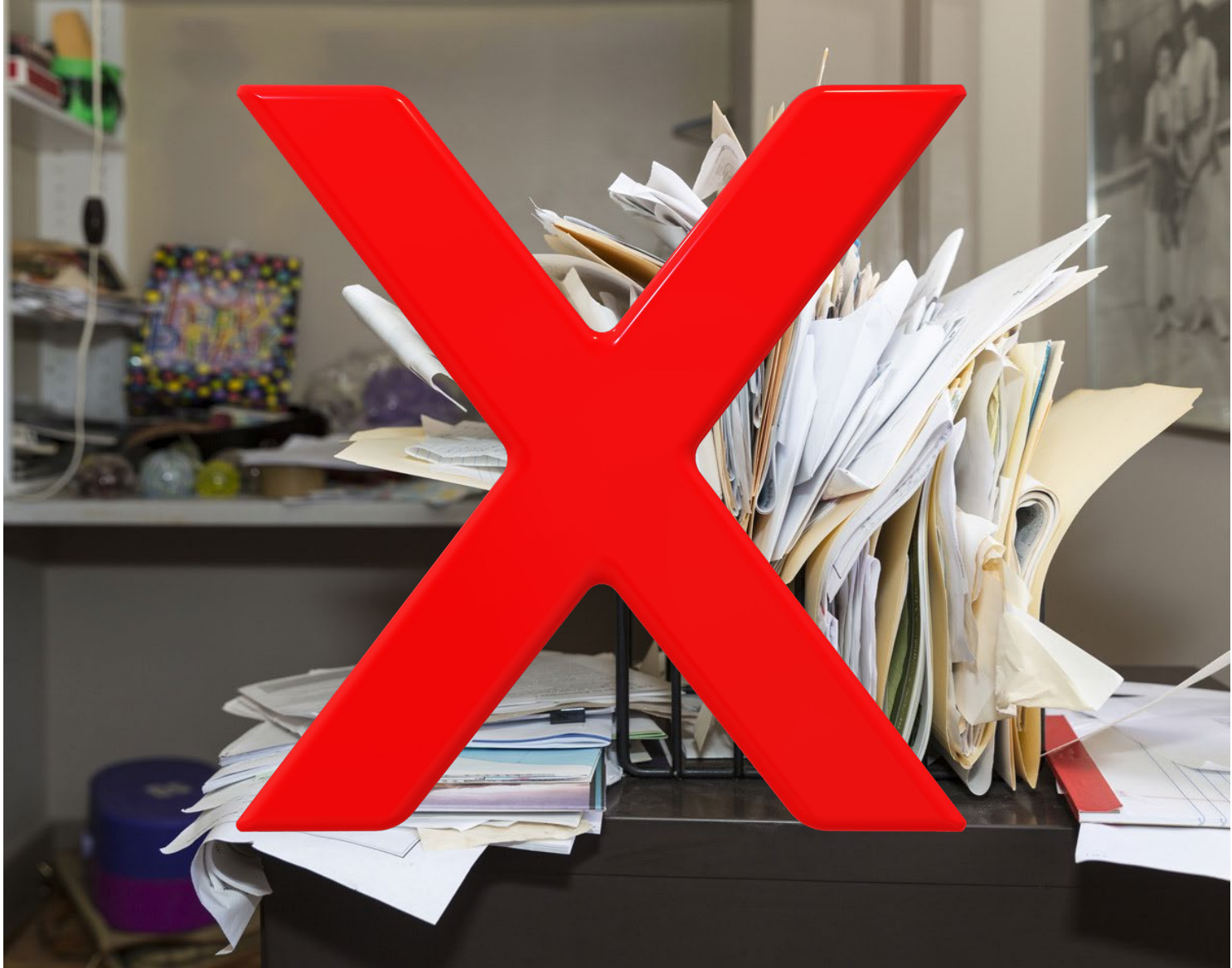


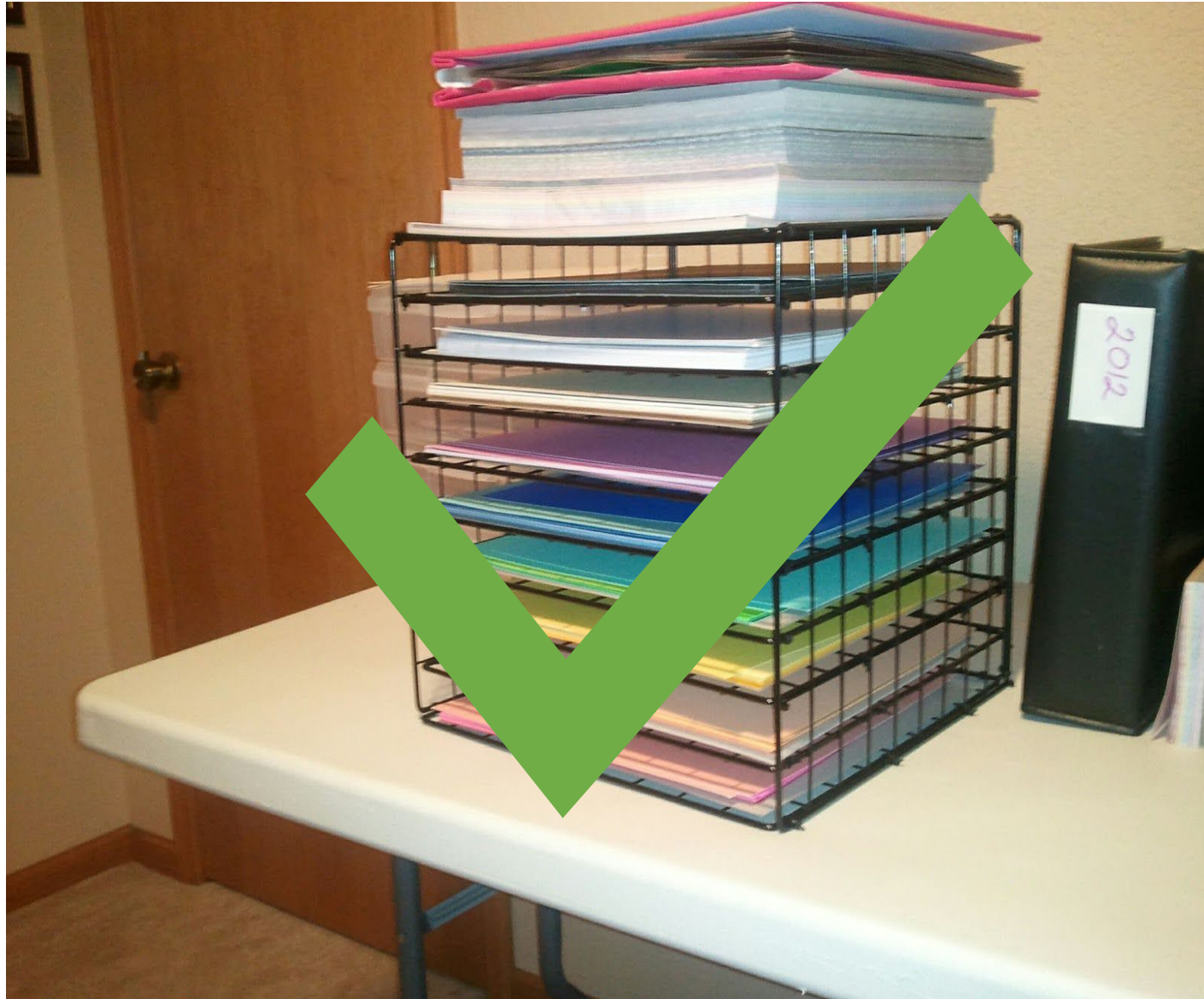
ROLES



- If the workers set up the polling location the day before polls open, provide checklists and procedures for them to do so effectively and securely.
- On each morning of early voting, make sure the workers know where everything is and direct them to inspect all equipment and supplies for tampering, and verify that seals are intact.
- Instruct them to use the chain of custody form.
- Make sure the workers still have good connection and power.
- Make sure the workers are checking that they have enough supplies, and to call if they need to be replenished (ballot paper, “I Voted” Stickers, pens, etc.)



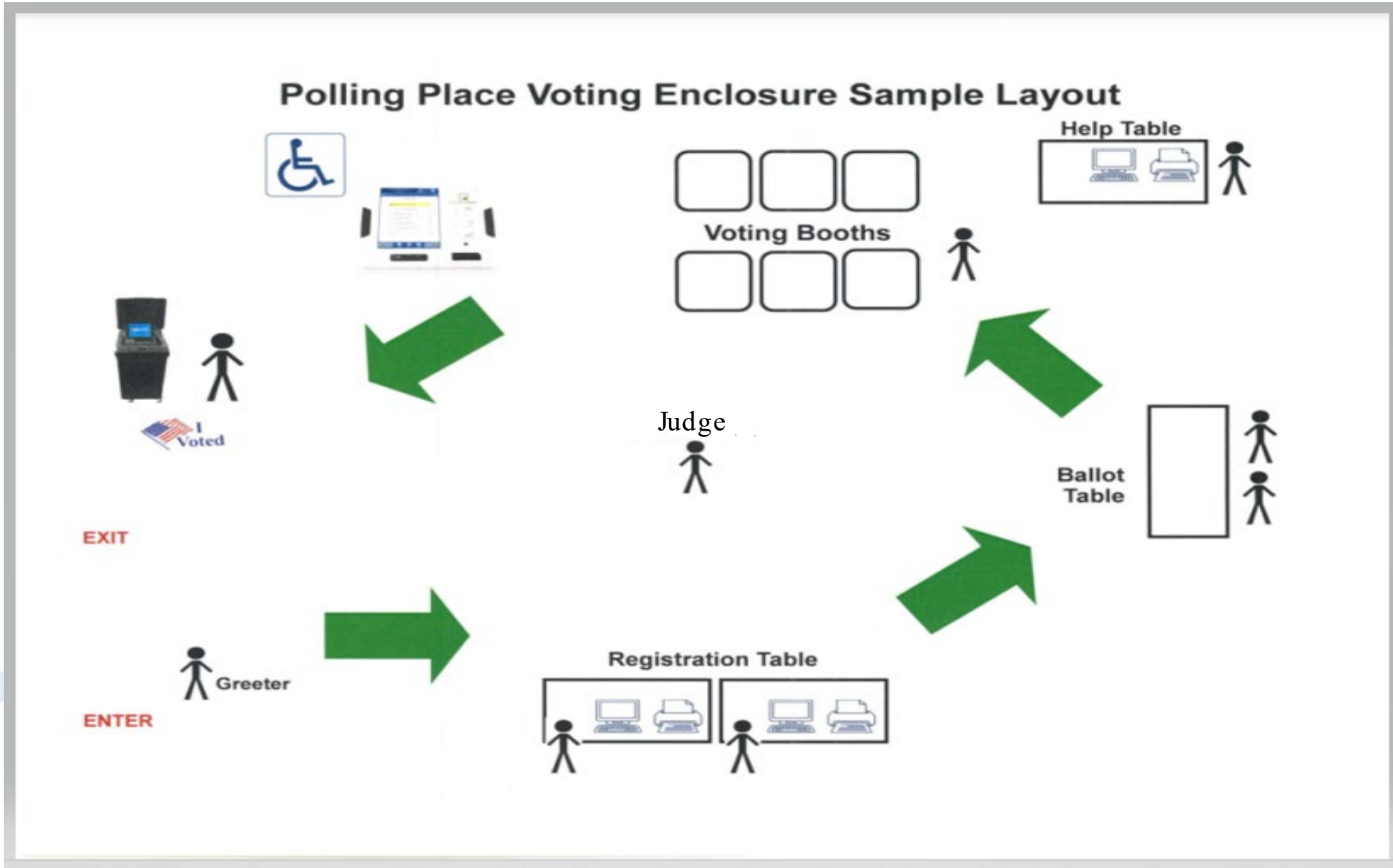




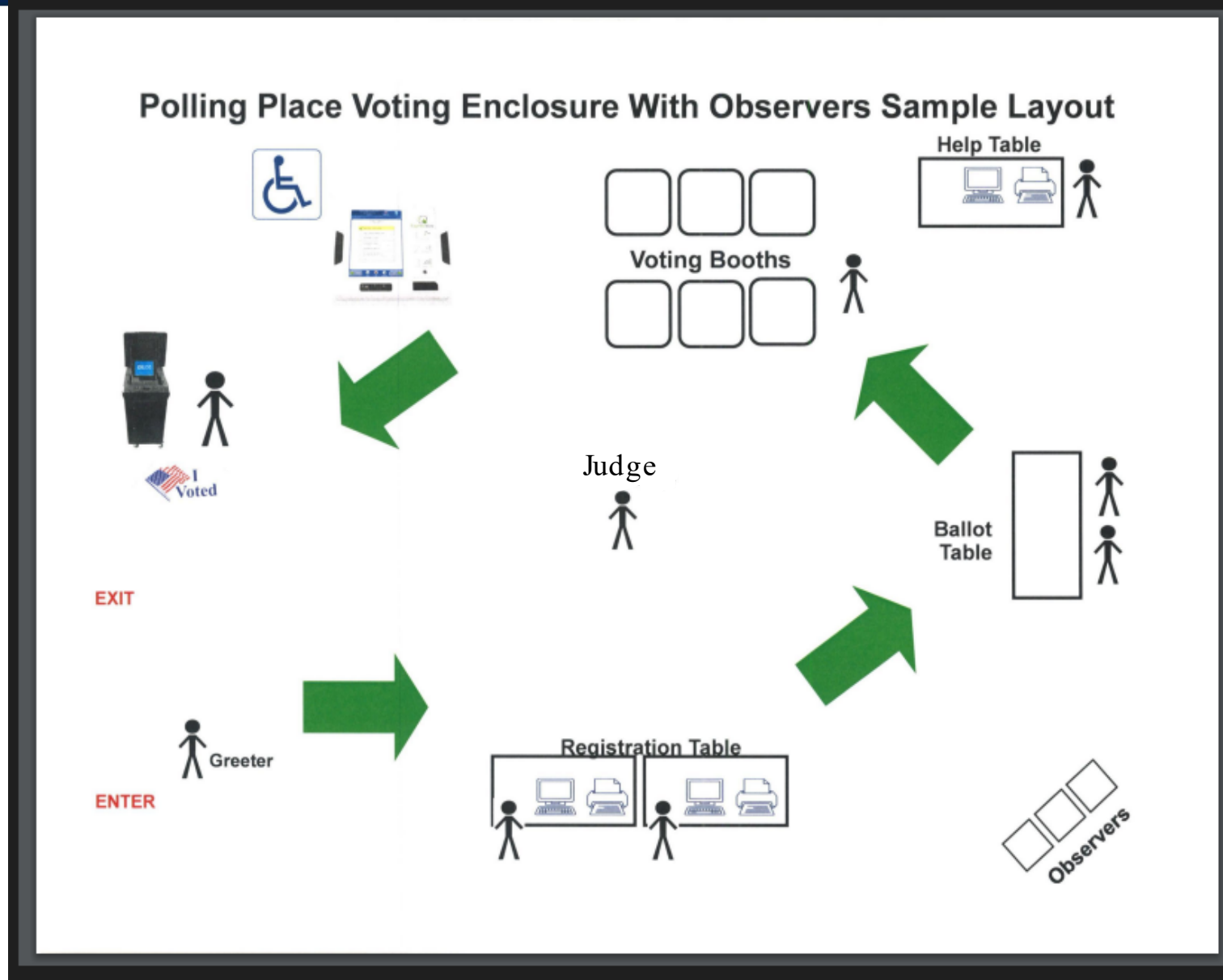
The following diagrams give a few examples of how polling place layout may be set up under different procedures and voting area configurations.

It's not possible to give examples that would cover every potential polling place setup, but the ones provided in the next few slides do illustrate some of the key aspects of effective polling place layout.





If you have poll watchers or observers, remember they have free movement, but you may give them a place to sit.



For Polling Places Using DRE

- Ensure the layout allows the person issuing ballots and monitoring the status lights to see the voting booths.
 - Monitoring the voting booths prevents fleeing voters
 - Allows election workers to see if a voter needs help in the booth more readily
 - Provides the voter with the best customer service

DRE for Curbside Voting

- Ask the voter's assistant/helper to witness the reconnection of the device to ensure the ballot was properly counted.



Questions?

elections@sos.Texas.gov

1-800-252-8683





Don't forget the voter's "I Voted" sticker!

