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I. Introduction

Thank you for your interest in becoming an Election Judge in Maryland. By coming this far, it’s clear that you cherish the principle of “one person, one vote” – a bedrock of our democracy. At the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law (BC) and the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (LCCR) we also cherish that principle and therefore work every day to preserve and protect the right to vote for every eligible citizen. Election Judges are an essential part of the voting process. Informed and engaged Election Judges contribute to that process, benefit their communities, and help ensure the right to vote is not unduly impeded. Indeed, a lack of qualified Election Judges (different from poll watchers) has been a serious impediment to voter access. When states face difficulties attracting and hiring qualified Election Judges, polling places are often understaffed or mismanaged, resulting in long lines, the spreading of misinformation, and even incidents of bias and intimidation. Additionally, Election Judges are often the only election officials with whom voters interact, and so they play an important role in how voters experience and think about the voting process.

To address these issues, we have teamed up with the Association of Pro Bono Counsel (APBCo) to create state-specific guides to encourage qualified candidates to become Election Judges - Election Judges who know the relevant laws and processes, how to assist and troubleshoot effectively, and how to help voters have a positive experience on Election Day.

This toolkit for Maryland provides an overview of the process for becoming an Election Judge. We hope it is useful to you as both a technical and practical guide, including pointers that we have gleaned from experience. It is NOT a substitute for training materials provided by the state, county, or local government. Instead, it is meant to equip qualified people like you with the information you need to become an Election Judge and enjoy the important job of serving your fellow voters well. We hope that this guide encourages you to join the movement and make a difference!
II. Overview of Maryland’s Election System

Maryland has 24 local boards of election, involving 23 counties and 1 city.\(^1\) Baltimore City is the only city that has a local board of elections.\(^2\) During an election, each of these government units pays people called “Election Judges” to work at the polls.\(^3\)

Election Judges have a significant impact on the voting experience of Marylanders. Ultimately, the Election Judges are in charge of monitoring the polling place and the election process. Recruiting qualified candidates and training them properly is essential to minimizing mistakes, hassle and wait time. However, a shortage of well-trained Election Judges is not uncommon.

This problem correlates with issues that occur in Maryland’s polling places on Election Day, including\(^4\):

- Using provisional ballots instead of paper ballots when voting machines malfunctioned (paper ballots, unlike provisional ballots, should be counted without further inquiry);
- Election Judges telling voters that photo identification was required to vote, which is not true for most voters;
- Not offering provisional ballots at polling places when they opened late;
- Not providing voters the choice to use a paper ballot when electronic poll books malfunctioned;
- Leaving voter cards in electronic voting machines thereby disrupting vote counting and posing a security risk; and
- Election Judges not being aware that their polling place had extended hours.

The importance of the Election Judges’ role cannot be overstated. This job is vital to the voting process and essential to the well-being of our democracy. Accordingly, well-trained qualified Election Judges are severely needed. This Maryland Election Judge Toolkit will present an easy guide on how to become a Maryland Election Judge:

- Part III details the necessary qualifications needed to become an Election Judge under Maryland election law. In addition, it explains the roles and duties of Election Judges on Election Day.
- Part IV will describe the process for applying to be an Election Judge.
- Part V will outline the process after the application to become an Election Judge is filed.
- Part VI will provide information about Election Judge training.
- Part VII will provide an overview of COVID-19 concerns.
III. Description of Roles

a. Qualifications

To qualify to be an Election Judge, an individual must be:

✓ Able to speak, read, and write English; and

✓ A registered voter who resides in the county for which the Election Judge is appointed.

- To register to vote, a person must be:
  
  o A U.S. citizen;
  
  o A Maryland resident; and
  
  o At least 16 years old.

- To register to vote, a person cannot have been:
  
  o Convicted of buying or selling votes;
  
  o Under guardianship for mental disability and found by a court to be unable to communicate a desire to vote; or
  
  o Currently serving a court-ordered sentence of imprisonment for a felony conviction.

- An individual can use Maryland's Online Voter Registration System (OLVR) to register to vote or may complete a voter registration application in person at several places including:

  o The local Board of Elections (see Figure 2);
  
  o The State Board of Elections;
  
  o The Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA); and
  
  o Their local polling place on Election Day.
Other desirable qualifications:

- Able to work a 15-hour day;
- Willing to work in a different precinct than you vote in;
- Able to sit or stand for a lengthy time;
- Computer knowledge is preferred, but not necessary; and
- Ability to speak another language.\(^\text{11}\)

Disqualifications

An Election Judge cannot:

- Be a candidate or currently hold a public or political party office;\(^\text{12}\)
- Use his/her authority to influence or affect the election;\(^\text{13}\)

An Election Judge may engage in the activities of a political campaign, except:

- While performing official duties on Election Day;\(^\text{14}\) or
- By being a candidate’s campaign manager or a campaign finance entity’s treasurer.\(^\text{15}\)

A Minor Can Serve as an Election Judge

A minor who is at least 16 years old and who is a registered voter may become an Election Judge if the minor meets all the other qualifications for an Election Judge and at least one parent or guardian gives permission.\(^\text{16}\)

A minor who is at least 14 years old may serve as a student poll worker through the Election Day Page Program.\(^\text{17}\) Pages serve up to two 4-hour shifts under the supervision of the Chief Election Judge and assist Election Judges as directed.\(^\text{18}\)

Requirements

- No experience is required\(^\text{19}\)
- Each local election board will train Election Judges based on the program developed by the State Board of Elections\(^\text{20}\)
- All Election Judges except those appointed under emergency circumstances must attend the training program\(^\text{21}\)
- All Election Judges must take this written oath\(^\text{22}\)
b. Categories of Election Judges/Responsibilities and Duties

Election Judges administer voting procedures in their precinct and ensure a fair election for all eligible voters. Duties may include:

- Setting up and taking down a polling place before and after voting hours
- Checking in voters
- Assisting voters
- Overseeing all election procedures throughout the polling place

As of October 1, 2019, Maryland allows for same-day voter registration on Election Day. Election Judges are responsible for confirming residency and issuing voter authority cards, and, as appropriate, provisional or regular ballots (depending on whether the voter resides in the precinct).

If there are more than 200 registered voters in a polling place, there should be at least 4 Election Judges. If there are less than 200 registered voters in a polling place, there may be 2 Election Judges.

Election Judges report to the polling place an hour before the polls open and work until all duties are completed after the polls close at 8:00 p.m. During early voting, the polls open at 10:00 a.m.; on Election Day, they open at 7:00 a.m.

An Election Judge must act throughout Election Day to assure that:

- Privacy in voting is maintained;
- Voting process integrity is preserved;
- The counting of ballots is accurate;
- Order in the precinct is maintained; and
- All election laws are obeyed.
An Election Judge must wear a badge that:

✓ Is visible;

✓ Identifies the person as an Election Judge; and

✓ Identifies the person by name and by the ward and precinct where the person is an Election Judge.\textsuperscript{33}

An Election Judge must:

✓ Keep the peace\textsuperscript{34}; and

✓ Order the arrest of anyone who:

- Breaches the peace;
- Violates any provision of Maryland Election Law; or
- Interferes with the work of the Election Judges.\textsuperscript{35}

The different roles of Election Judges and their duties vary between polling locations. For more information, contact your local election board. Phone numbers and contact information for inquiries can be found at the following links:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allegany County</th>
<th>Charles County</th>
<th>Prince George's County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anne Arundel County</td>
<td>Dorchester County</td>
<td>Queen Anne's County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore City</td>
<td>Frederick County</td>
<td>St. Mary's County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore County</td>
<td>Garrett County</td>
<td>Somerset County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvert County</td>
<td>Harford County</td>
<td>Talbot County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caroline County</td>
<td>Howard County</td>
<td>Washington County</td>
</tr>
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<td>Carroll County</td>
<td>Kent County</td>
<td>Wicomico County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecil County</td>
<td>Montgomery County</td>
<td>Worcester County</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Local Board of Elections Contact Information

For example, the following are the categories of Election Judges and their roles in Harford County\textsuperscript{36}
TYPES OF ELECTION JUDGES:

Chief Judges
Chief Judges manage the polling place on Election Day.

Provisional Judges
Provisional voting allows someone who thinks they are an eligible voter to vote. These judges assist these voters with this process.

Check-In Judges
These judges verify the voters’ registration information.

Ballot Judges
These judges distribute the ballots.

Voting Judges
These judges assist voters at the voting booth as well as the scanner.

Figure 3: Election Judge Roles in Harford County

c. Party Affiliation

✓ If there are 5 or less Election Judges in the polling place, there must be an equal number of Election Judges from the majority party and the principal minority party.37

✓ If there are 6 or more Election Judges in the polling place, there may be one or more Election Judges who are not registered with either the majority party or the principal minority party, but the number of these judges may not be more than the number of Election Judges belonging to either the majority party or the principal minority party, whichever has the least number of judges.39

✓ An applicant must indicate his/her party affiliation on the application:40
d. Term of Office

✓ The term of office for an Election Judge runs from 13 weeks before a statewide primary election to 13 weeks before the next statewide primary election.\textsuperscript{41}

e. Compensation

✓ An Election Judge must be paid for each Election Day and each early voting day that the Election Judge serves.\textsuperscript{42}

✓ Compensation varies by county. It is between $100 and $250 per day for the Chief Election Judge and between $80 and $200 per day for other Election Judges.\textsuperscript{43}

✓ If an Election Judge serves on Election Day, the Election Judge must receive at least $20 for each required class the Election Judge attended.\textsuperscript{44} This compensation also varies by county.

- Baltimore City: An Election Judge will receive $20 for the training;\textsuperscript{45}
- Prince George’s County: An Election Judge will receive $50 for the training;\textsuperscript{46}
- Harford County: An Election Judge will receive $25/hour for the training.\textsuperscript{47}

IV. Application Process

a. How to Apply

Where Can One Access the Application to Become an Election Judge?

✓ The Maryland Election Judge application can be filled out online at this link: \texttt{http://www.elections.state.md.us/get_involved/election_judges_form.html} or by contacting the local Board of Elections (see Figure 2)
Local government units may have their own application, which can be accessed through their websites. For example:

- Anne Arundel County
- Baltimore City
- Baltimore County
- Cecil County
- Garrett County
- Montgomery County
- Prince George’s County

**Description of Process**

If qualified to become an Election Judge, the individual will fill out the Maryland state application or the local election board’s application.

If an individual fills out the Maryland state application, the state will contact the local election board with that person’s information and they will then contact the applicant. Depending on the local board, they may have the applicant fill out the local board’s application because it may contain more information than the state application.

The local board will decide among the applicants. Normally, the local board will accept an application if the person is qualified. If there are already a sufficient number of Election Judges, they will put the new applicant on a waiting list.

The Maryland state online application does not require a signature, but some of the county applications do require one.

**Where to File**

Although an applicant can file online at the Maryland state website, since it is a local election board’s determination, it is best to file in the locality in which one wishes to serve. Links to the various local Boards of Elections can be found in Figure 2 above.
Statewide Election Judges Application

It is our policy to preserve the privacy of personal records and to protect confidential or privileged information.

* Required

County/City of Residence *

Name *
Please provide your full name.

Residential Address (street, city, and zip)
Please provide your voter registration address.

Mailing Address (street or P.O. Box, city, and zip)
Only if different from your residential address

Daytime Phone *

Evening Phone

Cell Phone

Email Address *

Party Affiliation *
  ○ Democratic
  ○ Republican
  ○ Libertarian
  ○ Green
  ○ Unaffiliated
  ○ Other

Date of Birth

Are you a high school or college student? *
  ○ Yes
  ○ No
b. Deadlines for Applying

Applications are accepted year-round. However, the term for an Election Judge begins 13 weeks prior to the election so the Election Judges should be selected before then. However, that deadline is flexible. If a local election board does not have enough Election Judges, they will continue accepting applications after that deadline as long as the person can be trained prior to the election.
V. After Filing

a. Following Up

Phone numbers and contact information for inquiries can be found by local election board at the links listed in Figure 2 shown above.

b. Overcoming Objections

The local election board may send out letters or emails to the Election Judges who served in the prior election to determine which of the previous Election Judges would like to serve again.\textsuperscript{57} If some decide not to serve again, or if more Election Judges are needed, the local election board will turn to new applicants to see whether they qualify to become an Election Judge.\textsuperscript{58} Election Judges are selected on a first come, first served basis.\textsuperscript{59}

If an applicant does not qualify, the local election board will let the applicant know and may let the applicant try to resolve the situation.\textsuperscript{60}

- For instance, if they are unable to verify that an applicant is a registered voter, they will let the applicant know. If it is just a case of a misspelling in the applicant’s name or a similar issue and they then determine that the applicant is a registered voter, then the applicant will qualify to be an Election Judge. If it turns out that the applicant is not registered to vote, they will let the applicant know how to register to vote. If the applicant then becomes a registered voter, the applicant will then qualify to be an Election Judge.\textsuperscript{61}

If no Election Judge positions are available, the local election board will keep the applicant’s information on a waiting list so that they can contact them if a position opens.\textsuperscript{62}

If an individual applies and the local election board determines that the applicant meets the basic qualifications, but the applicant has a history of poor performance as an Election Judge or fails to do a good job in the training, the local election board could still disqualify the applicant.\textsuperscript{63} There is no way to appeal such a determination.\textsuperscript{64} The local election board has the final decision on who becomes an Election Judge.\textsuperscript{65}

VI. Training Resources

All prospective Election Judges receive a state manual that is adjusted to fit each county’s needs.\textsuperscript{66} However, this manual is not currently available online.\textsuperscript{67}
Depending on the local election board, the Election Judge may be trained for all Election Judge positions or just a specific position.

- For instance, St. Mary’s County will train an Election Judge on all positions so that they can rotate positions throughout Election Day. However, Montgomery County will train an Election Judge on the one position that they will hold throughout Election Day.

Training will usually take between 2 and 3 hours.

VII. High-Priority Issues

a. Provisional Ballots

Sometimes, voters must use provisional ballots. Some reasons why voters may need provisional ballots include:

- they are not in their registered precinct;
- their status is “pending”;
- their status is “Active (or Inactive)-Show ID,” but they cannot show an acceptable ID;
- a poll watcher challenges their right to vote, and they are unable to show acceptable ID; or
- they voted during extended hours.

b. When to Ask Voters for ID

Generally speaking, voters in Maryland do not need to show ID at the polls. Poll workers should not ask voters to show ID, only ask voters to show ID if they are marked “Show ID” in the electronic pollbook.

County Boards of Elections Must Permit Every Voter Standing in the Line by 8:00 p.m. to Vote

Polls in Maryland close at 8:00 p.m. unless ordered by a court to stay open longer. All voters in line by 8:00 p.m. must be allowed to vote. If a court orders extended voting hours and polls to stay open late, then voters in line at the end of the extended voting hours end must be allowed to check in and cast their ballots.

d. When a Voter Cannot Stand in Line

Voters who cannot stand in line must be accommodated. Do not ask a voter for proof of a disability. If a voter cannot stand in line, ask another voter in line to hold that person’s place. Let the voter sit down, give a placeholder card to the person holding their place in line, and let other judges know you have done so. When the placeholder voter gets to the front of the line,
they will show other election judges the placeholder card, and the voter who needed to sit
down will come to the front.\textsuperscript{75}

e. COVID-19 Concerns

The spread of COVID-19 means that information and election practices are changing
rapidly. You should contact your local election administrator to verify all information in this
guide before relying on information contained herein. On March 17, 2020, Governor Larry
Hogan announced he would postpone the state’s primary until June 2.\textsuperscript{76} This date allows the
State Board of Elections (“SBE”) to coordinate with local boards of elections to put safeguards
in place before the primary election. Polling places may still change; the SBE will consult with
local boards of elections before notifying voters who may be affected by any polling place
changes. The SBE “strongly encourages” Marylanders over 60 years old to look to guidelines
from the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control and the state’s health guidance, available
at health.maryland.gov/coronavirus, before becoming a poll worker.\textsuperscript{77} Again, we recommend
confirming all information about election administration practices with your local elections
office.
2 Id.
6 Id. § 10-202(a)(1). If a qualified individual residing in the county cannot be found with reasonable effort, the local board may appoint a registered voter residing in any part of the State. Elec. Law § 10-202(a)(2)(i).
7 Id. § 3-102(a)(1). A person may register to vote if he/she is at least 16 years old but cannot vote unless he/she will be at least 18 years old by the next general election. Elec. Law § 3-102(a)(2) and Voter Registration, Introduction, Voter Registration Eligibility, Maryland State Board of Elections, http://www.elections.state.md.us/voter_registration/index.html (last visited May 11, 2018).
11 Id. § 10-204(a)(1).
13 Election Judges Form, supra note 11.
15 Id. § 10-201(a)(1)(ii).
16 Id. § 10-201(a)(2)(i). If a qualified individual residing in the county cannot be found with reasonable effort, the local board may appoint a registered voter residing in any part of the State. Elec. Law § 10-201(a)(2)(ii).
17 Id. § 10-201(b)(1); (b)(2)(i) (2017).
18 Id. § 10-201(b)(2)(ii).
19 Id. § 10-203(a)(2).
21 Id. § 10-303(c)(1).
22 Id. § 10-303(c)(2).
25 Id. § 10-201(b)(2)(ii).