



VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION of CHIEFS of POLICE

& Foundation

2026 ELECTION DAY ADVISORY

TO: Virginia Police Chiefs & VACP/VACLEA Members

Although Election Day is officially one week away, early in-person voting, ballot box drops and mail-in ballots have become a major part of the election process. On Election Day, the VACP often receives phone calls from local election officials and election observers about what is happening at the polling places, and questions about the role of law enforcement. We may receive calls about voter intimidation in some localities, which includes people taking pictures of the voters in line — particularly persons of color. We expect there to be groups of “poll watchers” at the polling sites this election; coordinate with your local registrars to ensure that they are operating within the law and not impeding anyone’s right to vote. The constitutional amendments on the November ballot may be cause of heated demonstrations at or near polling sites.

SAFETY AT THE POLLING SITES IS THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY OF LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT. Law enforcement presence at the polls requires a sensitive, balanced approach from your officers. Some voters will be calmed by law enforcement presence, because they hope this will curtail intimidation created by other voters. However, some voters will perceive police presence itself to be intimidating, because they are fearful of law enforcement’s purpose at the polls. Some voters will assume there is trouble at the polling place just by seeing your marked cruisers. Whenever it is possible and prudent, use unmarked cruisers at polling sites (except for traffic control) or to transport local election officials between polling sites.

RECOMMENDATION: Early voting is available to all registered Virginia voters. Law enforcement officers are encouraged to vote in advance of Election Day. This is advised to ensure that law enforcement personnel are available as needed on Election Day.

On Election Day, the VACP recommends the following measures:

1. Inform your general registrar if you will be providing enhanced traffic enforcement at some of the polling sites. This enables their personnel to accurately answer voters’ questions about why police officers are nearby.
2. **It is NOT advised that law enforcement conduct DUI or traffic safety checkpoints on Election Day as this may be interpreted as an effort to impede access to the polling places.**
3. Ensure that officers and their vehicles are stationed a comfortable distance away from the entrance to the polling site to maintain a lower visibility profile. Some of your polling sites are in diverse neighborhoods where police presence at a polling site will be misunderstood, so it is important to ensure that your officers are aware of these potential concerns.
4. **Make sure that your general registrar knows how to contact your agency** if there are complaints about police presence. Likewise, they should be able to contact your agency if traffic congestion occurs and officers are needed to control traffic flow. Do not prolong police presence at a polling site longer than necessary to ensure safety and security. **SUGGESTION:** Place an officer at the registrar’s office on Election Day to be able to immediately address concerns at polling sites when registrar receives notice.

The key complaint or concern on Election or Primary Day is that individuals are present at the polling places who “intimidate” voters by their mere presence, usually a strong (but often silent) display of campaign materials, buttons, signs, or other items that are perceived to carry a political message. This is not a violation of law – however, **COV § 24.2-310 does prohibit certain campaigning activity within 40 feet of a polling place.**

Attached is a list of Virginia statutes that are relevant to Election Day security.

If you have any questions, contact Erin Schrad, VACP Director of Operations & Communications — erin@vachiefs.org; 804-512-5162 (mobile).

KNOW THE LAWS RE: VIRGINIA ELECTIONS

- ▶ **§ 24.2-310**. Requirements for polling places. The law does prohibit certain campaigning activity within 40 feet of a polling place.
- ▶ **§ 24.2-604.4**. Polling places; authorized representatives of party or candidate; prohibited activities.
- ▶ **§ 24.2-604.5**. Polling places; presence of additional persons authorized. (Neutral observers, “poll watchers”)
- ▶ **§ 24.2-605**. Loudspeakers prohibited at polls; penalty.
- ▶ **§ 24.2-1000**. Intimidation and threats toward election officials; penalty.
- ▶ **§ 24.2-1001**. Willful neglect or corrupt conduct.
- ▶ **§ 24.2-1002**. Interference with registration.
- ▶ **§ 24.2-1003**. Campaigning at registration locations.
- ▶ **§ 24.2-1005**. Intimidation of voters; civil cause of action.
 - ▶ **§ 24.2-1005.1**. Communication of false information to registered voter.
 - ▶ **§ 24.2-1005.2**. Interference with voting.
- ▶ **§ 24.2-1007**. Soliciting or accepting bribe to influence or procure vote.
- ▶ **§ 24.2-1009**. Stealing or tampering with ballot containers, voting or registration equipment, software, records or documents.
- ▶ **§ 24.2-1012**. Offenses as to absent voters.
- ▶ **§ 24.2-1015**. Conspiracy against rights of citizens under this title.
- ▶ **§ 18.2-283**. Carrying dangerous weapon to place of religious worship. *(NOTE: Houses of worship may be used as polling sites – firearm restrictions are limited to active religious meetings on such properties.)*
- ▶ **§ 18.2-308.1**. Possession of firearm, stun weapon, or other weapon on school property prohibited; penalty. *(NOTE: Firearm restrictions apply on school properties regardless of whether school is in session. There is no exemption for Election Day.)*

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE:

- ▶ **VIRGINIA GENERAL ELECTION BULLETIN: “Considerations for Local Officials on Polling Place and Election Material Security and Access in the 2026 General Election”**
- ▶ **“Policing in a Time of Elections,”** by the National Policing Institute (NPI) addresses seven topics:
 - ▶ Section 1: Training Officers to Successfully Protect Elections
 - ▶ Section 2: Interagency Collaboration and Mutual Aid
 - ▶ Section 3: Conflict Management and De-escalation
 - ▶ Section 4: Communication and Messaging
 - ▶ Section 5: Demonstration Management
 - ▶ Section 6: Tactical Considerations for Election Safety
 - ▶ Section 7: Officer and Staff Wellness During Election Season

[Read the Full Report \(PDF\)](#)

- ▶ **NPI TRAINING VIDEO (13 min.): “Public Safety & Elections: Preparing for a Safety Election”**
<https://www.policinginstitute.org/policing-in-a-time-of-elections-2/>