



For Challengers and Watchers: The Opening of the Polls

We welcome you as a challenger and watcher to the opening of the polls. Learn what's required of you, what happens during the opening of the polls, and what you're allowed to do and not allowed to do.

Know What's Required of You as You Arrive

Show your *Challenger and Watcher Certificate* to a chief judge right away when you get to the polling place.

Important: If a majority of the election judges agree, you and any other challengers and watchers will be told to leave the polling place while they open the polls.

Understand the Work of the Election Judges

The election judges prepare to open the polls by:

- Setting up the voting equipment.
- Setting up the pollbooks.
- Posting required signs.
- Accounting for ballots and voting supplies.
- Completing all paperwork.

Election Judges Get the Scanning Units Ready

Election judges follow the described processes to prepare the scanning units. They use certain processes for Early Voting Day 1, and different processes for Early Voting Days 2–8. For Election Day, they use the Early Voting Day 1 processes.

Election judges get the scanning units ready for Early Voting Day 1 and Election Day

1. After the local board of elections tests the scanning units, the units are sealed with a numbered seal. Scanning units are also called ballot scanners. The local board gives paperwork showing the seal number for each unit to the election judges. The paperwork also shows the tamper tape number that appears on the scanning unit's side compartment.
2. The election judges compare the seal number on each scanning unit against the seal number on the paperwork. Once they verify the seal number, they remove the seal and open the scanning unit case.
3. The election judges compare the tamper tape number on the unit's side compartment to the number recorded on the paperwork.
4. When the tamper tape number has been verified, the election judges print a Zero Report. This report lists all candidates and all responses for the ballot questions. The election judges review the report to verify that no votes have been cast.

5. An election judge will post one copy of the Zero Report for the public and attach the other copy to the Scanning Unit Integrity Report – Opening.
6. Once this work is done, the scanning unit is ready to accept ballots. The election judges prepare each scanning unit using the same process.
7. Election judges get the scanning units ready for Early Voting Days 2–8.
8. The election judges compare the seal number on each unit against the seal number recorded the night before. They remove the seal, open the scanning unit case, and compare the tamper tape number on the unit’s side compartment against the number recorded the night before.
9. A *Configuration Report* will automatically print. The election judges attach the report to the back of the *Scanning Unit Integrity Report – Opening*.

Once this work is done, the scanning unit is ready to accept ballots. The election judges prepare each scanning unit using the same process.

The Local Board Prepares the Electronic Pollbooks

The local board loads the list of registered voters onto the pollbook. They test the pollbooks, place them in transport cases, and seal them with a numbered seal. They prepare paperwork for the election judges.

Election Judges Get the Electronic Pollbooks Ready

Before voting begins, the election judges compare the seal number against the number recorded on paperwork provided by the local board. Once verified, the election judges remove the seal, open the case, and remove the pollbook.

The election judges then compare the second seal number and inventory tag number on the pollbooks against the numbers recorded on the paperwork. When they’ve verified these numbers, the election judges:

- Connect the pollbooks.
- Turn them on.
- Verify that the pollbook is for the correct precinct.
- Print a report that verifies that no voters are checked in to vote.

Election Judges Perform Additional Tasks to Open the Polls

To open the polls, election judges must:

- Confirm that they have the correct supplies.
- Verify the quantities of provisional ballots and other supplies.
- Complete the required paperwork.
- Post signs inside and outside the voting room.

Understand Your Scope of Work

What You're Allowed To Do

You're allowed to:

- Observe the election judges printing the Zero Report.
- Review the signed Zero Report posted for the public.
- Verify that new tamper tape or seals have been applied.
- Verify that no voters have been checked in on the electronic pollbooks.

What You're Not Allowed To Do

You're not allowed to interfere with the election judges' work going on or disregard the rules for challengers and watchers. For example, you will:

- Wait until the chief judges have completed all their tasks before asking questions.
 - For example, you might wait while they help an election judge or a voter.
- Give the election judges plenty of space so they can focus.
 - You'll listen to an election judge read the seal and tamper tape numbers.
 - Don't attempt to read over their shoulder. If you wish, you may record the numbers they read aloud.
 - Don't touch any election documents or equipment.

Additional Information

The rules of Challengers and Watchers apply to all tasks performed by election judges. Please refer to the Challengers and Watchers Manual for additional guidance.

Find the Maryland State Board of Elections Challengers and Watchers Manual at www.elections.maryland.gov.

Tap "Get Involved" on the side navigation bar to learn how to become a challenger and watcher. You can also learn the rights and responsibilities of challengers and watchers.