

Voter Protections Against Discrimination and Intimidation at the Polls

- ◆ **Discrimination against Texas voters:** Federal law prohibits discriminating against voters because of race, ethnicity, national origin, language, disability, or religion. Conduct even partially motivated by such discrimination is impermissible. Texas state law also does not allow voter discrimination.
- ◆ **Intimidation of Texas voters:** Under federal law, no government official or private citizen is allowed to intimidate, threaten, or coerce a voter to vote or not vote, or to cast their vote in a particular way. Texas state law also prohibits harming or threatening to harm voters. The presiding judge in a polling place is charged with preserving order. Prohibited behavior includes, but is not limited to:
 - Aggressive or confrontational behavior toward voters,
 - Photographing, videotaping, or recording voters to intimidate them,
 - Posting signs misinforming voters about the election to discourage voting,
 - Carrying a firearm inside a polling place, and
 - Using raised voices, making taunting chants, or using insulting, offensive or threatening language, inside the polling place.
- ◆ **Who is allowed at the polls:** Under Texas state law, only people who are voting, a state or federal official with a legally recognized function to perform, or an appointed poll watcher may be at the polls. State law does not allow individuals without one of these functions to loiter or electioneer within 100 feet of a polling place. Poll watchers are individuals appointed before the election, and are required to wear identification while at the polls.
- ◆ **Rules for appointed poll watchers:** Poll watchers in Texas are not permitted to engage in disruptive behavior and may not talk to voters under any circumstances. Poll watchers also are not allowed to use recording devices. Poll watchers must wear name tags at all times.
- ◆ **Challenges to voter eligibility:** Texas law does not allow private citizens to challenge a voter's eligibility at the polling place. State law allows for such challenges only before the election, and they must be made by someone registered to vote in the same county as the voter being challenged, and in writing in the presence of the voter registrar.
- ◆ **Reasonable impediment declaration:** Voters who do not possess one of the photo IDs allowed by Texas's photo ID law, and who have a difficulty to obtaining one of those photo IDs, have the right to provide an alternative form of ID and sign a reasonable impediment declaration. Those voters have the right to vote a regular ballot, and may not be questioned about the reason they provide for not obtaining photo ID.