



ARIZONA ELECTION OBSERVERS: RULES AND CONSTRAINTS

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Election observers, referred to as “political party observers” or “observers” in Arizona, are individuals who monitor polling places and ballot counting sites. While observers play an important role in providing transparency, they can also be a potential source of disruption and intimidation. For this reason, all states have a series of regulations and constraints regarding who can serve as poll watchers and what they can do. Additionally, both Congress and the Department of Justice may send federal observers to monitor elections for compliance with voting and civil rights laws. More information can be found [here](#).

Arizona’s rules on observers, which derive both from the state’s election code and from guidance issued by the secretary of state, are:

Appointment

- Under Arizona law, only the county chairman of each political party represented on the ballot may appoint party representatives to serve as observers to voting locations. Only one observer may be appointed per voting location, unless the parties agree to allow more observers.¹
- Observers may be appointed to Election Day voting locations, early voting locations, central counting places, and emergency voting centers.² Proceedings at central counting places may also be observed by up to three observers representing a candidate for nonpartisan office or representing a political committee supporting or opposing a ballot measure.³
- Arizona law requires observers to be Arizona residents and registered to vote in Arizona.⁴
- The county chairman must provide the names of observers and their credentials to the county recorder. Observers must be prepared to show their appointment credential immediately upon entering any voting location or central counting place or upon request by any election official.⁵

1 Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 16-590(A), (C); Arizona Secretary of State, *Arizona Election Procedures Manual*, December 22, 2025, 155, <https://perma.cc/EEZ8-7VML>.

2 Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 16-590(A); Arizona Secretary of State, *Arizona Election Procedures Manual*, 155.

3 Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 16-621(A).

4 Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 16-590(D); Arizona Secretary of State, *Arizona Election Procedures Manual*, 155.

5 Arizona Secretary of State, *Arizona Election Procedures Manual*, 155-156, 158.



Role of Observers

- Observers may not interfere with or impede the election procedures or staff.⁶
- Observers can challenge a voter's eligibility but must do so with clear and convincing evidence.⁷
- All challenges must be directed to poll workers. Challenges to a voter's qualifications for reasons such as the voter's race, religion, language, appearance, national origin, or name are not permitted.⁸

More information on the rules and constraints on voter eligibility challenges can be found [here](#).

Prohibited Activities

To prevent observers from disrupting elections, Arizona law makes the following activities a misdemeanor if committed within 75 feet of any voting location:⁹

- **Electioneering:** It is illegal for anyone, including observers, to conduct campaign-related activities, known as electioneering, within 75 feet of any voting location.¹⁰ Observers, as well as poll workers and election officials, are also prohibited from wearing clothing with a political message.¹¹
- **Photography and Video:** It is illegal for anyone, including observers, to take photographs or videos while within 75 feet of any voting location.¹²
- **Carrying Firearms:** It is illegal for any private citizen, including observers, to carry a firearm within 75 feet of any voting location.¹³
- **Obstruction:** Observers may not obstruct poll workers or the voting process.¹⁴
- **Voter Interaction:** Observers may not offer to assist any voter in the process of voting at a voting location and may only provide assistance after relinquishing the observer's formal status as an observer, exiting the voting location, and then accompanying the voter into the voting location as an assistant rather than an observer.¹⁵

6 See generally Arizona Secretary of State, *Arizona Election Procedures Manual*, 157.

7 Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 16-590(A); Arizona Secretary of State, *Arizona Election Procedures Manual*, 218.

8 Arizona Secretary of State, *Guidance on Polling Place Conduct and Prevention of Voter Intimidation: Voter Challenges*, October 2024, <https://azsos.gov/elections/about-elections/guidance-voting-location-conduct>. See also Arizona Secretary of State, *Arizona Election Procedures Manual*, 219.

9 Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 16-515(H).

10 Ariz. Rev. Stat. §§ 16-411(I), 16-515(A), 16-1018(I).

11 Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 16-515(F).

12 Ariz. Rev. Stat. §§ 16-515(G), 16-1018(4).

13 Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 13-3102(A)(11); Arizona Secretary of State, *Arizona Election Procedures Manual*, 158, 204.

14 Arizona Secretary of State, *Guidance on Polling Place Conduct and Prevention of Voter Intimidation: The Role of Observers*, October 2024, <https://azsos.gov/elections/about-elections/guidance-voting-location-conduct>.

15 Arizona Secretary of State, *Arizona Election Procedures Manual*, 157.



- **Election Worker Interaction:** Observers who have questions or objections about proceedings should raise them to the designated point of contact and not to any other election worker.¹⁶
- **Intimidation or Influence:** Attempting to intimidate or influence a voter is not allowed.¹⁷ Intimidation can include, but is not limited to, raising one's voice or taunting a voter, blocking entrances, following voters around, impersonating law enforcement (including wearing official-looking apparel), raising frivolous challenges, or communicating about possible voter fraud in an intimidating manner.¹⁸
- **Touching Election Materials:** Observers cannot touch or handle election materials.¹⁹
- **Disobeying Instructions:** When poll workers and election officials give lawful instructions, observers must follow them.²⁰

Federal and state law strictly prohibit all people, including observers, from engaging in voter intimidation. Any action that makes a voter feel intimidated, threatened, or coerced (including any effort to prevent a voter from registering to vote, voting, or voting for or against any candidate or ballot measure) could constitute voter intimidation, regardless of whether it breaks a specific rule.²¹ More information on the federal and state laws that protect Arizona voters from intimidation can be found [here](#).

Removal

- Arizona's secretary of state has expressly advised that election workers may remove observers from voting locations if they break the rules or fail to follow instructions, which is a very broad authority.²²
- Election officials should remove observers for failing to comply with a request to stop an activity that interferes with the election process, election staff, or poll workers or violates state, federal, or tribal law (if applicable).²³
- Any observer who engages in prohibited activities may also face criminal charges.

Poll workers should inform the officer in charge of elections of difficult situations involving disruptive people, including observers. Inspectors and marshals may contact law enforcement for assistance but should use sound judgment in deciding whether doing so is necessary.²⁴

16 Arizona Secretary of State, *Arizona Election Procedures Manual*, 157.

17 Arizona Secretary of State, *Arizona Election Procedures Manual*, 157.

18 Arizona Secretary of State, *Arizona Election Procedures Manual*, 204-205.

19 Arizona Secretary of State, *Arizona Election Procedures Manual*, 157.

20 See, e.g., Arizona Secretary of State, *Arizona Election Procedures Manual*, 158 ("If an observer is asked by the inspector or other officer in charge to cease an activity that interferes with the election process or election staff or poll workers, the observer must comply or face possible ejection.").

21 18 U.S.C. §§ 241, 594; 52 U.S.C. § 10101(b); Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 16-1013.

22 Arizona Secretary of State, *Arizona Election Procedures Manual*, 156, 158.

23 Arizona Secretary of State, *Arizona Election Procedures Manual*, 156, 158.

24 See, e.g., Arizona Secretary of State, *Arizona Election Procedures Manual*, 204 ("The inspector must utilize the marshal to preserve order and remove persons engaging in voter intimidation . . . The inspector and/or marshal must use sound judgment to decide whether to contact law enforcement, and any higher-level decisions should be raised through the officer in charge of elections.").