



September 11, 2020

Notice Regarding Student Election Judge

In June, Governor Pritzker signed Public Act 101-0642 into law, creating a number of requirements aimed at helping the state prepare for holding the 2020 General Election in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The legislation makes November 3, 2020 a state holiday and provides that “[a]ll government offices, with the exception of election authorities, shall be closed unless authorized to be used as a location for election day services or as a polling place.”

Anticipating a shortage of election judges, Public Act 101-0642 makes several changes to state law aimed at encouraging students to serve in that role. In addition to specifically mandating that Election Day will be a school holiday, the law provides that election judges may be as young as 16 if they are otherwise qualified. Both schools and colleges must also publish online notice and notify their students about the opportunity to serve as an election judge, as well as the qualifications for serving.

Election judges help to guarantee the rights of voters are protected at the early vote centers, and the polling places on Election Day. Election judges are commissioned as officer of the Circuit court and must take an oath to uphold the constitutions of the United States and the State of Illinois in the performance of their duties. Election judges ensure every American qualified to vote is allowed to vote and every American allowed to vote is qualified to vote only once. The following points out the qualifications necessary to become an election judge, also some of their important duties and responsibilities, and how to become an election judge.

Qualifications to become an election judge:

If you are a qualified high school junior or senior, you can be appointed to serve as an Election Judge. To be an Election Judge if, as of the date of the election at which you serve as a judge, you must be;

- A citizen of the United States and entitled to vote at the next election or be a high school junior/senior in good standing or a student enrolled in a public or private secondary school;
- Have a cumulative grade point average equivalent to at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale;
- Have the written approval of his/her parent or legal guardian;
- Have satisfactorily complete the training course for judges of election; and
- Meet all other qualifications for appointment and services as an election judge.
[i.e. be: 1) Of good repute and character; 2) Able to speak, read and write the English language; 3) Skilled in the four fundamental rules (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) of arithmetic; 4) Of good understandings and capable to perform his/her duties; 5) Neither a candidate for any office at the election nor an elected precinct committeeman; 6) Residing and be registered to vote in the precinct where selected to serve as judge.]

Source: Madison County (IL) Clerk's Office

Duties and responsibilities of an election judge:

In the polling place, the judges are responsible for ensuring that the electoral process is administered fairly and in accordance with federal and state election laws. Election judges serve as officers of the circuit court and swear to uphold the constitution of the United States and the State of Illinois in performing their duties.

All judges in the polling place have equal authority and responsibility regardless of their length of service. There is no “head” judge. All decisions must be made in accordance with the election laws and a majority vote of all judges. However, each judge may act alone to enforce election laws. Judges should rotate the various duties during the day.

Only judges can handle the election materials, supplies and ballots.

The polls are open from 6:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. on Election Day. Judges are required to report at the polling place in which they are serving by 5:00 a.m. and are required to remain until after the polls close and all forms, certificates and affidavits are completed and signed, and all election materials are packaged for return to the County Building. Two judges (one from each political party) must return to the County Building at the end of the night.

Judges are required to maintain order in the polling place throughout Election Day. All persons present in the polling place, or within the campaign free zone (within 100 horizontal feet of any such room), must obey any lawful order of the judges. All serious problems should be reported to the election authority and the judges do have the authority to evict any person creating a disturbance. Judges must monitor the polling place throughout the day to ensure no electioneering is taking place within the campaign free zone.

How to become an election judge:

Qualifying students should complete the Application for Student Election judge, which can be obtained from your principal.