



MAINTAINING ORDER IN THE POLLING PLACE

Guidance for Massachusetts Law Enforcement



150-FOOT RULE

prohibits political & campaign activities in the areas in and around polling places on Election Day.

INCLUDES:

- the actual polling place
- the building (including the walls) in which the polling place is located
- the premises on which the building stands
- the area within 150 feet of the building entrance door to the polling place
- any further distance warranted by public safety concerns

EXCLUDES:

- any location which is not a polling place on Election Day
- any event taking place before or after Election Day
- any activity taking place more than 150 feet from the walls of or entrance(s) to a polling place, or the building in which that polling place is located, unless the property or land on which the building or polling place stands extends for more than 150 feet, in which case, the area more than 150 feet from the building or polling place is not subject to the prohibitions of the 150-foot Rule.



PROHIBITED

the following is prohibited within 150 feet of a polling place on Election Day:

- exhibition, circulation, & distribution of materials tending to influence the action or decision of a voter at the ongoing election
- solicitation of votes
- influencing voters
- petitioning and gathering signatures
- using or displaying prohibited phrases and slogans



ALLOWED

the following is allowed within the 150-foot Rule to the extent it does not interfere with election administration:

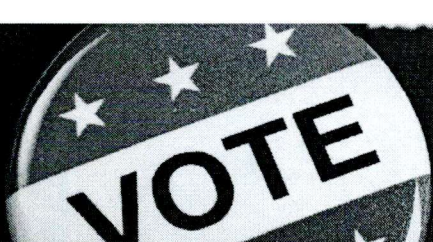
- exit polling
- issue phrases and slogans not explicitly tied to the campaign of a candidate, political party, or ballot question
- voter materials to assist them in the voting process provided they are not displayed in a manner which violates the 150-foot Rule

Additional information is provided in Election Advisory #20-12 Regarding Electioneering, the 150-foot Rule, and Maintaining Order in the Polling Place, Secretary of the Commonwealth, Elections Division (October 30, 2020).

Provided by:

Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, Inc.
Office of the General Counsel





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ROLE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

- The police officer assists, when requested, the election workers and aids in enforcing the laws relating to elections.
- The poll warden may direct the police officer to enforce any and all of the poll warden's lawful orders and may request that the police officer take into custody any person who, by disorderly conduct, interrupts or disturbs the proceedings of the election or the work of an election officer or worker.
- The police officer must enforce lawful orders as directed by the poll warden.
- Enforcement of the 150-foot Rule should occur in a manner which plainly and directly addresses the violation(s) of the Rule without stating or implying bias or prejudice on the part of the poll warden.
- Officials invoking the 150-foot Rule must make every effort to emphasize that the voter's right to vote is not being infringed upon and that the voter will be allowed to vote if and when they comply with the Rule.
- For clothing and other wearable campaign materials, voters should be asked to remove or cover the prohibited materials.



VOTER INTERFERENCE

- No person or group of people is allowed to hinder, delay, or interfere with a voter during an Election without lawful authority. No person or group may attempt to induce a voter to disclose how they have voted before depositing their ballot. Further, no person or group of people may aid, assist, or induce another person to hinder, delay or interfere with a voter during an Election without lawful authority. G. L. c. 56, § 29
- These prohibitions protect voters who are on their way to an Election, who are within the guard rail at a polling place, who are marking their ballot, who are voting or attempting to vote, and who have not yet cast their ballot. These prohibitions extend to all voters on Election Day, regardless of whether the voters are within 150 feet of a polling place.
- Violations are punishable by a fine of up to \$500 or imprisonment for up to one year. G. L. c. 56, § 29

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