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Dos and Don'ts for Campaigners and Authorized Representatives

I. Executive Summary

Under the Virginia Code, authorized representatives and campaigners are given a combination of rights and restrictions. This guide, intended for officers of election and local election officials, explains what authorized party representatives may do or may not do at various points from pre-election to post-election. The Virginia Department of Elections refers to this document as the *Dos and Don'ts for Campaigners and Authorized Representatives*.



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II. Campaigning

Relevant Authorities: Va. Code §§ 24.2-310(E), 24.2-604, 24.2-605, and 24.2-1007

A. The Dos and Don'ts of Campaigning

i. Campaigners may **DO** the following

- a. Refer to the “Prohibited Areas and Activities poster” that should be posted in your polling location. This provides information about the activities that various individuals may *not* do in or near areas where voting is taking place.¹
- b. Campaign within a building containing a polling location *only if* the local Electoral Board allows such activity. However, campaigning may *not* take place in the forty foot “prohibited area” under any circumstances.²
- c. Be present outside of the “prohibited area” despite the number of other campaigners present. The Va. Code does not limit the number of campaigners allowed outside of the “prohibited area.”
- d. Distribute campaign and referendum materials, including sample ballots, outside of the “prohibited area.”³
- e. Post signs, posters, and referendum materials outside of the prohibited area. Note however that building policies, local zoning ordinances, or directives from building management may prohibit posting these materials, including outside the “prohibited area.”⁴
- f. Use a polling location’s bathroom at the discretion of the officers of election present. However, the campaigner must remove or cover any campaign hats, buttons, stickers, and/or t-shirts of a partisan nature while using the bathroom. The campaigner must then promptly exit the polling place and prohibited area after bathroom use.⁵

ii. Campaigners **DON'T** have authority to do the following

- a. Campaign within forty feet of the entrance of any location where voting is taking place. This forty-foot zone is called the “prohibited area.” The prohibited area is in force while polls are open, within one hour of polls opening or closing, and anywhere ballots are being counted.
- b. Carry a firearm within one hundred feet of any buildings where the local Electoral Board is meeting, where voting is taking place, the central absentee precinct, or the State Board Meeting to certify the election results.⁶ This restriction also applies to any building used to conduct a recount.
- c. Hinder or delay any person from either entering or leaving a polling place.⁷
- d. Hinder or delay a qualified ballot from casting their secret ballot.
- e. Offer or accept a bribe or anything of value either to influence another person’s vote or to influence

¹ See the form ELECT-604: Prohibited Area and Activities Poster.

² Va. Code § 24.2-604.

³ Va. Code § 24.2-604.

⁴ Va. Code § 24.2-604.

⁵ Va. Code § 24.2-604(C) and § 24.2-604(D).

⁶ Va. Code § 24.2-604.

⁷ Va. Code § 24.2-604.



- another person's choice whether to register to vote. Note that certain exceptions apply.⁸
- f. Use loudspeakers within three hundred feet of any polling location on Election Day.⁹
 - g. Distribute campaign and referendum materials, including sample ballots, inside of the "prohibited area."¹⁰ The local Electoral Board may allow exceptions to this rule in limited circumstances under Va. Code § 24.2-310 (E).
 - h. Post campaign signs or referendum materials inside the prohibited area or in any location where voting takes place.¹¹
 - i. Give, tender, or exhibit any ballot, ticket, or other campaign referendum within the polling location or the "prohibited area."
 - j. Solicit or attempt to influence any person in casting his vote within the polling location or the "prohibited area."
 - k. See the marked ballot of any voter or stand in a position where they may see the marked ballot of any voter.¹²
 - l. Ask any election worker to sign or otherwise mark any paper, form, or item.¹³
 - m. Impede the orderly conduct of the election.
 - n. Hinder or delay any officer of election.
 - o. Ask any election worker to sign or otherwise mark any paper, form, or item.¹⁴

III. Sample Ballots

Relevant Authorities: Va. Code § 24.2-604, 24.2-622, and 24.2-650.

A. The Dos and Don'ts of Sample Ballots

i. Sample ballots distributed by campaigners must:

- a. Contain the publishing candidate or group's authority statement (also known as a "disclaimer").¹⁵
- b. Contain the disclaimer required by federal law. This applies to federal offices only.¹⁶
- c. Include on their face the words "sample ballot" in type no smaller than twenty-four-point font.¹⁷

ii. Sample ballots distributed by campaigners must NOT:

- a. Be printed on any shade of white paper.
- b. Contain any official authority statement of a local Electoral Board or the State Board of Elections.

B. Sample ballots in the polling place.

⁸ Va. Code § 24.2-1007.

⁹ Va. Code § 24.2-605.

¹⁰ Va. Code § 24.2-604.

¹¹ Va. Code § 24.2-604.

¹² See Va. Code § 24.2-604 (C) and (E).

¹³ Va. Code § 24.2-604(C) and § 24.2-604(D).

¹⁴ Va. Code § 24.2-650.

¹⁵ Va. Code § 24.2-622.

¹⁶ For more information see elections.virginia.gov/candidatepac-info/regulation-and-policies/.

¹⁷ Va. Code § 24.2-622.



Note that voters may carry sample ballot, campaign materials, and referendum materials into the polling place. However, they must not give, offer, or show those materials to any person other than an assistant while within the polling place or prohibited area.¹⁸

IV. Pre-Processing Meetings

Relevant Authorities: Va, Code §§ 24.2-604.4 and 24.2-709.1; 1VAC20-70-40; SBE Policy 2023-001

A. The Dos and Don'ts of Pre-Processing

i. Local election officials shall **DO** the following prior to pre-processing

- a. Give notice to the local political party chairs in sufficient time to allow for an authorized representative to be present.¹⁹
- b. Give notice to the local political party chairs that includes the times and places for each pre-processing meeting.

ii. Authorized representative may **DO** the following

- a. Be present at the polling location.
- b. Hear and view the check-in process.²⁰
- c. Authorized representatives **must** have a written statement or copy signed by the political party chairperson or independent/primary candidate he represents.

iii. Authorized representatives **DON'T** have authority to do the following

- a. Violate any voter's right to a secret ballot.
- b. Disclose any information concerning ballots.²¹
- c. Handle absentee ballots or envelopes.
- d. View information on an absentee envelope.

iv. Candidates **DON'T** have authority to do the following

- a. Attend the pre-processing meeting.

B. Quantity of Authorized Representatives permitted by Election Type

Election Type	Permitted Authorized Representatives
General	• One from each political party

¹⁸ Va. Code §§ 24.2-604 and 24.2-622.

¹⁹ 1VAC20-70-40; SBE Policy 2023-001.

²⁰ Va. Code § 24.2-604.4.

²¹ Va. Code § 24.2-709.1 & SBE Policy 2023-001.



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	<p>with a nominee on the ballot in that election.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One from each independent candidate on the ballot in that election.
Special	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One from each political party with a nominee on the ballot in that election. • One from each independent candidate on the ballot in that election.
Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One authorized representative for each primary candidate on the ballot in that election. • When a primary involves only one political party, one authorized representative from the other political party may attend, optionally.²²

V. Before Polls Open

Relevant Authorities: Va. Code §§ 24.2-604.4, 24.2-639, and 24.2-655

A. The Dos and Don'ts Before Polls Open

i. Officers of Election shall DO the following

- a. Examine the equipment and see that no vote has been cast.
- b. Ensure that the counter registers zero.
- c. Conduct the above in the presence of the authorized representatives, if present.²³
- d. At the officer of election's discretion, verify an authorized representative's status and identity by asking the representative to provide an acceptable form of identification.

i. Candidates may DO the following

- a. Serve as an authorized representative before polls open from 5:15 a.m. to 6:00 a.m..²⁴

²² 1VAC20-70-40; SBE Policy 2023-001.

²³ Va. Code § 24.2-639.

²⁴ Va, Code § 24.2-604(E).



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- b. Visit a polling place to vote.
- c. Visit a polling place to visit for up to 10 minutes per polling place per Election Day.²⁵

ii. Authorized Representatives may DO the following

- a. Serve all day.
- b. Serve a partial day and be replaced by successive representatives in shifts.²⁶

iii. Authorized Representatives DON'T have authority to do the following

- a. Serve without providing a written statement signed by the political party chair or independent candidate whom they represent. This statement should be signed by a local, district, or state chairman of the political party and presented to the chief officer of election.²⁷

iv. Officers of election may DO the following

- a. Serve all day.
- b. Serve a partial day and be replaced by successive representatives in shifts.²⁸
- c. Remove any person interfering with the voting process.
- d. Manage affairs within the polling place, with broad discretion for the officer of election, including the authority to contact law enforcement if necessary.²⁹
- e. At the officer of election's discretion, verify an authorized representative's status and identity by asking the representative to provide an acceptable form of identification.

B. Quantity of Authorized Representatives permitted by Election Type

Election Type	Permitted Authorized Representatives
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One from each political party with a nominee on the ballot in that election. • One from each independent candidate on the ballot in that election.
Special	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One from each political party with a nominee on the ballot in that election. • One from each independent

²⁵ Va. Code § 24.2-604(E).

²⁶ Va. Code § 24.2-604.4.

²⁷ Va. Code §§ 24.2-604.4 and 24.2-639.

²⁸ Va. Code § 24.2-604.4.

²⁹ Va. Code §§ 24.2-604 and 24.2-607.



	candidate on the ballot in that election.
Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One authorized representative for each primary candidate on the ballot in that election. • When a primary involves only one political party, one authorized representative from the other political party may attend, optionally.³⁰
Write-in candidate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write-in candidates are not entitled to have authorized representatives. However, write-in candidates and their supporters may be able to witness the counting of votes after the close of polls pursuant to Va. Code § 24.2-655.

VI. While Polls are Open

Relevant Authorities: Va. Code §§ 24.2-410.2, 24.2-604, 24.2-604.4, 24.2-607, 24.2-649, and 24.2-655

A. The Dos and Don'ts While Polls are Open

Candidates **DON'T** have authority to do the following

- Serve as an authorized representative while the polls are open or after they have closed. This applies to a candidate whose name is printed on the ballot.³¹

Authorized Representatives may **DO** the following

- Be a qualified Virginia voter.³²
- Observe from a pollbook division or station. One representative from each party and independent/primary candidate must be allowed per pollbook station or division.
- Be "close enough to the voter check-in table to be able to hear and see what is occurring; however, such observation shall not violate" the secrecy of the ballot guaranteed to all voters. § 24.2-604.4.
- At early voting locations and/or Election Day polling locations where pollbooks are being used for voter check-in, see the pollbook if space permits.

³⁰ 1VAC20-70-40; SBE Policy 2023-001.

³¹ Va. Code §§ 24.2-604(E) & 24.2-604.4(B).

³² Va. Code § 24.2-604.4.



Authorized Representatives DON'T have authority to do the following

- a. Impede the orderly conduct of the election.
- b. See personally identifiable information (also known as "PII").³³
- c. Serve without providing a written statement signed by the political party chair or independent candidate whom they represent. This statement should be signed by a local, district, or state chairman of the political party and presented to the chief officer of election.³⁴
- d. Hinder or delay a voter or officer of election.
- e. Assault or abuse an officer of election.
- f. Hinder or delay a qualified ballot from casting their secret ballot.
- g. Offer or accept a bribe or anything of value either to influence another person's vote or to influence another person's choice whether to register to vote. Note that certain exceptions apply.³⁵
- h. Use loudspeakers within three hundred feet of any polling location on Election Day.³⁶
- i. Distribute campaign and referendum materials, including sample ballots, inside of the "prohibited area."³⁷ The local Electoral Board may allow exceptions to this rule in limited circumstances under Va. Code § 24.2-310 (E).
- j. Post campaign signs or referendum materials inside the prohibited area or in any location where voting takes place.³⁸
- k. Give, tender, or exhibit any ballot, ticket, or other campaign referendum within the polling location or the "prohibited area."
- l. Solicit or attempt to influence any person in casting his vote within the polling location or the "prohibited area."
- m. See the marked ballot of any voter or stand in a position where they may see the marked ballot of any voter.³⁹
- n. Ask any election worker to sign or otherwise mark any paper, form, or item.⁴⁰

Officers of election may DO the following

- a. Verify an authorized representative's registration status and identity by asking the representative to provide an acceptable form of ID.

B. Quantity of Authorized Representatives permitted by Election Type

Election Type	Permitted Authorized Representatives
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One from each political party with a nominee on the ballot in that election.

³³ Va, Code 24.2-604.4.

³⁴ Va. Code §§ 24.2-604.4 and 24.2-639.

³⁵ Va. Code § 24.2-1007.

³⁶ Va. Code § 24.2-605.

³⁷ Va. Code § 24.2-604.

³⁸ Va. Code § 24.2-604.

³⁹ See Va. Code § 24.2-604 (C) and (E).

⁴⁰ Va. Code § 24.2-604(C) and § 24.2-604(D).



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One from each independent candidate on the ballot in that election.• A maximum of three authorized representatives of each political party or independent candidate, at the discretion of the officers of election.
Special	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One from each political party with a nominee on the ballot in that election.• One from each independent candidate on the ballot in that election.• A maximum of three authorized representatives of each political party or independent candidate, at the discretion of the officers of election.
Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One authorized representative for each primary candidate on the ballot in that election.• A maximum of three authorized representatives of each political party or independent candidate, at the discretion of the officers of election.
Write-in candidate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write-in candidates are not entitled to have authorized representatives.• However, write-in candidates and their supporters may be able to witness the counting of votes after the close of polls pursuant to Va. Code § 24.2-655.

VII. Close of Polls



Relevant Authorities: Va. Code §§ 24.2-604, 24.2-639, and 24.2-655

A. The Dos and Don'ts after the Close of Polls

Authorized Representatives may **DO** the following

- a. Serve in shifts⁴¹, allowing for the closing authorized representative to be a different individual than the authorized representative who served or worked during Election Day.
- b. Have an unobstructed view of the officers of election and their actions as the votes are counted and the returns are completed.
- c. Only two representatives from each political party having candidates in the election and one from each independent candidate may stay in the polling place after the close of polls.
- d. Those lawfully present may witness the counting and ascertainment of the results⁴².

Authorized Representatives **DON'T** have authority to do the following

- a. Serve without providing a written statement signed by the political party chair or independent candidate whom they represent. This statement should be signed by a local, district, or state chairman of the political party and presented to the chief officer of election.⁴³
- b. Leave until the final results are ascertained and the chief officer of election has opened the doors and announced the results of the election.⁴⁴
- c. Communicate with any person outside of the polling place during the counting and ascertainment of results.⁴⁵

B. Quantity of Authorized Representatives permitted by Election Type

Election Type	Permitted Authorized Representatives
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two from each political party with a candidate on the ballot in that election. • One from each independent candidate on the ballot in that election.

⁴¹ Va. Code § 24.2-604.4.

⁴² Va. Code § 24.2-655.

⁴³ Va. Code §§ 24.2-604.4 and 24.2-639.

⁴⁴ Va. Code § 24.2-655.

⁴⁵ Va. Code § 24.2-655.



Special	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two from each political party with a candidate on the ballot in that election. One from each independent candidate on the ballot in that election.
Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two from each political party with a candidate on the ballot in that election.
Write-in candidate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write-in candidates are not entitled to have authorized representatives. However, write-in candidates and their supporters may be able to witness the counting of votes after the close of polls pursuant to Va. Code § 24.2-655.

VIII. The Provisional Ballot Meeting

Relevant Authorities: Va. Code §§ 24.2-653.01, 24.2-671, and 24.2-678.

A. The Dos and Don'ts of the Provisional Meeting

Authorized Representatives may DO the following

- Attend the provisional ballot meeting.
- Inspect the provisional ballot log and take notes from the list, including the names, phone numbers, year of birth, and addresses of individuals who have voted provisionally, so long as all necessary PII has been removed from the log.

Authorized Representatives DON'T have authority to do the following

- Participate during the provisional meeting; authorized representatives may serve only as observers.
- Impede the orderly conduct of the meeting.

B. Who May be present at the Provisional Ballot Meeting?

Notwithstanding the provisions of Virginia's FOIA law (§ 2.2-3700 et, seq.), only the following are entitled to representation during the provisional meeting.



In all elections

- The individual whose provisional vote is being considered and the individual's representative or legal counsel.
- Appropriate staff and legal counsel for the Electoral Board.

In a general or special election:

- One representative of each political party with a nominee on the ballot in that election.
- One representative of each independent candidate on the ballot in that election.

In a primary election

- One representative of each primary candidate on the ballot in that election.



Dos and Don'ts for Campaigners and Authorized Representatives

IX. APPENDIX A- GUIDELINES FOR CAMPAIGNERS AND AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES (REPS)
§§ 24.2-310, 24.2-604, .et seq., of the Code of Virginia

CAMPAIGNERS (INCLUDES CANDIDATE) - OUTSIDE POLLING PLACE AND PROHIBITED AREA

- ↳ Must be outside 40 feet of any entrance to the building in which voting takes place. Only Electoral Board can authorize limited exceptions.
- ↳ Must not knowingly carry on or about their person any firearm within 100 feet of any building in which voting takes place.
- ↳ No limit to the number of campaigners allowed outside the polling place and prohibited area.
- ↳ Cannot hinder or delay a person from entering or leaving a polling place.
- ↳ Loudspeakers cannot be used within 300 feet of any polling place.
- ↳ Campaign and referendum materials, including sample ballots:
 - Must be distributed outside the polling place and prohibited area.
 - Must contain a statement indicating who paid for/authorized the printing (see ELECT website, Campaign Finance)
 - Subject to a civil fine for failure to properly identify any campaign/referendum material.
- ↳ Sample ballots cannot be printed on white paper and must contain the words "Sample Ballot".

AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES (REPS) - INSIDE POLLING PLACE AND PROHIBITED AREA

- ◆ Must be a qualified Virginia voter.
- ◆ Must not knowingly carry on/about their person any firearm within 100 feet of any building in which voting takes place.
- ◆ Must present to the chief officer of election a "letter of authorization" signed by the independent or primary candidate or party chair entitled to representation (see below) . A copy of the signed "letter of authorization" is acceptable.
- ◆ No campaigning is permitted by anyone inside the polling place building without Electoral Board exception.
- ◆ Cannot hinder or delay any officer of election or voter.
- ◆ Cannot sit at the check-in table with officer of election but must be positioned to see and hear the check-in table and what is occurring. (rep may appeal to the local electoral board if dissatisfied with the chief officer's decision on placement.)
- ◆ May create their own list of voters and mark their own list (an officer cannot provide any list to reps).
- ◆ Cannot provide assistance to any voter or wear any indicator that he is available to assist any voter inside the polling place or within 40 feet of any entrance to the polling place.
- ◆ Officers of election have authority to remove any representative who does not adhere to above guidelines.

BEFORE POLLS OPEN §24.2-639	WHILE POLLS ARE OPEN §24.2-604	ASCERTAINING THE VOTE §24.2-655
<p>One rep of each political party having a nominee on the ballot in this election</p> <p>One rep of each independent candidate on the ballot in this election (or in a primary, each primary candidate on the ballot) [may be the candidate]</p>	<p>Candidates may enter polling places only to vote, or to visit for no longer than ten (10) minutes per day per polling place</p> <p>For each pollbook in use in the precinct:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One rep of each political party having a nominee on the ballot in this election • One rep of each independent candidate on the ballot in this election (or in a primary, each primary candidate on the ballot) [cannot be the candidate] *** <p>If less than three (3) pollbooks in use, the Officers of Election, at their discretion, may allow a maximum of three reps whether or not the pollbook is divided.</p>	<p>Two reps of each political party having a nominee on the ballot in this election</p> <p>One rep of each independent candidate on the ballot in this election (or in a primary, each primary candidate on the ballot) [may be the candidate] ***</p> <p>The representative cannot leave the polling place nor relay in any manner the results of the election until after final results are ascertained and chief officer of election has opened doors and announced the results. There are no exceptions to this rule.</p> <p>Representatives may witness the counting and ascertainment of results and make their own notes but may not touch or handle any ballot, voting equipment or official document, or interfere in any manner.</p>



X. Change Log (High Level Summary)

- The 2026 version significantly expands and reorganizes the document.
- Adds a full Executive Summary and new sections including Sample Ballots and Pre-Processing Meetings.
- Clarifies authorized representative rules with explicit DO and DO NOT lists.
- Provides expanded rules for campaigners and adds firearm and signage restrictions.
- Introduces structured tables defining representative limits by election type.
- Adds an expanded Appendix A with detailed guidance tables.

I. Executive Summary

- Adds a full Executive Summary explaining the purpose of the guide and referencing applicable sections of the Code of Virginia.

II. Campaigning / Campaigners

- Expanded lists of campaigner DOs and DONTs.
- Adds new details: bathroom rules, firearm restrictions within 100 feet, signage rules, and use of loudspeakers.
- Clarifies the authority of building management over signs outside the prohibited area.

III. Sample Ballots

- More structured requirements (“must” / “must not”).
- Clarifies federal vs. state disclaimers.
- Explicit prohibition on white paper and minimum font size.

IV. Pre-Processing Meetings

- Includes a full new section detailing:
 - Notice requirements given to party chairs
 - Authorized representatives viewing rights
 - Written statement requirements for authorized representatives
 - Explicit DON'Ts for authorized representatives and candidates

V. Before Polls Open

- Adds detailed DOs for officers of election and authorized representatives.
- Clarifies verification of ID and representative documentation.

VI. While Polls Are Open

- Details on authorized representative placement, observation, limits on seeing PII, and behavior restrictions.
- Separates candidate rules distinctly.

VII. Close of Polls

- Adds structured tables and clearer DON'Ts.
- Clarifies when authorized representatives may leave and communication restrictions.

VIII. Provisional Ballot Meeting

- New, fully expanded section including who may be present at meetings, observation rules, log inspection rules, and confidentiality safeguards.

Appendix / Guidelines

- Significantly expanded 3-column guidance table.
- More detailed behavioral rules for both campaigners and authorized reps.