



Standards of Conduct for Election & Registration Officials



INSTITUTE FOR ELECTION ADMINISTRATION
RESEARCH & PRACTICE

Standards of conduct for **ELECTION & REGISTRATION OFFICIALS**

Election officials play a critical role as guardians of our democratic process, responsible for ensuring the integrity and fairness of elections. They bear the weight of ensuring that voting is well-organized, that every vote is counted, and that election outcomes reflect the will of the electorate. The importance of their role demands that they uphold the highest standards of conduct in the execution of their duties.



Election administration is complex, and challenged with limited resources. Election officials tirelessly strive to administer free, fair, and secure elections. They cannot anticipate every challenge and operate without error, and their conduct must be judged with consideration of this reality.



Finally, responsibility for carrying out our democratic process does not fall entirely on election officials. It is a shared duty. We must work together to safeguard our elections and provide the support and resources that make election officials' work possible.

My personal pledge to

FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND MY PROFESSION

“I uphold the Constitution of the United States and of my state, and the laws, policies, and court decisions of federal, state and local jurisdictions.”

APPLICATION

- **Understand and adhere to the law:** Election officials should have a working knowledge of all applicable federal, state, and local laws, and always comply with these laws in good faith while carrying out their duties to the best of their ability.
- **Stay current:** Election officials should regularly review legal requirements, stay apprised on changes to law, and seek guidance from legal counsel when uncertain on the correct protocols.
- **Adhere to proper procedures:** Election officials should adhere to all legal requirements and follow efficient and effective processes when setting policy, issuing regulations and guidance, and agreeing to contracts.
- **Document decisions:** Election officials should document their reasoning behind decisions to the extent feasible, to ensure that legal requirements are considered and that the decision can be explained and justified.
- **Act as a nonpartisan resource for federal, state, and local lawmakers:** Election officials are experts on election administration. They should provide regular feedback to lawmakers at all levels of government and offer nonpartisan, factual information when new laws are proposed.



“I strive to maintain the highest level of knowledge and expertise in the elections process through continuing education and self-evaluation.”

APPLICATION

- **Seek training opportunities:** Election officials should seek and take advantage of opportunities for continued training, professional development/certification, and sharing of best practices with others in their profession.
- **State associations:** should endeavor to advance and provide professional development/certification, and serve as clearinghouse for innovative ideas and best practices.
- **Set staff up for success:** Election officials should hire staff based on skills and experience, provide staff with the training and guidance needed to succeed in their roles, and regularly review performance. Administrators should invest in staff knowledge, training, and resources to ensure continuity of operations.
- **Be open to improvement:** Election officials should be transparent about their operations, be open to constructive criticism, and welcome suggestions for improvement from colleagues, public officials, community groups, and voters.



“I strive to conduct elections in a fair, efficient and accurate manner and I am accountable for maintaining public confidence in honest and impartial elections.”

APPLICATION

- **Establish clear protocols in advance:** Election officials should establish and adhere to guidelines and procedures to guide decision making during the election process. Election officials should make these protocols publicly available so that all interested parties are aware of the rules in advance, as long as doing so does not compromise physical security or cybersecurity. When new circumstances demand departures from established protocols, changes should be vetted with relevant stakeholders and communicated clearly to the public.
- **Be impartial:** In carrying out their official duties, election officials should always provide the same level of excellent services to candidates, parties, voters, and other participants in the democratic process.
- **Promote accurate information:** Election officials should endeavor to educate the public on the election administration process, including about the existence of safeguards to ensure fair, accurate, and secure elections.
- **Ensure transparency with voters and the public:** Election officials should encourage members of the public to participate in election administration by serving as election workers or observing election processes, as law permits.



“I dignify voters by promoting equal opportunity to participate in the democratic process; I strive for fair and equitable treatment of the general public, elected officials, and members of my profession.”

APPLICATION

- **Promote dignity, equality, and respect:** Election officials should treat all voters, candidates and other participants in the political process with respect, identify and correct discriminatory policies or practices, and refrain from activities or associations that promote discrimination.
- **Provide clear instructions:** Election officials should inform voters how to cast a ballot and have their vote counted, using varied communication methods and in a manner that is reasonably likely to reach all voters.
- **Provide inclusive voter support:** Election officials should provide accessible and inclusive services to all voters, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds.
- **Lead by example:** Election officials should model the professional and respectful behavior they expect from their staff in both internal and external interactions.



“I am accessible and receptive to both individuals and groups and aspire to build positive relationships within the community.”

APPLICATION

- **Establish communication channels:** Election officials should seek to establish clear communication channels that provide candidates and interested parties equal access to information and opportunities to be heard, where appropriate.
- **Build relationships within the community:** Look for opportunities to connect with the community through education and outreach, including at community events.
- **Be transparent with the public:** Election officials should endeavor to provide appropriate information and access to the public so that individuals can learn more about the election process and voice concerns. Election officials should balance the benefits of transparency with the need to maintain the security of election infrastructure and be effective stewards of public resources when determining what information is reasonable and appropriate to provide to the public.
- **Be responsive:** Election officials should be responsive to communications from voters, candidates and other stakeholders, seek to respond in a timely manner, and be willing to engage in conversation, as resources permit.



“I endeavor to protect the public office from manipulation for personal or partisan gain.”

APPLICATION

- **Follow relevant ethics and campaign finance laws:** As public officeholders, election officials should adhere to relevant ethics and campaign finance laws, including limits on campaign contributions, personal gift restrictions for public officials, conflict of interest rules, and transparency requirements.
- **Set special guardrails when running for office:** Election officials should establish and implement guardrails when running for office in their own jurisdiction, including to the extent feasible, recusing themselves from decisions that have a direct impact on their races.
- **Seek to maintain impartiality and avoid perceived conflicts of interest:** In carrying out their official duties, election officials should refrain from accepting any benefit or taking other actions that would create an appearance of a conflict of interest.



“I am resourceful and responsive to changing conditions within the framework of the law in carrying out my duties on behalf of the public’s interest.”

APPLICATION

- **Be open-minded and flexible:** Election officials should be open to new ideas and approaches as challenges and voter needs evolve, and should be willing to adjust plans when necessary to carry out their duties.
- **Collaborate:** Election officials should seek out opportunities to collaborate, where appropriate, to identify and implement solutions that address the needs of voters.
- **Evaluate procedures for efficiency:** Election officials should look for ways to streamline operations and make processes more efficient.
- **Embrace new technology:** Election officials should stay up to date with technological developments and consider how, with proper testing and security precautions, the technology can be used to improve voter service.



“I conduct all fiscal duties with integrity, and I am responsible in allocating all funds and resources entrusted to my office.”

APPLICATION

- **Use resources efficiently:** Election officials should carefully adhere to budgets made available for election administration, and endeavor to use available resources in a way that maximizes their ability to administer secure, fair, and accurate elections.
- **Follow established procurement processes:** Election officials should follow procurement processes with the goal of obtaining equipment, systems, and services at the best price and quality.
- **Regularly review spending:** Election officials should regularly review and evaluate spending to identify inefficiencies and areas for improvement in future elections.
- **Communicate needs:** Election officials should proactively communicate early and often with relevant decisionmakers about funding and other resources and assistance necessary to carry out responsibilities.



“I maintain a productive and efficient operation through a well-managed elections environment.”

APPLICATION

- **Develop and adhere to procedures:** Election officials should develop and adhere to standard operating procedures, which ensure that the office operates in a consistent and efficient manner and that resources are being used effectively.
- **Establish metrics and track performance:** Election officials should set measurable goals, collect data throughout the election administration process, and use this data to monitor progress.
- **Conduct routine process review and improvement:** Election officials should conduct regular evaluations of internal procedures to evaluate shortcomings and identify areas for improvement.



“I strive to maintain the highest level of integrity in performing all duties of my profession.”

APPLICATION

- **Act with honesty and accuracy:** Election officials should always make a conscious effort to convey accurate information to the public and use sound evidence to guide decision-making.
- **Protect the independence of election administration:** Election officials should resist undue interference from other public officials or outside actors in the administration of elections.
- **Bolster the election administration profession:** Election officials should seek to build trust in the field of election administration as a whole, recognizing that the actions and reputation of any one election official can impact whether all voters have confidence in elections. Election officials should always be mindful that their public conduct, including criticism of other officials, impacts trust in the profession as a whole.

