



Protecting and serving
all of America's voters
on Election Day

Police Executives' Checklist for Election Day

Policing in a time of elections is a uniquely challenging task. Leaders must be prepared for a broad range of situations while also reassuring the public of their commitment to a fair and impartial response.

This checklist is intended to provide police executives with guidance and inspiration for internal and external discussions and decision-making regarding policing leading up to, during, and following an election.

The following are strategies that leaders could consider as part of preparing an agency for Election Day:

Recognize community concerns

- Brief officers at roll call on the role of police on Election Day, focusing on ensuring their commitment to upholding a fair and free democratic election in a nonpartisan manner
- Alert the public to the agency's role for plainclothes officers on Election Day, bearing in mind that transparency will be critical to foster trust at polling locations
- Acknowledge that it is a goal to investigate any reliable intelligence concerning local risks/threats and disinformation, potential crowding issues, etc.

Collaborate with stakeholders

- Meet with the board of elections or local registrar in advance of Election Day and provide a department point of contact for ongoing dialogue through and following Election Day
- Collaborate with city and county leadership to ensure consistent messaging to the community
- Compile a list of polling places and familiarize agency staff with locations, hours of operation, and points of contact at each
- Participate in local, state, and federal government collaborative information sharing environments to learn of emergent issues of potential local and national concern [e.g., FBI/Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), DHS, or similar operation center]
- Establish an Election Day critical incident community and government notification roster
- Confer with mutual aid agencies and prosecutors to develop plan for arrest processing and charging in the event of criminal activity or mass arrests

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Communicate your vision and the law's requirements

- Identify the full range of stakeholders and open lines of communication with them, including municipal attorneys, state police, FBI/JTTF, local and federal prosecutors, activist groups, the board of elections, registrar's office, mutual aid / adjacent law enforcement, other local officials, and formal/informal community leaders
- Ensure you and your agency are knowledgeable about relevant local, state, and federal laws about conduct at polling locations by all parties, including voters, campaign officials, protesters, electioneers and campaigners, private security, poll watchers, polling staff, the media, and police/law enforcement
- Engage with media regularly to address questions and concerns, to correct misinformation and to reassure the public that your agency is committed to safeguarding a nonpartisan, impartial democratic process leading up to, on and following Election Day
- Use the agency's social media platforms to broadcast messages about the agency's commitments, values, and guiding principles. Be aware of social media platforms that may be spreading misinformation regarding the election
- Clarify what entity—pursuant to law—will have obligation for protection of ballots during the election and after ballot count

Affirm agency's commitment to securing the democratic process

- Meet with local elected officials to reiterate the agency's commitment to the democratic process
- Prepare training bulletins and materials to outline rules, laws, procedures, and expectations
- Ensure operational plan for Election Day forecasts staffing and other resource needs and scheduling adjustments have been made
- Brief agency staff on the procedures officers and other officials are to follow at the polls, to include opening and closing procedures, certification of the ballots, and regulations that could affect the voting process
- Reassure local activist and advocacy groups that the agency will support and facilitate the freedom of speech and the right to protest, but will not tolerate criminal acts, violence, or disruption of the voting process
- Describe plans to ensure access to polling locations in the event of disruption
- In conformance with the law, develop a plan for response to display of firearms at/near polling locations

Protect rights and democracy

- Give staff and supervisors procedural guidance and training about effective and impartial conduct at and near polling locations, pursuant to local, state, and federal laws
- Clarify body worn camera policies relevant to local, state laws regarding filming in and around polling locations. Ensure officers understand this policy and clearly define when cameras should be utilized
- Formulate and review disorder control/unrest plans and distribute to agency leadership or command staff