



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

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## Talking Points for Law Enforcement Executives when Engaging the Media

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As Election Day approaches, it is important that police leaders communicate with the media clearly and consistently about what the community can expect from their agencies. Leveraging the media's reach **early and often** can help confirm to the public that your agency is prepared to address potential concerns about free and equal access to polling locations and the voting process. Media outreach can help convey your understanding of relevant laws and democratic principles, and can communicate a commitment to nonpartisan policing up to, on and following Election Day.

Equally important to engaging the media clearly and consistently is being prepared to answer likely questions with fair and impartial responses. Below are a series of questions that law enforcement leaders should be prepared to answer, as well as sample responses.

### What do you think will be the biggest challenge for police on Election Day?

Political and social tensions have been on the rise in America, and Election Day won't be an exception. Institutions that have rarely or never endorsed candidates before have done so, and demonstrations have become more frequent. Many of them are about policing itself, and some protesters have unfortunately leveraged what would otherwise be peaceful gatherings as opportunities to overstep the bounds of the law with intimidation and aggression. There has been a lot of speculation about how this will play out on Election Day and navigating these concerns in a fair and impartial manner is a priority for our department. We're committed to meeting that challenge. Our goal is for officers to be present at the polls when necessary, and in accordance with local and state laws, and above all to ensure safe, free elections for everyone. We're committed to doing this in a nonpartisan way that protects and promotes everyone's right to vote.

### Your agency's labor union has endorsed a candidate for elected office. Should members of the public be concerned that this endorsement means union members will police in a partisan manner?

Our agency is fully committed to fair and impartial policing on Election Day. Labor unions have the prerogative to endorse candidates for elected office, but this does not influence how their members perform official duties. Our officers perform their duties impartially and regardless of their political preference year-round, and Election Day is no exception. We've reminded our officers about their obligations under the Hatch Act and we've conducted roll call training about the critical importance of nonpartisan policing on Election Day. We are going to hold our officers to this standard.

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**Are you concerned about protests and intimidation at the polls, or unauthorized poll watchers who might attempt to interfere with people's right to vote?**

Our goal is to secure every person's right to vote safely and without fear. We have been in close communication with election officials and other law enforcement entities to learn of any plans to impede voters, and our goal is to respond to those swiftly if they occur. It's our intent to proactively visit polling locations in an unobtrusive way, and to respond when any form of intimidation or interference takes place.

**Some people are afraid of seeing the police or other law enforcement officials at the polls and worry that their presence will be intimidating for a variety of reasons. What would you say to those people?**

We understand that the mere presence of a police officer in uniform may be intimidating to some, but I assure you that voters have nothing to fear from our officers. Our goal is to be there, first and foremost, to protect their right to vote. Our goal is to be mindful of not unnecessarily positioning ourselves at the entrance to a polling place, where people sign in to vote, at the balloting location, or any other place that may inadvertently lead people to believe we are there to influence the act of voting or to monitor the process in an inappropriate way.

**Candidates for elected office may make appeals to local police to take certain actions at the polls and after Election Day, ones that might favor them or sow fear, confusion, or discord. How will you respond?**

We are proud to serve the people of our community. It is their need for both their safety and a fair, free democratic election that will guide our nonpartisan work on Election Day and beyond. Our goal is to only take actions necessary to preserve life and safety, or to stop acts that are dangerous or clearly intimidating. In doing so, we will preserve people's First Amendment rights, their right to vote, and their right to exercise both of them fairly and safely.

**How will your department respond if you are asked to enforce election laws, including responding to individuals accused of fraud?**

Generally and consistent with state laws, election law concerns are handled by judicial and other authorities outside of the police. We will cooperate with such judicial and election officials and share information as appropriate, but cannot intervene where the law does not allow.