

Election Day 2020: What is the role of a poll watcher?

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by: Rick Aaron

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Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1eeB1ykghil>

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SALT LAKE CITY (ABC4 News) – On Election Day, many Utah polling places will be monitored by poll watchers, volunteers who have signed up to observe but who are not allowed to interfere or intimidate.

President Donald Trump who has voiced concerns about a rigged election tweeted out a call for poll watchers and a video on his campaign website also recruits supporters to join his election day operations team.

“You don’t have to be a lawyer, you just have to know the rules,” Erin Perrine of the Trump Campaign Election Day Team says in the video. “Once you are trained, you can sign up for a shift at the polls. We all know that the Democrats will be up to their old dirty tricks on election day to make sure President Trump doesn’t win. We cannot let that happen.”

Importance of Utah in the 2020 election

“This year we’re really, unfortunately, fighting against a lot of misinformation and disinformation,” Nikila Venugopal, the Voting Rights Manager for the ACLU of Utah, said. The ACLU will have poll watchers in bright yellow t-shirts stationed at polling places throughout the state.

“Really they’re there to be an advocate for the voter,” Venugopal said. “To observe the processes, make sure things are going smoothly and to let us know if there is an issue we need to work with local officials to deal with.”

Utah's Director of Elections Justin Lee told ABC4 News there's a process for getting certified as a poll watcher.

"You don't just show up. You go and register with the County Clerk and make sure they know who you are," Lee said. "The job of the watcher is really to watch. They can take notes. They can make memos but their job is not to interfere. Their job is not to do the County Clerk's job for them. It's to watch and not get in the way of anybody who's voting."

Both Lee and Venugopal say even with this contentious and emotional election, they don't expect polling place problems here in Utah.

"We're not anticipating any major voter intimidation issues and think people should feel safe getting to the polls," Venugopal said.

"We always want to be transparent," Lee said. "If members of the public or representatives of campaigns want to come see the process, that's a good thing. We want people to know that it works well, you know that there's nothing underhanded going on."