

## Who may observe or enter the voting area

See GS 163-45.

In North Carolina, the only people who may enter the voting location are:

poll workers - includes the Chief Judge, Election Judge and Assistants (what most people will be)  
party observers - persons appointed by the political party or independent candidates to observe the process

No other persons may enter the voting area.

Both must be registered voters.

Both must be approved by the County Board of Elections.

Poll watchers are paid by the board of elections

Party observers are not paid by the BOE.

Only a limited number of persons are allowed within a voter enclosure. See GS 163-166.3.

**§ 163-166.3. Limited access to the voting enclosure.** During the time allowed for voting in the voting place, only the following persons may enter the voting enclosure:

(2) An observer appointed pursuant to G.S. 163-45.

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The public is allowed at all polling places during voting outside a buffer zone. See GS 163-166.4.

**"§ 163-166.4. Limitation on activity in the voting place and in a buffer zone around it.**

(a) Buffer Zone and Adjacent Area for Election-Related Activity. - No person or group of persons shall hinder access, harass others, distribute campaign literature, place political advertising, solicit votes, or otherwise engage in election-related activity in the voting place or in a buffer zone which shall be prescribed by the county board of elections around the voting place. In determining the dimensions of that buffer zone for each voting place, the county board of elections shall, where practical, set the limit at 50 feet from the door of entrance to the voting

place, measured when that door is closed, but in no event shall it set the limit at more than 50 feet or at less than 25 feet. Except as provided in subsection (b), the county board of elections shall also provide an area adjacent to the buffer zone for each voting place in which persons or groups of persons may distribute campaign literature, place political advertising, solicit votes, or otherwise engage in election-related activity

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However, if they obstruct or interfere, they can be removed or arrested. See GS 163-48.

**§ 163-48. Maintenance of order at place of registration and voting.**

The chief judge and judges of election shall enforce peace and good order in and about the place of registration and voting. They shall especially keep open and unobstructed the place at which voters or persons seeking to register or vote have access to the place of registration and voting. They shall prevent and stop improper practices and attempts to obstruct, intimidate, or interfere with any person in registering or voting. They shall protect challenger and witnesses against molestation and violence in the performance of their duties, and they may eject from the place of registration or voting any challenger or witness for violation of any provisions of the election laws. They shall prevent riots, violence, tumult, or disorder.

In the discharge of the duties prescribed in the preceding paragraph of this section, the chief judge and judges may call upon the sheriff, the police, or other peace officers to aid them in enforcing the law. They may order the arrest of any person violating any provision of the election laws, but such arrest shall not prevent the person arrested from registering or voting if he is entitled to do so. The sheriff, police officers, and other officers of the peace shall immediately obey and aid in the enforcement of any lawful order made by the precinct election officials in the enforcement of the election laws. The chief judge and judges of election of any precinct, or any two of such election officials, shall have the authority to depute any person or persons as police officers to aid in maintaining order at the place of registration or voting. (1901, c. 89, s. 72; Rev., s. 4376; C.S., s. 5977; 1955, c. 871, s. 4; 1967, c. 775, s. 1; 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 762, s. 21.)

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When the election closes, the public can enter the precinct to observe activities. See GS 163-166.10.

**§ 163-166.10. Procedures after the close of voting.**

The State Board of Elections shall promulgate rules for closing the voting place and delivering voting information to the county board of elections for counting, canvassing, and record maintenance. Those rules shall emphasize the need for the appearance as well as the reality of security, accuracy, participation by representatives of more than one political party, openness of the process to public inspection, and honesty. The rules, at a minimum, shall include procedures to ensure all of the following:

- (1) The return and accurate accounting of all official ballots, regular, provisional, voted, unvoted, and spoiled, according to the provisions of Articles 15A of this Chapter.
- (2) The certification of ballots and voter- authorization documents by precinct officials of more than one political party.
- (3) The delivery to the county board of elections of registration documents and information gleaned through the voting process that would be helpful in the accurate maintenance of the voter registration records.
- (4) The return to the county board of all issued equipment.
- (5) The restoration of the voting place to the condition in which it was found.

(2001-460, ss. 3,3.1, effective January 1, 2002)

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