

Section 3: Polling Place Hours

Poll workers should be taught how to open and close polls on Election Day.

Opening the Polls

- On the day of any election, the polls must open at exactly 7:00 a.m. and remain open continuously until closing time at 8:00 p.m. (These times may differ for unconsolidated municipal elections). When the polls are opened, poll workers should announce loudly, “The polls are open,” before allowing any ballots to be cast. Voting shall begin as soon as the polls are opened. (§§ 10242, 14212-14214)

Closing the Polls

- When the polls are closed, poll workers should proclaim loudly, “The polls are closed.” No voters who arrive after the polls close may cast votes. (§§ 14401, 14402)
- Any voter (including a voter dropping off a vote-by-mail ballot) who is in line at 8:00 p.m. when the polls are scheduled to close is allowed to vote. If there is a line when the polls close, a poll worker should stand at the back of the line to let people who arrive after 8:00 p.m. know that the polls have closed. Any voter who arrives after the polls have closed may not be allowed to vote, even if voters who were in line to vote before the polls closed are in the process of voting. (§§ 14401, 14402)

Extended Poll Hours by Court Order

- Poll workers should be informed that a court order could be issued to extend the voting hours. Poll workers should be told how they would be informed to keep their polling places open. Generally, poll workers will be notified of extended hours by phone, text message, or a visit from a roving inspector.
- Rumors and media reports of court orders are not sufficient to trigger extended poll hours. Poll workers must be officially notified by a county elections official.
- If a court order extends the time the polls are open, poll workers must know that anyone who votes during that timeframe is required to cast a provisional ballot. The provisional ballots cast during the extended time period must be kept separate from other provisional ballots cast before 8:00 p.m., in the event a legal determination is made that the polls should not have been kept open. (§ 14402.5)