

Williamson County National, State, and County General Election Poll Observation Report - Early Voting and Election Day, 2024

The League of Women Voters of Williamson County (LWVWmCo) had fifteen poll observers at six voting locations during Early Voting (Oct. 16-31) and twelve observers at nine polling places on Election Day (Nov.5). The LWVWmCo commends the Williamson County Election Commission for another well-run election.

Locations Visited by League of Women Voters Poll Observers

Early Voting

- The Election Commission Office
- Franklin Recreation Complex
- John P. Holt Brentwood Library
- Nolensville Recreation Center
- The Pearl at Fairview
- Somerfield Health Center (The Heritage), Brentwood
- Vitality Senior Living Facility, Franklin

Election Day

- The Church of the City, Franklin
- Cool Springs Conference Center
- County Enrichment Center, Franklin
- Hillsboro Middle School
- The John P. Holt Brentwood Library
- Legacy Middle School
- Longview Recreation Complex
- Pearre Creek Elementary
- Trinity Elementary

Overall

LWVWmCo poll observers reported well-run polling places with professional, friendly, and voter-oriented poll workers at each location. The 100-foot boundary was well marked and respected at all the polling places during early voting and Election Day. The observers also noted that the locations were neat, clean, and well-organized. Specific Issues and

Recommendations are located in Appendix A

ADA Issues: The Election Commission should be commended for effectively training poll workers to help voters who requested assistance. Our observers reported, for example, that the poll workers were very positive, helpful, and respectful. The most common problem identified was the lack or the location of signage informing those who needed assistance to proceed to the front. Recommendations for improvement are located in Appendix A of this document.

Number of machines and tabulators: Overall, the observers felt there was an appropriate number of voting machines and tabulators at each location for both elections. The one exception was the Franklin Recreation Center. This location had a larger volume than anticipated, but the Election Commission Staff should be commended for sending assistance when the lines grew long there.

Voting Entrance Signage: The observers reported that the signage was generally adequate, with the exceptions noted at the Cool Springs Conference Center, the Election Commission Office, the Franklin Recreation Center, the John P. Holt Brentwood Library, Pearre Creek Elementary, and Trinity Elementary.

Flow within the Polling Location: Most observers noted that the flow was effective at their locations. However, some improvement was recommended at the following locations: Church of the City, the Cool Springs Conference Center, the Election Commission Office, and the Franklin Recreation Center.

Voters turned away from voting: Half of our observers during the Early Voting period and all of our observers on election day reported voters being turned away for various reasons. Those observers who were able to verify why the voter was turned away reported that the most common reason had to do with the voter's registration status. The vote was either unregistered, not registered in Williamson County, or had registered after the deadline. In most cases, if the individual was not registered, they were offered a registration form to complete. Several poll observers reported instances where a person attempted to vote but could not. In several instances, the individuals were not registered, were not registered in Williamson County, or they had registered after the deadline.

In most cases, if the individual was not registered, they were offered a registration form to complete. In all but one instance, the voter appeared satisfied with how the issue was resolved.

Our observers also reported other instances where voters had recently changed addresses or did not reside in the county. The voters appeared to be satisfied with the way their issue was resolved.

Provisional Ballots: Our observers reported a few instances where voters were offered a provisional ballot. One voter was given incorrect information regarding the deadline for verifying the information on her provisional ballot.

Voters wearing political hats, shirts, buttons, etc., entering the polling place: Our observers only reported one instance where a person was turned away from the polling place because of political attire. The individual returned a little later with a sweatshirt covering the political message.

Other Poll-Watching Groups: the following organizations also participated in poll-watching during early voting and on Election Day: a representative from the Williamson County Republican Party and Organize Tennessee.

League of Women Voters of Williamson County General Recommendations

As a result of our observations, we recommend the following:

ADA Issues: Improve signage at the voting locations, directing voters to entrances that meet ADA requirements and/or need assistance. It would be particularly helpful if the commission provided portable signs for each early voting location.



Voters turned away from voting: If the Election Commission is not currently keeping records on the number of voters turned away for not being registered, we strongly encourage them to begin tracking this number. We would also encourage the Commission to seek ways to inform voters of their voter registration status, the voter registration deadlines, and the boundaries for Williamson County. The League is committed to assisting in this effort.

Provisional Ballots: We recommend the Election Commission compile and make public the number of provisional ballots cast and the numbers accepted and rejected. There seems to be some inconsistency when a voter is given a provisional ballot and when a voter must resolve the issue with the Election Commission. We also recommend that the Poll Worker training emphasize the TN requirements for providing provisional ballots and the proper procedures to follow.

Poll Observing: One of the questions asked was where the poll observers were located at each polling place. Most observers had difficulty hearing, but most could see what was occurring. The Poll Official monitored the door at one polling location, so it was difficult for the observer to find out what had transpired at the check-in table. In another instance, the Election Official was out to lunch when the observer arrived, and no one knew what to do. We recommend that an alternate be trained and/or designated to step in when necessary. Since we are prohibited from speaking to any official other than the Election Official, it would be helpful to place a sign near where the observers are seated to inform voters that they are not to engage with the poll observers inside the polling place.

Appendix A

Signage - Issues and Recommendations

Church of the City: The entrance was not well marked from the parking lot. Once it got dark, there was no lighting in the parking area or on the sidewalk, making it difficult for people to move to and from their vehicles to the entrance.

Cool Springs Conference Center: The 100-foot boundary was not marked.

Election Commission Office: If notices are posted on the door and the door is left open, the notices can't be seen. A bigger sign about not wearing campaign garb inside would limit the policing the poll workers need to do. Our observer noted a significant improvement in the signage for disabled voters once the deficiency was brought to the attention of the Election Commission staff.

John P. Holt Brentwood Library: When there was no line, it wasn't obvious to voters where the entrance to the polling place was located. As a result, voters came to the circulation desk to ask. The circulation desk kept track of the inquiries, and they had 27 inquiries between 10 and 11 o'clock. Recommendation: place a sign inside the entrance to the library directing voters to the outside entrance.

Longview Recreation Center, Spring Hill: The handicapped parking or drop-off point for people with disabilities was not marked or easily located.

Pearre Creek Elementary: The entrance was not well marked. There was also no signage prohibiting campaign apparel inside the polling place.

Trinity Elementary: only one small sign with an arrow indicated where the entrance to the polling place was located. When the observer arrived, it was pointed in the wrong direction. When the observer left, someone had turned it to point in the correct direction. Also, the sign informing voters of ADA accommodations was taped to the wall inside the polling place, so it was not easily seen from the doorway.

Flow within the Polling Location – Issues and Recommendations

The Church of the City: The entrance was very crowded, making voter privacy difficult to maintain. The voters did not know where to go after marking their ballots. Taping arrows on the floor or additional signage indicating the direction of the exit would have been helpful. Additionally, there was some confusion about where to stop and wait for someone to escort the voter to the voting booth. In one case, a voter proceeded to the booth without assistance. The poll observer pointed this out to the Poll Official, and he immediately rectified the situation. Some people entered the exit door and then ducked under the divider.

Cool Springs Conference Center: Entrance/exit lanes were not marked at the entry to the room. Some people entered the exit and then ducked under the divider.

Election Commission Office: There is always a jam at the door, with people stopping to get stickers in the same place as those coming in and going out. Move the sticker station to the other side of the fireplace. Also, the in-and-out barrier should be brought into the polling room when the doors open. Additionally, there are still issues with voters crossing the "Stop here" line at the entrance to the voting room, thus violating voters' privacy at check-in desk 1. Many voters could not see where the person calling was sitting, so there was confusion. Perhaps having the computer stations numbered would help so voters could be directed to a particular station.

Franklin Recreation Center: An additional exit sign right above the "You Voted" sign with the stickers would help direct voters to exit as intended. Some people naturally turned from there to exit, where they entered and had to be verbally redirected. There is a significant need for a poll worker to manage the entrance and exit. Voters did not see the "STOP HERE" sign, so they routinely crossed it while waiting for their turn, and check-in workers occasionally had to tell them to step back. This is a privacy issue for voters who are checking in. Voters waiting to enter also routinely blocked the exit, slowing everything down. Because no one managed the entrance, check-in workers had to yell, "Next, please." Many voters could not see where the person calling was sitting, so there was confusion. Other voters weren't paying attention, and realizing they were being called took a while. This slowed down the process and seemed to be frustrating for poll workers. A person working at the door would immediately solve these issues.