



BEYOND

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How Election Officials are Facing 2024


ELECTION CENTER
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* ELECTION OFFICIALS

THE INSTITUTE FOR
ELECTION ADMINISTRATION
RESEARCH & PRACTICE

A note from
THE ELECTION CENTER & THE INSTITUTE

The 2024 election year will undoubtedly pose serious challenges for election officials. Chief among them will be overcoming trust deficits with voters and demonstrating that the election will be safe, secure, and well-run. The Election Center and The Institute for Election Administration Research & Practice are highly confident in all of you and the steps you are taking to prepare for this moment. In addition to your diligent and important work, we want to share the newly detailed Standards of Conduct for Election Officials. This is by no means a new document – but our application of it, and our campaign to see it publicly adopted nationwide, are.

The Standards are a bridge between the values and principles election officials bring to our work and the concrete actions we take to uphold those principles in practice. They are a tool for communicating with the public about what it means to conduct a free and fair election, and how we as election officials ensure all eligible voters have an equal opportunity to participate.

We hope you will make use of the Standards of Conduct, and publicly adopt them this year. This document gives you the tools to do that clearly and effectively. Please make use of the toolkit however you choose, and contact our team with any questions or requests for support.

Sincerely,

The Election Center Board of Directors

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Standards of conduct for
**ELECTION & REGISTRATION
OFFICIALS**



Election officials play a critical role as guardians of our democratic process, responsible for ensuring the integrity and fairness of elections. They bear the weight of ensuring that voting is well-organized, that every vote is counted, and that election outcomes reflect the will of the electorate. The importance of their role demands that they uphold the highest standards of conduct in the execution of their duties.



Election administration is complex, and challenged with limited resources. Election officials tirelessly strive to administer free, fair, and secure elections. They cannot anticipate every challenge and operate without error, and their conduct must be judged with consideration of this reality.



Finally, responsibility for carrying out our democratic process does not fall entirely on election officials. It is a shared duty. We must work together to safeguard our elections and provide the support and resources that make election officials' work possible.



My personal pledge to
**FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY
AND MY PROFESSION**

“I uphold the Constitution of the United States and of my state, and the laws, policies, and court decisions of federal, state and local jurisdictions.”

APPLICATION

- **Understand and adhere to the law:** Election officials should have a working knowledge of all applicable federal, state, and local laws, and always comply with these laws in good faith while carrying out their duties to the best of their ability.
- **Stay current:** Election officials should regularly review legal requirements, stay apprised on changes to law, and seek guidance from legal counsel when uncertain on the correct protocols.
- **Adhere to proper procedures:** Election officials should adhere to all legal requirements and follow efficient and effective processes when setting policy, issuing regulations and guidance, and agreeing to contracts.
- **Document decisions:** Election officials should document their reasoning behind decisions to the extent feasible, to ensure that legal requirements are considered and that the decision can be explained and justified.
- **Act as a nonpartisan resource for federal, state, and local lawmakers:** Election officials are experts on election administration. They should provide regular feedback to lawmakers at all levels of government and offer nonpartisan, factual information when new laws are proposed.



“I strive to maintain the highest level of knowledge and expertise in the elections process through continuing education and self-evaluation.”

APPLICATION

- **Seek training opportunities:** Election officials should seek and take advantage of opportunities for continued training, professional development/certification, and sharing of best practices with others in their profession.
- **State associations:** should endeavor to advance and provide professional development/certification, and serve as clearinghouse for innovative ideas and best practices.
- **Set staff up for success:** Election officials should hire staff based on skills and experience, provide staff with the training and guidance needed to succeed in their roles, and regularly review performance. Administrators should invest in staff knowledge, training, and resources to ensure continuity of operations.
- **Be open to improvement:** Election officials should be transparent about their operations, be open to constructive criticism, and welcome suggestions for improvement from colleagues, public officials, community groups, and voters.



“I strive to conduct elections in a fair, efficient and accurate manner and I am accountable for maintaining public confidence in honest and impartial elections.”

APPLICATION

- **Establish clear protocols in advance:** Election officials should establish and adhere to guidelines and procedures to guide decision making during the election process. Election officials should make these protocols publicly available so that all interested parties are aware of the rules in advance, as long as doing so does not compromise physical security or cybersecurity. When new circumstances demand departures from established protocols, changes should be vetted with relevant stakeholders and communicated clearly to the public.
- **Be impartial:** In carrying out their official duties, election officials should always provide the same level of excellent services to candidates, parties, voters, and other participants in the democratic process.
- **Promote accurate information:** Election officials should endeavor to educate the public on the election administration process, including about the existence of safeguards to ensure fair, accurate, and secure elections.
- **Ensure transparency with voters and the public:** Election officials should encourage members of the public to participate in election administration by serving as election workers or observing election processes, as law permits.



“I dignify voters by promoting equal opportunity to participate in the democratic process; I strive for fair and equitable treatment of the general public, elected officials, and members of my profession.”

APPLICATION

- **Promote dignity, equality, and respect:** Election officials should treat all voters, candidates and other participants in the political process with respect, identify and correct discriminatory policies or practices, and refrain from activities or associations that promote discrimination.
- **Provide clear instructions:** Election officials should inform voters how to cast a ballot and have their vote counted, using varied communication methods and in a manner that is reasonably likely to reach all voters.
- **Provide inclusive voter support:** Election officials should provide accessible and inclusive services to all voters, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds.
- **Lead by example:** Election officials should model the professional and respectful behavior they expect from their staff in both internal and external interactions.



“I am accessible and receptive to both individuals and groups and aspire to build positive relationships within the community.”

APPLICATION

- **Establish communication channels:** Election officials should seek to establish clear communication channels that provide candidates and interested parties equal access to information and opportunities to be heard, where appropriate.
- **Build relationships within the community:** Look for opportunities to connect with the community through education and outreach, including at community events.
- **Be transparent with the public:** Election officials should endeavor to provide appropriate information and access to the public so that individuals can learn more about the election process and voice concerns. Election officials should balance the benefits of transparency with the need to maintain the security of election infrastructure and be effective stewards of public resources when determining what information is reasonable and appropriate to provide to the public.
- **Be responsive:** Election officials should be responsive to communications from voters, candidates and other stakeholders, seek to respond in a timely manner, and be willing to engage in conversation, as resources permit.



“I endeavor to protect the public office from manipulation for personal or partisan gain.”

APPLICATION

- **Follow relevant ethics and campaign finance laws:** As public officeholders, election officials should adhere to relevant ethics and campaign finance laws, including limits on campaign contributions, personal gift restrictions for public officials, conflict of interest rules, and transparency requirements.
- **Set special guardrails when running for office:** Election officials should establish and implement guardrails when running for office in their own jurisdiction, including to the extent feasible, recusing themselves from decisions that have a direct impact on their races.
- **Seek to maintain impartiality and avoid perceived conflicts of interest:** In carrying out their official duties, election officials should refrain from accepting any benefit or taking other actions that would create an appearance of a conflict of interest.



“I am resourceful and responsive to changing conditions within the framework of the law in carrying out my duties on behalf of the public’s interest.”

APPLICATION

- **Be open-minded and flexible:** Election officials should be open to new ideas and approaches as challenges and voter needs evolve, and should be willing to adjust plans when necessary to carry out their duties.
- **Collaborate:** Election officials should seek out opportunities to collaborate, where appropriate, to identify and implement solutions that address the needs of voters.
- **Evaluate procedures for efficiency:** Election officials should look for ways to streamline operations and make processes more efficient.
- **Embrace new technology:** Election officials should stay up to date with technological developments and consider how, with proper testing and security precautions, the technology can be used to improve voter service.



“I conduct all fiscal duties with integrity, and I am responsible in allocating all funds and resources entrusted to my office.”

APPLICATION

- **Use resources efficiently:** Election officials should carefully adhere to budgets made available for election administration, and endeavor to use available resources in a way that maximizes their ability to administer secure, fair, and accurate elections.
- **Follow established procurement processes:** Election officials should follow procurement processes with the goal of obtaining equipment, systems, and services at the best price and quality.
- **Regularly review spending:** Election officials should regularly review and evaluate spending to identify inefficiencies and areas for improvement in future elections.
- **Communicate needs:** Election officials should proactively communicate early and often with relevant decisionmakers about funding and other resources and assistance necessary to carry out responsibilities.



“I maintain a productive and efficient operation through a well-managed elections environment.”

APPLICATION

- **Develop and adhere to procedures:** Election officials should develop and adhere to standard operating procedures, which ensure that the office operates in a consistent and efficient manner and that resources are being used effectively.
- **Establish metrics and track performance:** Election officials should set measurable goals, collect data throughout the election administration process, and use this data to monitor progress.
- **Conduct routine process review and improvement:** Election officials should conduct regular evaluations of internal procedures to evaluate shortcomings and identify areas for improvement.



“I strive to maintain the highest level of integrity in performing all duties of my profession.”

APPLICATION

- **Act with honesty and accuracy:** Election officials should always make a conscious effort to convey accurate information to the public and use sound evidence to guide decision-making.
- **Protect the independence of election administration:** Election officials should resist undue interference from other public officials or outside actors in the administration of elections.
- **Bolster the election administration profession:** Election officials should seek to build trust in the field of election administration as a whole, recognizing that the actions and reputation of any one election official can impact whether all voters have confidence in elections. Election officials should always be mindful that their public conduct, including criticism of other officials, impacts trust in the profession as a whole.



MEDIA RECOMMENDATIONS

The background image shows a wooden desk with a laptop, a microphone, and some papers. A red banner with white text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

MEDIA RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL

Communities and voters need to better understand their election officials, and what you do to ensure elections are conducted with honesty and integrity. This is paramount to increasing trust in our elections. We want the American people to see that election workers are their next door neighbors, the people they sit next to in their houses of worship, and the person in front of them at the grocery store line. While the values and principles outlined in the Standards of Conduct aren't new, they present an opportunity for election officials like you to better describe your work and demonstrate how these Standards are applied in the everyday practice of election administration.

We encourage all election officials to publicly sign on to the Standards of Conduct, and use them as a tool to engage local media around your office's work. This will look different depending on your position and your office's policies, and we encourage you and your office to engage with the Standards however you are best able. We welcome and encourage election offices to sign on in addition to individuals. For more information on adopting the Standards of Conduct or any questions, please contact hilary.rudy@coloradosos.gov.

You may publicly announce your adoption of the Standards using any of the means below, including social media, a press release, or an op-ed. Publicly adopting the Standards is ultimately a tool for engaging your community around your work and that of your office, so we urge anyone who adopts these principles to continue to talk about them with your community at every opportunity.

If you are interested in developing your message or engaging on a wider scale, we are here to help. Please contact us with any questions regarding the Standards of Conduct and interacting with the media. CLYDE, a communications firm, is also supporting the launch of the Standards and able to assist with questions.



MESSAGING AND TALKING POINTS

The following talking points can be used in public settings (i.e., interviews, speeches, op-eds, social media, etc.) to reintroduce your work to your community and discuss how the Standards of Conduct codify values and principles that election officials abide by.

- Nationwide, election officials are working diligently to prepare for record levels of voter participation and ensure the 2024 election is conducted with fairness and integrity.
- Research shows that many Americans do not know their election officials or understand our work. There is more that can be done within our profession to engage our communities and use transparency to build trust in what we do.
- We need to show the people we serve, the voters, that we are part of your communities, and that we take our roles extremely seriously. Election officials follow the Constitution and all state and local laws, we conduct elections with honesty and integrity, and we ensure all voters have an equal opportunity to participate.
- Sharing these values with our communities isn't enough - we need a better way to explain what we do in practice to administer free and fair elections.
- The Standards of Conduct, developed by Election Center members and enhanced by the Election Center's cross-partisan Committee on Ethics in Practice and The Institute for Election Administration Research & Practice, help to bridge our principles with our actions. They are a tool for election officials to clearly communicate with the public about how we do our jobs, and what it means to administer elections with transparency, honesty, and integrity.
- I am adopting the Standards of Conduct in recognition of the excellent work our elections office already does in line with these standards, and to make a public commitment to my community that this is who we are. I encourage other election officials to join us.



SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA

TWITTER

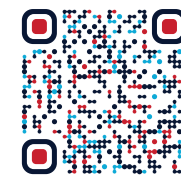
- Our office is adopting new standards of conduct that show in detail how we work to uphold transparent, free, and fair elections, by ensuring all voters have an equal chance to participate. Learn more about our work: bit.ly/49dCnuR #ProtectTheVote 🗳️🔒
- I am proud to adopt the Standards of Conduct created by @Electioncenter2 to promote free and fair elections in communities like ours. Read to learn more about how we conduct elections with honesty and integrity: bit.ly/49dCnuR #SafeElections 📖🗳️
- Research shows many Americans don't know their election officials or what we do. To help change that, I'm joining other election officials nationwide in embracing new standards of conduct that make our work clearer. bit.ly/49dCnuR 🔍🗳️ #Transparency #StandardsOfConduct
- Election officials play a vital role in our democracy. Learn about our commitment to honesty, integrity, and equal opportunity in the new Standards of Conduct developed by @ElectionCenter2: bit.ly/49dCnuR 🗳️👥 #ElectionOfficials #StandardsOfConduct
- The #StandardsOfConduct serve our community by confirming we will follow the laws of the U.S. constitution, ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to vote, build trust, act in a nonpartisan manner, and more! Learn more about our pledge here: bit.ly/49dCnuR #SafeElections 🗳️👥

LINKEDIN/INSTAGRAM/FACEBOOK

- I am joining election officials across the country in adopting standards of conduct that detail how we work to uphold transparent, free and fair elections, by ensuring all eligible voters have an equal opportunity to participate. This code of ethics reinforces our decades of experience in administering elections with honesty and integrity. Learn more about the principles that guide our work below! bit.ly/49dCnuR #ProtectTheVote 🗳️🔒
- It is critical that all Americans can trust the outcomes of our elections. To help increase understanding of our office's work to hold elections that are transparent, free, and fair, I am joining other election officials nationwide in adopting new standards of conduct. Read below to learn about the principles we follow, and how we put them into practice: bit.ly/49dCnuR

- I'm proud to serve my community by ensuring our elections give all eligible voters an equal opportunity to participate. To back that commitment up, I'm publicly adopting new standards of conduct for our office that reinforce our existing work to hold elections that are free and fair. This code of ethics says we will:

- ✓ Follow all laws and the U.S. Constitution
 - ✓ Ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to vote
 - ✓ Engage with our community to build trust
 - ✓ Act in a nonpartisan manner
- ...and more!



Download social media graphics to share your adoption of the Standards of Conduct here:
<https://bit.ly/electionstandardstoolkit>

ACCOUNTS TO TAG

Election Center

- Twitter: [@ElectionCenter2](https://twitter.com/ElectionCenter2)
- Facebook: [Election Center](https://www.facebook.com/ElectionCenter)
- Threads/Instagram: [@electioncenternaeo](https://www.instagram.com/electioncenternaeo)

Speaker Handles

- Michael Adams: [@KYSecState](https://twitter.com/KYSecState)
- Adrian Fontes: [@AZSecretary](https://twitter.com/AZSecretary)
- Benjamin Ginsberg: [@BenLGinsberg](https://twitter.com/BenLGinsberg)
- Tammy Patrick: [@aztammyp](https://twitter.com/aztammyp) on [Twitter/X](https://twitter.com/) & [Threads](https://www.threads.net/@aztammyp)
- Madeleine May: [@madbmay](https://twitter.com/madbmay)
- Zach Montellaro: [@ZachMontellaro](https://twitter.com/ZachMontellaro)

Hashtags

- #StandardsOfConduct
- #ElectionOfficials
- #FreeAndFairElections
- #ProtectTheVote
- #SafeElections



PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

[LOGO OR LETTERHEAD]

Contact:

[MEDIA CONTACT NAME]

[PHONE NUMBER]

[EMAIL]

[DATE OF RELEASE]

For Immediate Release

[STATE/COUNTY/TOWN] Election Office Adopts Official Code of Ethics, Reiterates Commitment to Integrity and Fairness in Elections

[YOUR CITY/TOWN], [STATE] – [ELECTION OFFICIAL TITLE/NAME] announced today that [YOUR OFFICE] has adopted new Standards of Conduct reinforcing its current approach to conducting elections with integrity and fairness. The Standards represent a public recommitment by [OFFICE] to upholding the law and U.S. Constitution, providing equal opportunities to all eligible voters, ensuring elections are conducted impartially, and taking other steps to uphold public confidence in free and fair elections.

[QUOTE FROM ELECTION OFFICIAL].

Nationwide, election officials are working diligently to prepare for record levels of voter participation and ensure the 2024 election is conducted with fairness and integrity. [OFFICE] is committed to communicating transparently with the public about our elections process and ensuring a fair and accurate count.

The Standards of Conduct were developed by the Institute for Election Administration Research & Practice and the Election Center, also known as the National Association of Election Officials, the premier non-partisan, nationwide organization for training and certification of election and voter registration administrators. The Standards of Conduct reinforce the work elections offices around the country already do, while providing the public with a clear and concise view of how election officials conduct their work, the values and principles that underpin fair administration of our elections, and how election officials ensure the integrity of our democracy.

Principles outlined in the Standards of Conduct include:

- Upholding the U.S. and state constitutions and following all federal, state, and local laws
- Conducting elections fairly, efficiently, and accurately
- Providing all eligible voters an equal opportunity to participate
- Being accessible and building positive relationships with the community

For more information on how [OFFICE] conducts fair and accurate elections, contact [MEDIA CONTACT NAME] at [EMAIL].

OP-ED WRITING BEST PRACTICES

Authoring an op-ed in a local or state newspaper read by members of your community is a great way to outline your values, your commitment to your community, and the work your office is doing to administer this year's elections. Be sure to share any published material on social media to keep the conversation going. A general guide to op-ed writing is below:

- Op-eds should be easy to read and understand. Limit flowery language, unnecessary words, and anything above a high school reading level.
- Keep length around 700 to 800 words or less.
- Make use of the Standards of Conduct as you look for ways to describe how your office works with honesty and integrity. Encourage other election officials to adopt it for themselves.
- A sample outline for an op-ed could look like the following:
 - **Introduction:** Start with relevant and recent news about the upcoming 2024 election in your community that underlines why greater understanding of election officials' work is needed. **State your thesis and its importance.**
 - **Body:** Begin each body section with a subjective statement, and back up each claim with 2-3 pieces of evidence. Make sure all points connect back to the thesis and transition to the next point.
 - › **Body 1: Challenges facing your office for the 2024 Election.**
 - Explain challenges you are facing.
 - How these could harm election officials and hinder free and fair elections.
 - › **Body 2: Importance of trust in our community.**
 - Explain that many Americans lack awareness and understanding about what election officials actually do.
 - Discuss ways to bridge this gap and help the public understand election officials' commitment to our jobs.
 - › **Body 3: Standards of conduct are just a start.**
 - Explain why you are adopting the Standards and how they can help people understand your work.
 - Note that these principles are nothing new, but represent a national effort by election officials to better communicate about our role.
 - **Conclusion:** Restate the importance of increasing trust in elections in 2024, and the steps you are taking to increase understanding of your work.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project is the result of efforts of many individuals and organizations in the election administration space. Special thanks are due to the Square One Foundation and the Election Center’s Institute for Election Administration Research & Practice and Auburn University for supporting this work, to Mitchell Brown and Kathleen Hale for designing this project, to Becca Autrey, Ruby Edlin, Larry Norden, Derek Tisler, and Dan Weiner for their scholarship in developing the first draft of the annotated code of ethics, to the election officials and election administration system stakeholders from around the country involved in focus groups and providing other feedback over the past two years, and to the Election Center’s Committee on Ethics in Practice for their dedication and thoughtful reflection on the issues raised here, with a special thanks to Hilary Rudy for her leadership.

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This toolkit was produced in partnership with CLYDE, a communications agency dedicated to protecting our democracy and its institutions by working with reform advocates, election officials, and advocacy organizations. Learn more at clyde.us/democracy.





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