



NORTH CAROLINA

State Board of Elections & Ethics Enforcement

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NUMBERED MEMO 2018-15

TO: County Boards of Elections
FROM: Kim Strach, Executive Director
RE: **Security at the Polls**
DATE: October 26, 2018

In light of several recent events at voting sites, this numbered memo provides information to elections officials to help ensure all voters have safe, positive experiences when they go to the polls and that poll workers and observers feel safe as they do their jobs.

The safety of voters and elections officials is a top priority. At the same time, you must remain cognizant that some voters may feel intimidated by the presence of law enforcement at the polls. We have had complaints in past elections, including an election protest, due to the presence of uniformed sheriffs or deputies at polling places when the sheriff was a candidate on the ballot.

One way to increase security without discouraging some voters is to ask local law enforcement to increase patrols in the area of voting sites. Doing this as a preventative measure may also avoid problems before they happen. Informing law enforcement of the location and schedules of your voting sites is another way you can make sure they are prepared. Let them know you will be reaching out if an incident occurs at a voting site.

The chief judge or one-stop site manager must use their sound discretion to attempt to de-escalate any potential disturbance. All your elections officials should be familiar with your emergency plan and know who to contact if a problem arises. If they feel any person's safety is threatened at a voting site, officials' first call should always be to emergency personnel. They should also alert your office right away. Once an incident is resolved, precinct officials must document what happened with an incident report, which should be submitted as a Help Ticket.

Please review [Numbered Memo 2016-20](#) for more information on enforcement of the buffer zone and some examples of prohibited acts. [Numbered Memo 2016-16](#) provides detailed guidance about voter assistance and includes a script for precinct officials to use when interacting with voters who may need assistance.