

# Operational and Communications Toolkit

## Managing Drop Box Observers

Recently, ballot drop boxes have been a common subject of misinformation and misconception. As such, it's important for elections officials to be well acquainted with the rules and policies around dropbox observation.

This generic, nonpartisan resource includes operational response best practices for engaging with dropbox observers, as well as starter templates for [social media](#), [news releases](#), and [voter-facing information](#). These can be easily adapted for any election office and provide a starting place for nonpartisan communication with voters about drop box observers. Keep in mind, these are just samples and guides. We encourage you to adapt them to your jurisdiction's needs and make them your own. We encourage you to consult your state, county, or city attorney about relevant statutes.

## Operational Response Best Practices

This Operational Response Template outlines steps that election officials can take to proactively manage conversations around drop boxes and to navigate issues should they arise. These guidelines are based on best practices, and are organized based on the situation and audience.

Planning Phase	Steps to Consider
Preparation	<p><b>Training Staff and Developing Protocols</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Legal Training:</b> Ensure all staff are knowledgeable about state and local laws regarding ballot drop box monitoring and voter intimidation.</li><li>● <b>Incident Response Training:</b> Conduct regular training on de-escalation techniques and how to handle confrontational situations. Include role-playing exercises to help staff practice responses.</li><li>● <b>Resource Availability:</b> Ensure staff have access to relevant resources, such as quick reference guides to laws, contact lists, and incident report forms.</li><li>● <b>Develop Protocols:</b> Develop and distribute clear, written protocols for how to respond to overzealous observers, including step-by-step instructions for different types of situations. This document can be used as a starting point.</li></ul> <p><b>Communication with Law Enforcement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Pre-Election Coordination:</b> Schedule meetings with local law enforcement before the election to discuss potential issues and establish a clear communication plan.</li><li>● <b>Emergency Contacts:</b> Create a list of emergency contacts within law enforcement, ensuring that all staff have this information readily available.</li><li>● <b>Joint Training:</b> Consider joint training sessions with law enforcement to ensure a coordinated response to any incidents.</li></ul> <p><b>Develop and Share Observer Guidelines</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Visible Signage:</b> Place signs at all ballot drop box locations clearly stating the rules for observers, including distance requirements and prohibited behaviors.</li><li>● <b>Handouts:</b> Provide printed guidelines to observers who arrive at ballot drop box locations, outlining their rights and responsibilities.</li><li>● <b>Online:</b> rules and guidelines should also be posted on the official elections website</li></ul>
Communicating with Observers	Always communicate in a calm and respectful manner, regardless of the observer's behavior. Use clear and straightforward language to avoid misunderstandings.

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Planning Phase	Steps to Consider
	<p><b>Template Scripts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Initial Interaction:</b> "Hello, I see that you are observing the ballot drop box. Please ensure that you are following all guidelines for observers. If you have any concerns, you can report them to our office. Thank you for your cooperation."</li> <li>● <b>Addressing Non-Compliance:</b> "We understand your interest in the election process. However, we must ask you to follow the observer guidelines to ensure the safety and integrity of the voting process. Failure to comply may result in your removal from this area."</li> <li>● <b>Escalation Warning:</b> "We have noticed that your current behavior is disruptive. If you do not comply with the guidelines, we will need to contact law enforcement to ensure the safety of all voters and staff."</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communicating with Voters</b></p>	<p><b>Pre-Election Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>News Releases:</b> Issue news releases outlining the rules for ballot drop box observers and the measures in place to ensure a fair and safe election process. Include information about the importance of following these guidelines.</li> <li>● <b>Social Media Posts:</b> Use social media to remind the public of their rights and responsibilities regarding ballot drop boxes. Share clear, concise posts about the rules for observers and how to report concerns.</li> <li>● <b>Community Outreach:</b> Engage with community organizations, local leaders, and influencers to spread the word about proper ballot drop box etiquette and the role of observers.</li> </ul> <p><b>During the Election</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Regular Updates:</b> Provide regular updates on the status of ballot drop box monitoring through news releases, social media, and the official election website. Address any incidents promptly and transparently.</li> <li>● <b>Incident Reporting:</b> Encourage the public to report any concerning behavior they witness around ballot drop boxes. Provide clear instructions on how to report issues and reassure the public that their concerns will be taken seriously.</li> <li>● <b>Hotline Availability:</b> Establish a hotline for voters to call if they encounter problems or have questions about ballot drop box observers. Ensure the hotline is well-publicized and staffed by knowledgeable personnel.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Media Engagement</b></p>	<p><b>Communicate Proactively:</b> Reach out to local media outlets before the election to discuss the measures in place for ballot drop box security and observer guidelines. Offer interviews or news briefings to answer any questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Remind voters of existing security and monitoring processes that are already in place</li> <li>● Reiterate that regardless of how a ballot is received, it is subjected to verification and confirmation</li> </ul>

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Planning Phase	Steps to Consider
	<p><b>Incident Response:</b> Prepare a media response plan for any incidents involving overzealous observers. Be ready to issue statements and hold news conferences if necessary to address the situation and reassure the public.</p> <p><b>Transparency and Accountability:</b> Emphasize the importance of transparency and accountability in your communications with the media. Ensure that any information shared is accurate and up-to-date.</p>

# Managing Drop Box Observers

## Social Media Templates

Here are some sample social media posts related to managing drop box observers. They can be adapted based on the urgency of the situation. These sample posts may also be used on other platforms you use to reach community members.

Platform	Sample Text
Twitter	<p><b>Pre-Election Reminder</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention Voters! As we approach election day, remember that ballot dropboxes are a safe, secure, and <b>monitored</b> way to cast your ballot. Your vote matters! #Vote2024 #ElectionIntegrity</li> <li>• Whether a ballot is received by mail, via dropbox, or cast in-person, we have extensive verification processes to confirm the eligibility of the voter and the legitimacy of the vote cast. #Vote2024 #ElectionIntegrity</li> </ul> <p><b>Observer Guidelines</b> If you are planning on observing a ballot drop box, you must follow local guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a respectful distance. <a href="#">[If a specific jurisdictional distance requirement exists, include it here].</a></li> <li>• Do not engage voters.</li> <li>• Report any concerns to our office.</li> </ul> <p>Together, we ensure a safe and fair election! #Election2024 #VoteSafe</p> <p><b>Incident Reporting</b> See something concerning at a ballot drop box? Report it! Our hotline is available to address any issues. Let's keep our election process safe and secure. #ElectionSafety #Vote2024</p>
Facebook	<p><b>Pre-Election Reminder</b> As election day approaches, remember that our ballot drop boxes are secure and closely monitored. Observers are crucial to this process but must adhere to strict guidelines to ensure fairness and safety. Your vote is your voice—make it count! #Vote2024 #ElectionIntegrity</p> <p><b>Observer Guidelines</b> If you're observing a ballot drop box, please remember:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a respectful distance.</li> <li>• Do not engage with voters.</li> <li>• Report any concerns directly to our office.</li> </ul> <p>Together, we can ensure a safe and fair election process! #Election2024 #VoteSafe</p> <p><b>Incident Reporting</b> Have you seen something concerning at a ballot drop box? Please report it! Our hotline is available to address any issues and ensure the safety and security of our election process. Let's work together for a fair election. #ElectionSafety #Vote2024</p>
Instagram	<p><b>Pre-Election Reminder</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Image:</b> Voters dropping ballots into a secure drop box.</li> <li>• <b>Caption:</b> Election day is around the corner! Remember, ballot drop boxes are secure and monitored. Observers play a key role but must follow guidelines. Your vote is your voice—make it count! #Vote2024 #ElectionIntegrity</li> </ul>

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Platform	Sample Text
	<p><b>Observer Guidelines</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Image:</b> Infographic with observer guidelines.</li> <li>● <b>Caption:</b> Observing a ballot drop box? Here are the key guidelines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maintain a respectful distance.</li> <li>○ Do not engage voters.</li> <li>○ Report concerns to our office.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Let's ensure a safe and fair election together! #Election2024 #VoteSafe</li> </ul> <p><b>Incident Reporting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Image:</b> Hotline number with a secure ballot box background.</li> <li>● <b>Caption:</b> If you see something concerning at a ballot drop box, report it! Our hotline is here to help. Let's work together to keep the election process safe and secure. #ElectionSafety #Vote2024</li> </ul>
LinkedIn	<p><b>Pre-Election Reminder</b></p> <p>As we approach election day, it's important to remember that ballot drop boxes are secure and monitored. Observers play a crucial role but must follow strict guidelines to ensure a fair and safe process. Your vote is your voice—make it count! #Vote2024 #ElectionIntegrity #CivicDuty</p> <p><b>Observer Guidelines</b></p> <p>Observing a ballot drop box? Please adhere to these important guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Maintain a respectful distance.</li> <li>● Do not engage with voters.</li> <li>● Report any concerns directly to our office.</li> </ul> <p>Together, we ensure a secure and fair election process! #Election2024 #VoteSafe #DemocracyInAction</p> <p><b>Incident Reporting</b></p> <p>If you witness any concerning behavior at a ballot drop box, we encourage you to report it immediately. Our hotline is available to address issues and ensure the security of our election process. Let's work together to uphold the integrity of our elections. #ElectionSafety #Vote2024 #PublicSafety</p>

For more examples of social media posts, reference the Elections Assistance Commission's "[Election Official Social Media Toolkit](#)."

# Managing Drop Box Observers

## Sample News Release Template



These generic news release templates are a starting point. The first is meant to be released before the election, to provide guidance on the rules in place for ballot box observers. The second can be used in response to incidents related to drop box observers. These are customizable for your jurisdiction. The **Blue text** notes places where jurisdiction specific text is particularly important. It's a best practice to keep news releases to one page or two at most.

### CONTACT

[Your Name]  
[Your Title]  
[County Elections Office]  
[Phone Number]  
[Email Address]  
[Date]



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Pre-Election Guidance for Ballot Box Observers

[City, State], [Date] – “As we approach the upcoming election, the [County/City] Election Office is committed to ensuring a transparent voting process. To this end, we would like to remind voters that ballot drop boxes are a safe, secure, and **monitored** way to cast your ballot. [Include jurisdictional details about what this monitoring entails].

In addition, whether a ballot is received by mail, via dropbox, or cast in-person, we have extensive verification processes to confirm the eligibility of the voter and the legitimacy of the vote cast.”

[Jurisdictional/State/Federal] If you plan on observing dropboxes, you must follow these guidelines:

1. **Maintain Distance:** Observers must keep a respectful distance from the ballot drop box to avoid intimidating or interfering with voters. This ensures that voters can cast their ballots in privacy and without disruption.
2. **Non-Engagement:** Observers should not engage with voters, election staff, or interfere with the voting process. Any interaction with voters may be perceived as intimidation and is strictly prohibited.
3. **Reporting Concerns:** If observers have any concerns or witness any suspicious activity, they should report it directly to the Election Office rather than confronting individuals or taking matters into their own hands.
4. **Adherence to Rules:** Observers must follow all local, state, and federal laws regarding election observation. Any violation of these rules may result in removal from the observation area and potential legal consequences.

#### Resources Available:

- **Observer Guidelines:** Detailed guidelines are available on our website [insert link] and at each ballot drop box location.
- **Hotline:** A dedicated hotline is available for observers to report concerns or ask questions: [Hotline Number].

For more information, please visit our website [insert website] or contact the Election Office at [Contact Information].

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## Sample News Release Template



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### CONTACT

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[County Elections Office]

[Phone Number]

[Email Address]

[Date]

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Incident Involving Drop Box Observer

[City, State], [Date] – The [County/City] Election Office is addressing recent reports of overzealous behavior by some ballot drop box observers. Our priority is to maintain a safe, secure, and orderly election process, and we take any actions that threaten this seriously.

**Incident Summary:** Over the past few days, we have received multiple reports of observers engaging in behavior that violates our guidelines at [list locations or additional details]. These actions include [describe, for example, approaching and questioning voters, blocking access to ballot drop boxes, creating a disruptive environment, etc.].

**Immediate Actions Taken [list all pertinent actions that your jurisdiction has taken, for example]:**

1. **Increased Monitoring:** We have increased the presence of election staff and law enforcement at ballot drop box locations to ensure compliance with observer guidelines and to protect voters.
2. **Observer Removals:** Individuals who have violated the guidelines have been asked to leave the observation area. Repeat offenders will face further legal action.
3. **Public Reminders:** We are reiterating our guidelines for ballot box observers to the public through various channels, including social media, our website, and community bulletins.

**Statement from the Election Office:**

"We are committed to ensuring that every voter can cast their ballot without fear or intimidation. The recent behavior of some observers is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. We urge all observers to follow the established guidelines and to respect the voting process. Our team, along with local law enforcement, is dedicated to maintaining a secure and respectful environment for all voters."

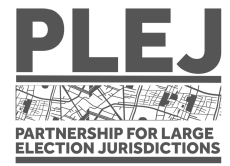
**Guidelines Reminder:**

Observers must maintain a respectful distance, avoid engaging with voters, and report any concerns to the Election Office. Any violation of these guidelines will result in immediate action, including removal from the site and potential legal consequences.

For further information or to report concerns, please contact the Election Office at [Contact Information].

# Managing Drop Box Observers

## Voter-Facing Information Template



Here is an example of a generic, *conversational* resource on what voters may need to know about drop box observation. **Blue text** denotes places where jurisdiction specific information is particularly important, though the entire resource is customizable for your jurisdiction.

### Voter Education Handout: Understanding Ballot Drop Box Observation



**Your Vote Matters! Ensure a Safe and Secure Voting Experience**  
*What You Need to Know About Ballot Drop Box Observers*

Members of our community are allowed to observe the voting process and ballot drop-off process. However, we have guidelines in place for observers to ensure that everyone stays safe, comfortable, and can participate in the election process.

#### Guidelines for Observers:

1. **Maintain Distance:** Observers must keep a respectful distance from the ballot drop box to avoid any intimidation or interference with voters.
2. **Non-Engagement:** Observers should not engage with voters or election staff. Any interaction with voters may be perceived as intimidation and is not allowed.
3. **Reporting Concerns:** If observers have any concerns or witness suspicious activity, they should report it directly to the Election Office. They should not confront individuals.
4. **Adherence to Rules:** Observers must follow all local, state, and federal laws regarding election observation. Violating these rules can result in removal and legal consequences. Our local laws can be found here: [\[LINK\]](#).

#### Your Rights as a Voter:

- **Privacy:** You have the right to cast your ballot in privacy without being approached or questioned by observers.
- **Safety:** If you feel unsafe or witness inappropriate behavior by observers, report it immediately to the Election Office.
- **Support:** Election staff and law enforcement are available to ensure a safe voting environment for everyone.

#### How to Report Issues:

If you experience or witness any concerning behavior at a ballot drop box, please report it to the Election Office:

- **Hotline:** [\[Hotline Number\]](#)
- **Email:** [\[Email Address\]](#)
- **Website:** [\[Website URL\]](#)

**Remember: Your vote is your voice. Let's work together to ensure a safe, secure, and fair election process for all.**

**Contact Us: For any questions or concerns, contact the [\[County/City\]](#) Election Office at:**

Phone: [\[Phone Number\]](#)

Email: [\[Email Address\]](#)

Website: [\[Website URL\]](#)

**Stay Informed: Follow us on social media for the latest updates and information:**

Twitter: [\[Twitter Handle\]](#)

Instagram: [\[Instagram Handle\]](#)

Facebook: [\[Facebook Page\]](#)

LinkedIn: [\[LinkedIn Page\]](#)