

# Serving as an Election Judge

## Montana Secretary of State, Election and Voter Services

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MONTANA SECRETARY OF STATE

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## Serving as an Election Judge

In the United States, more than 1.4 million citizens serve as election judges! On election day, a citizen's right to vote and have that vote count can rest in the hands of the "people on the ground" – the **Election Judges**. There are few jobs as critical to our democracy as the job of an Election Judge.

Election Judges – whether working at polling places, counting ballots or doing other assigned duties – provide a vital and important function for the voters of the **State of Montana**. It is in large part because of the time and effort election judges have committed that Montana's elections are fair, accurate and accessible. Together we can help instill confidence in Montana voters that their vote is valued and important!

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**GET INVOLVED, ENGAGE IN GOVERNMENT PROCESSES and SERVE AS AN ELECTION JUDGE!**



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## Qualifications

### Election Judges:

- Must be registered voters of the county and precinct where they are serving.
  - Except when filling vacancies.
- Cannot be a candidate, or a spouse, ascendant, descendant, brother, or sister of a candidate or a candidate's spouse or the spouse of any of these in an election precinct where the candidate's name appears on the ballot.
  - However, this does not apply to candidates for precinct offices.



## Appointments

- Judges are appointed by the county governing body from a list compiled by the election administrator at least 30 days before the primary election in even-numbered years.
  - Three or more judges per precinct are appointed.
  - A chief judge for each precinct must be appointed.
- Judges must attend training conducted by the election administrator every other year before the primary election.



## Appointments

- The election administrator must notify judges of their appointment and of the time set for training.
- Training must include how to operate voting systems if voting systems are used in the county.
- Attendees of the training may not be paid for attendance unless the individual is appointed as an election judge.
- Each election judge completing the training is given a certificate of completion.
  - No one can serve as an election judge without a valid certificate, unless filling vacancies in emergencies.



Election judges must be trained and recertified before each even-year primary election.

The Secretary of State provides [model training](#) for election judges and publishes an [Election Judge Handbook](#) that is provided to each election judge by the election administrator.

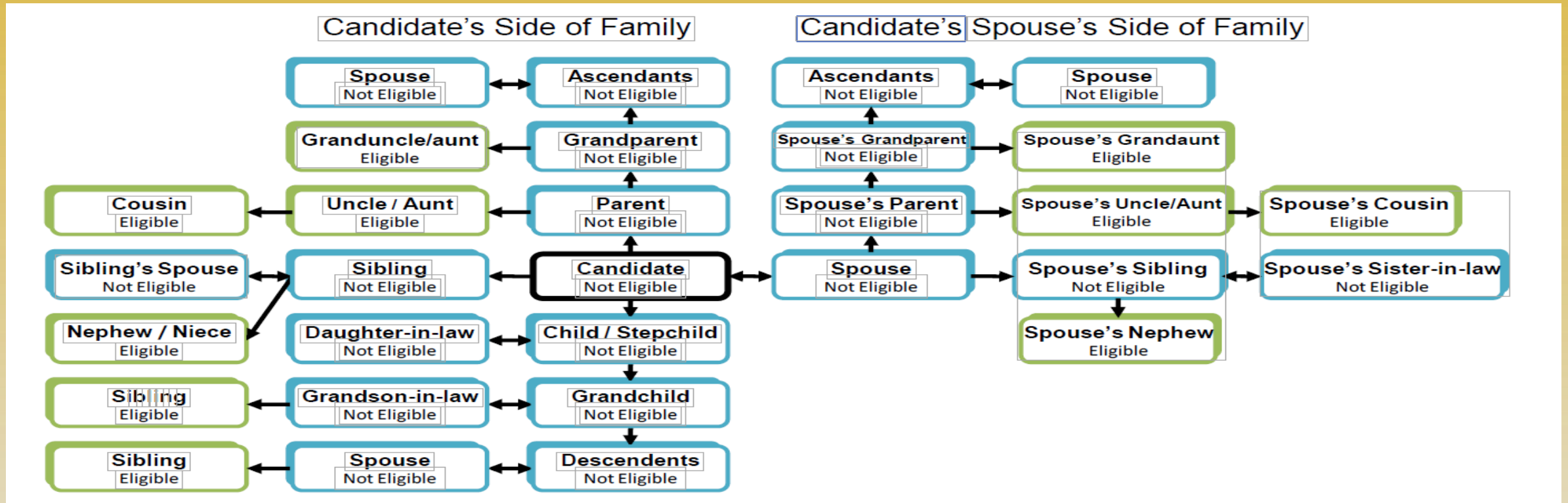
## Compensation

Election judges are paid for their service by the county. Hourly rate must be at least the state or federal minimum wage, whichever is greater.

- Montana 2023 minimum wage: \$9.95 per hour
- Federal 2023 minimum wage: \$7.25 per hour



# Election Judge Appointment – Qualification Chart



# Montana Code Annotated 2021 MCA [13-4-107](#)

## Title 13. Elections

### Chapter 4. Election Judges

#### Part 1. Appointment

### Qualifications Of Election Judges

**13-4-107. Qualifications of election judges.** (1) Election judges must be registered electors of the county in which they serve.

(2) No election judge may be a candidate or a spouse, ascendant, descendant, brother, or sister of a candidate or a candidate's spouse or the spouse of any of these in an election precinct where the candidate's name appears on the ballot. However, this does not apply to candidates for precinct offices.

(3) If a polling place for a precinct is located in the same venue as one or more other precincts, a candidate whose name appears on any ballot being voted on within the venue, an ascendant, descendant, brother, sister, or spouse of the candidate, or a spouse of an ascendant, descendant, brother, or sister of the candidate may not serve as an election judge within the venue.





## What does a Citizen Need to Know to Serve as an Election Judge?

Election Judges are not required to have any election experience in order to serve. Some helpful attributes for election judges include:

### ➤ Ability to Learn and Retain Large Amounts of Information

- In addition to the training provided by the election administrator, each election judge is provided with an [Election Judge Handbook](#) published each election cycle by the Secretary of State.
- The Secretary of State offers online election judge training to supplement the county's training and as a refresher between elections.



## What does it take to serve as an Election Judge?

### ➤ Customer Service Skills!

- Election judges at the polling places interact with voters for extremely long hours on election day. Good customer service skills helps election judges deal with voters who may be frustrated.
- Voters may be confused about the process and look to the election judges to give them accurate information.

### ➤ Stamina!

- Election judges frequently are scheduled to work from 6 a.m. until 8 p.m. or later on election day.
- Requirements are 3 election judges for each precinct at the polling place during the election, resulting in no breaks in service during the day.



## What does it take to serve as an Election Judge?

- Having a sense of humor is important as an election judge!
  - Many voters arrive at the polling place at the same time, either early in the morning before work, at lunch or after work. This can result in **long** lines and frustrated voters. It is important to treat everyone with respect and realize the process can be frustrating. It is also important for election judges not to take things personally, to put things into perspective and have a good sense of humor to get you through the day!

If you want to serve as an Election Judge, contact your [County Election Administrator](#). The information can be found at: [sosmt.gov](http://sosmt.gov)

