



2023 CLEARINGHOUSE “CLEARIE” AWARD SUBMISSION

CATEGORY

Outstanding Innovations in Elections

TITLE

Drop Box Observer Program

SUBMITTED BY

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DROP BOX OBSERVER PROGRAM

Pierce County is Washington state's second-largest jurisdiction with over 550,000 registered voters. Pierce County has been voting-by-mail since 2011, making drop boxes a vital and critical part of our elections. Misinformation has been circulated around the security of ballot drop boxes, creating concern among some voters.

Recognizing this issue, Pierce County Elections worked with our political parties to develop a new observer program in the summer of 2022. This initiative centered around our 50 county-wide drop boxes.

In working with the local political parties, Pierce County sought to create a formal program for the observation of drop boxes. Pierce County Elections partners with observers to monitor the conditions at each site on election night. The drop box observer program helps create accountability by political parties observing and confirming that our legal requirements and internal policies are being met.



TRAINING

Before each election, Pierce County Elections hosts a training for those interested in being a drop box observer. The training is our chance to work with political parties and advocates. It gives our team the opportunity to demystify drop boxes and deposited ballots. The training touches on the following:



- ★ **The do's and don'ts of observing voters at the drop box.**
- ★ **Our process and security measures we take when collecting ballots.**
- ★ **What observers can expect to see, and how the closing process works.**
- ★ **How ballots are processed when returned to Pierce County Elections, including the signature verification process.**

Additionally, during the training, we present a video of our drop box collection process, showing the steps of ballot collection. This helps our observers understand what they are looking at and to discern if election staff is not following the required procedures. We acknowledge and depend on the people who attend these trainings to be great advocates for the election process in the community. This local advocacy can only be achieved by providing training and resources.

View the video at rb.gy/xwvpid or

**CLICK HERE TO
WATCH VIDEO**

ELECTIONS OBSERVER



Questions? Call (253) 798-VOTE (8683)



DROP BOX OBSERVER FORMS



SCAN ME

Check-in with
Pierce County Elections



SCAN ME

Check-out with
Pierce County Elections

form is submitted, an email is automatically sent to the Elections Manager, Supervisor, and Drop Box Supervisor.

The second QR code takes you to an online check-out form with Pierce County Elections. This is to be completed before the observer leaves their checked-in location. The form asks the date and time they stopped observing the drop box, as well as a space to leave feedback and comments. This is a great opportunity for the observer to let us know if any of our staff didn't follow protocol; suggest changes to traffic flow and direction; improvements for lighting; additional directional signage; and so on.

This check-in/check-out process also benefits the election office staff by knowing who is at the drop boxes in case voters call concerned about the observers. We can verify that the observers are known and trained by us to watch the drop box process. This gives the callers a sense of security and comfort when dropping off their ballots.

CHECK-IN & CHECK-OUT FORMS

To make the trained drop box observers easily identified by voters and staff, we created laminated cards that say "Elections Observer" to place on the dash of their vehicle. The back side of these cards have two QR codes.

The first QR code takes you to an online check-in form with Pierce County Elections. The form asks for the observer's name, party affiliation, the location of the drop box they are observing, and the date and time they arrived. Once the

2022 GENERAL ELECTION

30 DROP BOXES
OBSERVED

32 OBSERVERS

2022 PRIMARY ELECTION

27 DROP BOXES
OBSERVED

32 OBSERVERS

HELPFUL FEEDBACK

"Dropbox clogged at 5:30pm. I called it into my coordinator and this was relayed to Kyle. PCE workers arrived about 20-30 minutes later and they emptied 4 full boxes out of box. No issues after that."

"This location gets fairly consistent traffic and very congested at times with small turning space."

2023 GENERAL ELECTION

19 DROP BOXES
OBSERVED

24 OBSERVERS

2023 PRIMARY ELECTION

20 DROP BOXES
OBSERVED

25 OBSERVERS

HELPFUL FEEDBACK

"Several tried to leave their ballot after 8:00. Attendant collected them into their packet. She handled it well and appropriately."

"Would really help to have No Parking sign up from sidewalk to corner to assist voters getting to box."