



**ALEX PADILLA** | SECRETARY OF STATE | STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
ELECTIONS DIVISION

1500 11<sup>th</sup> Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814 | **Tel** 916.657.2166 | **Fax** 916.653.3214 | [www.sos.ca.gov](http://www.sos.ca.gov)

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County Clerk/Registrar of Voters (CC/ROV) Memorandum #16322

**TO:** All County Clerks/Registrars of Voters

**FROM:** /s/ Jana M. Lean  
Chief, Elections Division

**RE:** General Election: Cameras at Polling Places

The Secretary of State's office has historically taken the position that the use of cameras or video equipment at polling places is prohibited. Although there has been recent media coverage surrounding the use of cameras at polling places and AB 1494 regarding ballot "selfies" has been signed into law, our guidance will remain unchanged until January 1, 2017, when the new law goes into effect. However, there are several circumstances, including those described below, where election officials or poll workers could permit such use.

An example of when an elections official can permit the use of cameras at the polls is if a credentialed media organization wants to photograph or film a candidate voting at a polling place. This is something you may permit, provided you ensure such activity does not interfere with voting, is not intimidating to any voters or election workers, and that the privacy of voters is not compromised. Additionally, voters sometimes rely on information (sample ballots, notes, etc.) contained on their mobile phones to assist in casting their ballots.

With regard to exit polling, the Secretary of State's office recommends advising news organizations and other pollsters to refrain from exit polling activities within at least 25 feet of a polling place.

There are several laws that speak to the issue of whether people are allowed to film inside or adjacent to a polling place, most of which stem from the principle set forth in Article II, Section 7 of the California Constitution, which reads: Voting shall be secret.

It is also clear that, over the years, the Legislature and the Governor have sought to make the voting process private and free from any form of intimidation or coercion.

California Elections Code section 14221 states: Only voters engaged in receiving, preparing, or depositing their ballots and persons authorized by the precinct board to keep order and enforce the law may be permitted to be within the voting booth area before the closing of the polls.

California Elections Code section 14291 states: After the ballot is marked, a voter shall not show it to any person in such a way as to reveal its contents.

California Elections Code section 18370 states in part:

No person, on election day, or at any time that a voter may be casting a ballot, shall, within 100 feet of a polling place, a satellite location under Section 3018, or an elections official's office:

- (a) Circulate an initiative, referendum, recall, or nomination petition or any other petition.
- (b) Solicit a vote or speak to a voter on the subject of marking his or her ballot.
- (c) Place a sign relating to voters' qualifications or speak to a voter on the subject of his or her qualifications except as provided in Section 14240.
- (d) Do any electioneering as defined by Section 319.5. As used in this section, "100 feet of a polling place, a satellite location under Section 3018, or an elections official's office" means a distance 100 feet from the room or rooms in which voters are signing the roster and casting ballots.

Any person who violates any of the provisions of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor.

California Elections Code section 18540 states:

- (a) Every person who makes use of or threatens to make use of any force, violence, or tactic of coercion or intimidation, to induce or compel any other person to vote or refrain from voting at any election or to vote or refrain from voting for any particular person or measure at any election, or because any person voted or refrained from voting at any election or voted or refrained from voting for any particular person or measure at any election is guilty of a felony punishable by imprisonment pursuant to subdivision (h) of Section 1170 of the Penal Code for 16 months or two or three years.
- (b) Every person who hires or arranges for any other person to make use of or threaten to make use of any force, violence, or tactic of coercion or intimidation, to induce or compel any other person to vote or refrain from voting at any election or to vote or refrain from voting for any particular person or measure at any election, or because any person voted or refrained from voting at any election or voted or refrained from voting for any particular person or measure at any election is guilty of a felony punishable by

imprisonment pursuant to subdivision (h) of Section 1170 of the Penal Code for 16 months or two or three years.

California Elections Code section 18541 states:

- (a) No person shall, with the intent of dissuading another person from voting, within 100 feet of a polling place, do any of the following:
  - (1) Solicit a vote or speak to a voter on the subject of marking his or her ballot.
  - (2) Place a sign relating to voters' qualifications or speak to a voter on the subject of his or her qualifications except as provided in Section 14240.
  - (3) Photograph, video record, or otherwise record a voter entering or exiting a polling place.
- (b) Any violation of this section is punishable by imprisonment in a county jail for not more than 12 months, or in the state prison. Any person who conspires to violate this section is guilty of a felony.
- (c) For purposes of this section, 100 feet means a distance of 100 feet from the room or rooms in which voters are signing the roster and casting ballots.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Robbie Anderson at [Robbie.Anderson@sos.ca.gov](mailto:Robbie.Anderson@sos.ca.gov) or (916) 657-2166. Thank you.