

1-7-105. Watchers at primary elections. (1) Each political party participating in a primary election shall be entitled to have a watcher in each precinct in the county. The chairperson of the county central committee of each political party shall certify the persons selected as watchers on forms provided by the county clerk and recorder and submit the names of the persons selected as watchers to the county clerk and recorder. To the extent possible, the chairperson shall submit the names by the close of business on the Friday immediately preceding the election.

(2) In addition, candidates for nomination on the ballot of any political party in a primary election shall be entitled to appoint some person to act on their behalf in every precinct in which they are a candidate. Each candidate shall certify the persons appointed as watchers on forms provided by the county clerk and recorder and submit the names of the persons selected as watchers to the county clerk and recorder. To the extent possible, the candidate shall submit the names by the close of business on the Friday immediately preceding the election.

Source: L. 92: Entire article R&RE, p. 733, § 9, effective January 1, 1993. L. 2007: Entire section amended, p. 1977, § 22, effective August 3.

Editor's note: This section is similar to former § 1-7-202 as it existed prior to 1992.

ANNOTATION

I. General Consideration.

II. Irregularities.

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATION.

Annotator's note. The following annotations include cases decided under former provisions similar to this section. Designation of poll watchers for political organizations is not required in order to ensure constitutional access to the voting process. *Baer v. Meyer*, 728 F.2d 471 (10th Cir. 1984).

II. IRREGULARITIES.

The presumption that election officers have faithfully discharged their duties always obtains until the contrary is shown. *Londoner v. People ex rel. Barton*, 15 Colo. 557, 26 P. 135 (1890); *Baldauf v. Gunson*, 90 Colo. 243, 8 P.2d 265 (1932). And the will of the people should not be defeated by an honest mistake of election officers.

Baldauf v. Gunson, 90 Colo. 243, 8 P.2d 265 (1932). Moreover, literal compliance with prescribed forms is not required if the spirit of the law is not violated. *Baldauf v. Gunson*, 90 Colo. 243, 8 P.2d 265 (1932). And form should be subservient to substance when no legal voter has been deprived of his vote and no injury of any kind has been done to anyone. *Baldauf v. Gunson*, 90 Colo. 243, 8 P.2d 265 (1932).

But where there is a gross disregard of the procedure and formalities required in the conduct of elections, whether permitted by design, through ignorance, or negligence, the returns should be

rejected. *People v. Lindsey*, 80 Colo. 465, 253 P. 465 (1927). However, it is not necessary that actual fraud should be committed. *People v. Lindsey*, 80 Colo. 465, 253 P. 465 (1927).

Rather, when it is clearly established that frauds subversive of the purity of the ballot box and tending to nullify the popular will have been perpetrated by the election officers of a precinct, or have been perpetrated by others with their knowledge, connivance, and consent, and the extent of such frauds cannot be disclosed with reasonable certainty, the official returns from the precinct should be thrown out. *Londoner v. People ex rel. Barton*, 15 Colo. 557, 26 P. 135 (1890); *Baldauf v. Gunson*, 90 Colo. 243, 8 P.2d 265 (1932). However, where the counting officers divulged how the vote stood and left the tally books in an unlocked box, such irregularities did not constitute fraud subversive of the purity of the ballot box and tending to nullify the popular will or such culpable negligence as to render the doings of the election officials unworthy of credence and destroy the integrity of the returns. *Baldauf v. Gunson*, 90 Colo. 243, 8 P.2d 265 (1932). Entire poll ordinarily not rejected. The fact that illegal ballots have been cast, or that other irregularities have taken place, does not ordinarily warrant the rejection of the entire poll. *Londoner v. People ex rel. Barton*, 15 Colo. 557, 26 P. 135 (1890); *Baldauf v. Gunson*, 90 Colo. 243, 8 P.2d 265 (1932). But where it is impossible to separate with reasonable certainty legal from illegal votes, the entire vote should be rejected. *People v. Lindsey*, 80 Colo. 465, 253 P. 465 (1927).

1-7-106. Watchers at general and congressional vacancy elections. Each participating political party or issue committee whose candidate or issue is on the ballot, and each unaffiliated and write-in candidate whose name is on the ballot for a general or congressional vacancy election, is entitled to have no more than one watcher at any one time in each voter service and polling center in the county and at each place where votes are counted in accordance with this article. The chairperson of the county central committee of each major political party, the county chairperson or other authorized official of each minor political party, the issue committee, or the write-in or unaffiliated candidate shall certify the names of one or more persons selected as watchers on forms provided by the county clerk and recorder and submit the names of the persons selected as watchers to the county clerk and recorder. To the extent possible, the chairperson, authorized official, issue committee, or candidate shall submit the names by the close of business on the Friday immediately preceding the election. The watchers shall surrender the certificates to the election judges at the time they enter the voter service and polling center and are sworn by the judges. This section does not prevent party candidates or county party officers from visiting voter service and polling centers or drop-off locations to observe the progress of voting.

Source: L. 92: Entire article R&RE, p. 733, § 9, effective January 1, 1993. L. 95: Entire section amended, p. 862, §

122, effective July 1. L. 2002: Entire section amended, p. 1633, § 15, effective June 7. L. 2007: Entire section amended, p. 1978, § 23, effective August 3. L. 2013: Entire section amended, (HB 13-1303), ch. 185, p. 718, § 61, effective May 10. Editor's note: This section is similar to former § 1-7-104 as it existed prior to 1992. Cross references: In 2013, this section was amended by the "Voter Access and Modernized Elections Act". For the short title and the legislative declaration, see sections 1 and 2 of chapter 185, Session Laws of Colorado 2013.

1-7-107. Watchers at nonpartisan elections. Candidates for office in nonpartisan elections, and proponents and opponents of a ballot issue, are each entitled to appoint one person to act as a watcher in every polling place in which they are a candidate or in which the issue is on the ballot. The candidates or proponents and opponents shall certify the names of persons so appointed to the designated election official on forms provided by the official and submit the names of the persons selected as watchers to the county clerk and recorder. To the extent possible, the candidate, proponent, or opponent shall submit the names by the close of business on the Friday immediately preceding the election.

Source: L. 92: Entire article R&RE, p. 734, § 9, effective January 1, 1993. L. 93: Entire section amended, p. 1416, § 65, effective July 1. L. 2007: Entire section amended, p. 1978, § 24, effective August 3.

1-7-108. Requirements of watchers. (1) Watchers shall take an oath administered by one of the election judges that they are eligible electors, that their name has been submitted to the designated election official as a watcher for this election, and that they will not in any manner make known to anyone the result of counting votes until the polls have closed.

(2) Neither candidates nor members of their immediate families by blood, marriage, or civil union to the second degree may be poll watchers for that candidate. (3) Each watcher shall have the right to maintain a list of eligible electors who have voted, to witness and verify each step in the conduct of the election from prior to the opening of the polls through the completion of the count and announcement of the results, to challenge ineligible electors, and to assist in the correction of discrepancies.

Source: L. 92: Entire article R&RE, p. 734, § 9, effective January 1, 1993. L. 93: (1) amended, p. 1417, § 66, effective July 1. L. 2013: (2) amended, (HB 13-1303), ch. 185, p. 719, § 62, effective May 10.

Editor's note: This section is similar to former § 1-7-105 as it existed prior to 1992.

Cross references: In 2013, subsection (2) was amended by the "Voter Access and Modernized Elections Act". For the short title and the legislative declaration, see sections 1 and 2 of chapter 185, Session Laws of Colorado 2013.