



# CITY OF FALL RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS

BOARD OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

ONE GOVERNMENT CENTER

TEL. 508-324-2630

## 150 FOOT RULE

As you are aware, certain activities are prohibited within 150 feet of the polling location. The 150-foot area includes the polling place, in the building where the polling place is located, on the walls thereof, on the premises on which the building stands, or within 150 feet of the **building entrance door to such polling place**. G.L.c.54, § 65. The “premises” on which the building stands is further defined to mean only the grounds in the immediate vicinity of the building, and does not include the entirety of a large parcel of real property. 950 C.M.R. §52.03(22)(c), § 53.03(18)(c), § 54.04 (22)(c).

The following are prohibited within 150 feet of a polling location:

- the posting, exhibition, circulation, or distribution of material-including posters, stickers, posters, cards, handbills, placards, pictures or circulars—intended to influence the action of the voter; G.L.54, § 65.
- the solicitation of votes for or against, or any other form of promotion or opposition of, any person or political party or position on a ballot question, to be voted on at the current election; 950 C.M.R. §52.03(22)(d); 53.03(18)(d), 54.04(22)(d).
- holding any campaign sign; handing any person literature intended to influence the voter’s action at the polls; wearing any campaign buttons or identifying signage; soliciting a person’s vote for or against a candidate or question on the ballot; or distributing stickers.
- gathering signatures on nomination papers or initiative petitions. G.L.c.54, § 65.

The presiding officer at the polling place enforces the various requirements of the 150-foot rule. The police person or constable detailed to each polling place protects the election workers and aids in enforcing the laws relating to elections. Furthermore, the presiding officer at the polls may request that the police officer take into custody any person who by disorderly conduct interrupts or disturbs the proceedings of an election officer.

The clerk or warden of the polling place is vested with the authority and obligation to maintain peace, order, and decorum at the polls. G.L.c.54, § 71. Furthermore, the Code of Massachusetts Regulations requires that access to polling places must be open and unobstructed and the voters may not be hindered. 950 C.M.R. § 52.03(22)(c); 950 C.M.R. § 53.08(18)(c); 950 C.M.R. § 54.04(22)(c). The clerk or warden, pursuant to both statutory and regulatory authority, has significant discretion in determining what he or she believes amounts to a disturbance, an obstruction in access to the polling place, or a hindrance to the voters.