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Connecticut's 250-Foot Election Security Rule: What You Need to Know

Connecticut has a new law designed to protect voters, election workers, and the public from intimidation or interference at election locations. Known as the **250-foot rule**, it establishes restrictions on certain activities near voting and ballot-counting locations.

The law does not prevent police from responding to emergencies, performing routine duties that do not interfere with elections, or voting themselves.

Here's what law enforcement officers and the public should know about how the law works during Connecticut's 2026 General Election.

What does the 250-foot rule do?

The law creates a 250-foot restricted area around certain election sites, including polling places, Early Voting locations, same-day registration locations, recanvass locations, central count locations, and absentee ballot drop boxes.

Within that area, it:

- Restricts the presence and activities of law enforcement officers and certain other government-authorized personnel, while allowing specific activities described below.
- Prohibits those personnel from attempting to determine whether someone is qualified to vote.
- Prohibits people from requiring someone to show identification, unless Connecticut law requires it.
- Restricts face coverings that conceal a person's identity, with exceptions for medical needs, religious practices, and weather conditions.

The purpose is to prevent intimidation and interference while allowing elections, law enforcement, and everyday community activities to continue safely.

Who does the law apply to?

The law's restrictions on law enforcement include:

- Federal, state, and local law enforcement officers.
- Officers or agents of organizations authorized by a federal or state government to use force, search, detain, or arrest people.
- People with government authority to direct or control those officers or agents.

This means the law can apply to federal law enforcement agencies, state police, municipal police, and other government-authorized enforcement personnel.

Not every restriction applies only to law enforcement. The rules concerning face coverings and requiring identification apply to everyone within the restricted area, subject to the exceptions described below.

What can law enforcement officers still do?

The 250-foot rule does not create a police-free zone. Connecticut's Secretary of the State has issued permission for law enforcement officers to perform on-duty activities within the 250-foot zone, provided those activities do not interfere with the election site or the administration of the election. The Secretary has also clarified that off-duty officers may continue their normal, everyday activities within the restricted area.

Examples of acceptable on-duty activities within the restricted area include:

- **Routine patrols:** Officers may patrol streets and neighborhoods.
- **Traffic enforcement:** Officers may conduct traffic stops and other traffic enforcement activities.

- **Investigations:** Officers may speak with witnesses and perform other routine investigative duties.
- **Emergency response:** Officers may respond when circumstances reasonably require immediate action to protect people or property from a serious threat.
- **Voting:** Officers may cast their own ballots while on duty or off duty, including while wearing a police uniform.
- **Travel:** Officers may travel through the restricted area.
- **Police facilities:** Officers may enter, leave, and remain at police stations or other law enforcement facilities established and occupied before July 2026.

Off-duty officers may also go about ordinary personal activities, including going to restaurants or shopping, visiting a library, or spending time with family. They may remain within the area for the time needed to complete those activities.

What about searches, arrests, and emergencies?

If law enforcement officers are authorized by a judicial warrant to conduct a search, detention, or arrest within 250 feet of an election location — and that action could impact an elections site or the election — the law establishes additional requirements, including:

- The officer must be acting in an official capacity.
- The Secretary of the State and the Attorney General must receive at least 24 hours' advance notice.
- The officer may remain within the area only as long as reasonably necessary to carry out that authorized action.

The law separately allows action when emergency circumstances reasonably require an immediate response to a serious threat to life or property. It also permits activities requested or authorized by the Secretary of the State or the election moderator.

These requirements are not intended to stop routine police work or emergency response. They provide safeguards against interference with an election.

What the 250-foot law means

- Police must still respond to emergencies near polling places.
- Officers may continue patrolling neighborhoods that contain election locations.
- Police stations do not need to close or change their operations because an election location is nearby.
- Officers can vote on or off duty and/or in uniform.
- Off-duty officers can visit a restaurant, go shopping, visit family, or conduct other personal business within 250 feet of an election location.
- Residents and businesses within the restricted area do not need to leave or close.
- Election locations are not required to mark the 250-foot boundary or station a police officer outside it.

The law is intended to protect elections from interference, not disrupt public safety or everyday life.

Where and when does the rule apply during the 2026 General Election?

The law covers six types of election locations. The dates and times vary depending on the type of location.

Election location	When the 250-foot rule applies
Absentee ballot drop boxes	From October 2, when absentee ballots became available, through 8 p.m. Tuesday, November 3, when Election Day polls close.
Early in-person Voting locations	The Early Voting period runs from Monday, October 19, through Sunday, November 1.
Election Day polling places	Tuesday, November 3, the day of the General Election.

Same-Day Registration (SDR) locations	During in-person Early Voting October 19–November 1 when the site is an Early Voting SDR location, or on Election Day, November 3, when an Election Day site is an SDR location.
Central ballot-counting locations	Tuesday, November 3, when designated locations are used to count absentee, Early Voting, or Same-Day Registration ballots.
Recanvass locations	Whenever an official recanvass, sometimes called a recount, is being conducted. These dates are determined after an election, if a recanvass is necessary.

A location may serve more than one election function. For example, a Town Hall may contain an absentee ballot drop box, an Early Voting location, and a recanvass location. The law's applicability depends on the designated election location and the dates associated with it.

What about face coverings?

The law generally prohibits a person from wearing a mask or other covering that conceals their face, head, or identity within 250 feet of a designated election location.

There are three exceptions:

- **Medical needs:** A person may wear a medically necessary face covering.
- **Religious practices:** A person may wear a covering of religious significance.
- **Weather:** A person may wear a covering that is reasonable for the weather, such as a scarf covering the face on a cold day.

For a weather-related covering, the election moderator may request that the person remove it. The person must comply with that request.

The law does not require people wearing medically necessary or religiously significant coverings to disclose private medical information or explain their

religious beliefs. Importantly, a violation of the law must be willful, not accidental. Someone who happens to walk or drive within 250 feet of an election location while wearing a face covering as part of their normal daily activities, without knowing they are violating the law, is not willfully violating it.

Can someone require me to show identification?

The law prohibits anyone from requiring a person to present identification within 250 feet of a designated election location unless identification is required under Connecticut law.

This does not change the identification requirements that already apply to voting. Election officials and law enforcement may continue to carry out their routine lawful duties. However, a person or group cannot create an additional identification requirement, conduct its own voter eligibility checks, or demand proof of citizenship from people approaching an election location.

What should I do if I see a possible violation?

If someone is being intimidated, blocked from voting, asked for unauthorized identification, or otherwise interfered with at an election location, report it.

If the incident is occurring at an Early Voting location, SDR location, or polling place, notify the on-site election moderator, Registrar of Voters, Deputy Registrar, or Assistant Registrar.

You can also contact the Office of the Secretary of the State (SOTS) or the Connecticut State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC), the independent state agency responsible for investigating possible violations of election law.

To report an immediate election concern:

- **Phone:** 1-866-SEEC-INFO (1-866-733-2463)

- **Email:** Elections@CT.gov from 5:30 a.m. until midnight on Election Day

Provide the town, location, date, time, and a description of what happened. Include identifying information about the people involved and any witnesses, if available.

If there is an immediate threat to someone's safety, call **911**.

How do I file a formal complaint?

Anyone who believes Connecticut election law has been violated may file a complaint with SEEC. Download SEEC's official complaint form. A formal complaint must be in writing and sworn under oath. The completed, signed, and properly certified complaint must be mailed or hand-delivered to:

State Elections Enforcement Commission
55 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105

Reporting a concern by phone or email is different from filing a formal sworn complaint. A report alerts election authorities to a potential problem and may lead to an investigation. A formal complaint requires a written statement sworn under oath and may involve additional steps, including being asked to provide information or testify as a witness.

What are local election officials expected to do?

Local election officials have received guidance and training on the 250-foot rule.

They are not required to mark or continuously patrol the entire 250-foot area. Displaying signs is optional and up to local election officials.

If someone reports possible intimidation, interference, or another violation, election officials should assess the concern, take appropriate steps to

address conduct affecting the election location, notify the **Office of the Secretary of the State** and **SEEC** as appropriate, and document the incident in the moderator's official record.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can a police officer pull someone over within 250 feet of an absentee ballot drop box?
Yes. The Secretary of the State has authorized on-duty law enforcement activities unrelated to an election, including routine traffic enforcement, when those activities do not interfere with voting or election administration.

Can a police officer respond to an emergency at an Early Voting location?
Yes. The law allows officers to respond when immediate action is reasonably necessary to protect against a serious threat to life or property. Election officials may also request law enforcement assistance to address disorder.

Can an officer enter a polling place to vote while wearing a uniform?
Yes. Officers may vote while on duty or off duty, including in uniform.

Can a police officer eat at a restaurant within 250 feet of a polling place?
Yes. An off-duty officer may eat at a restaurant within the restricted area and stay long enough to order, eat, and finish the meal. The law does not impose an arbitrary number of minutes on ordinary personal activities.

What if a police station is within 250 feet of an election location?
The police station can continue operating. The law expressly permits officers to access, travel to and from, and remain at law enforcement facilities established and occupied before July 2026.

Can a police officer walk through the restricted area?

Yes. Officers may pass through the area.

What if I am a law enforcement officer who is also on the ballot?
You may campaign within the 250-foot zone around a polling place, but you must remain outside the 75-foot zone where campaigning is prohibited.

Can any group or individual ask people to prove they are U.S. citizens before approaching a polling place?
No. A group or individual cannot impose its own voter eligibility screening or identification requirements. The law also specifically prohibits covered law enforcement and government-authorized personnel from entering the restricted area to examine a person's qualifications to vote.

Can I wear a medical mask or religious face covering near a polling place?
Yes. The law expressly allows medically necessary face coverings and coverings of religious significance. Weather-related coverings are also allowed, but the election moderator may request their removal.

Will every polling place have signs marking the 250-foot area?
Not necessarily. The Office of the Secretary of the State has provided optional signage. Local election officials decide whether to display 250-foot restricted area signs. The law applies whether or not signs are posted.

Is law enforcement aware of this law?
Yes. The Office of the Secretary of the State has worked with the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association to draft and issue guidance including legal interpretations and written, signed permission for members of state and local law enforcement.

Who has received training regarding this law?
Local election officials – including Registrars of Voters and Town Clerks – through conference trainings, meetings, and communications from SOTS. Similarly, members of law enforcement at regional meetings have received information regarding the law and its application.

Who should I contact if I believe someone is violating the rule?
Report concerns to the moderator, Registrar of Voters, Deputy Registrar, or Assistant Registrar at the location. You can also contact SEEC at 1-866-733-2463 or the Secretary of the State at Elections@CT.gov. To submit a formal complaint, use SEEC's complaint form. For an immediate safety emergency, call 911.

Protecting Elections and Public Safety

Connecticut's elections are administered by trained local election officials, with law enforcement playing an important role in keeping communities safe.

The 250-foot rule adds protections against intimidation and interference while preserving the ability of police officers to perform legitimate duties, respond to emergencies, and participate in everyday community life.

Election security and public safety work together. This law is designed to protect both.