



Texas Secretary of State
ELECTIONS DIVISION



Conflict Resolution And De-Escalation

36th Annual Election Law Seminar
for Cities, Schools, and Other Political Subdivisions



Hot Topics

- Voter ID
- Firearms
- Cellular devices
- Voting machines

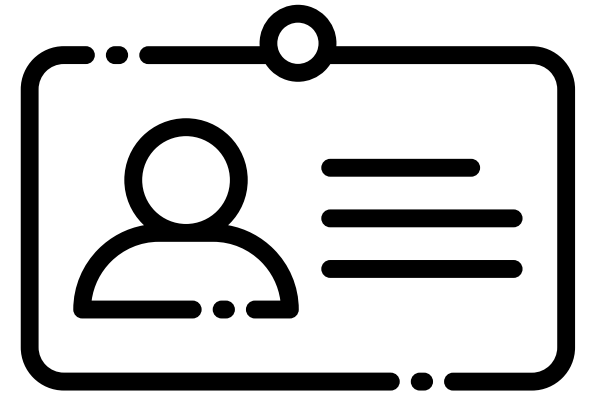
A black-outlined speech bubble graphic containing text.

“State Law
Requires/
prohibits...”



Voter ID

- Voters may jump to conclusions
- Take a couple extra minutes to help a voter find something that could work for him or her.
- Let the voter know there are options
 - Does the voter have a passport book or card?
 - Inform the voter of List B IDs with the option of completing a Reasonable Impediment Declaration
 - “The form only takes a few minutes to fill out. You won’t have to wait in line again. Come back to the front when you’re finished.”
 - Provisional Ballot
- Encourage your poll workers to call the main office/judge’s hotline





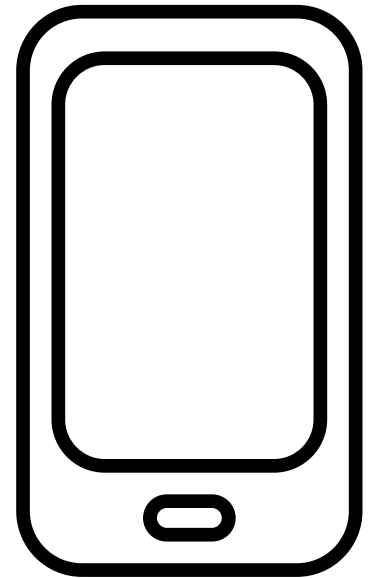
Firearms

- “Pardon me, you might not have even known, but according to state law, firearms are prohibited in the polling place. Do you mind returning it to your vehicle? I’ll ensure that you don’t lose your place in line.”
- People are passionate
- Presiding judge is responsible for maintaining order in the polling place
- Have a good relationship with your judges and clerks
- Stay calm and level headed
- Weigh the options
- See our SOS Law Enforcement Guide



Cellular Devices

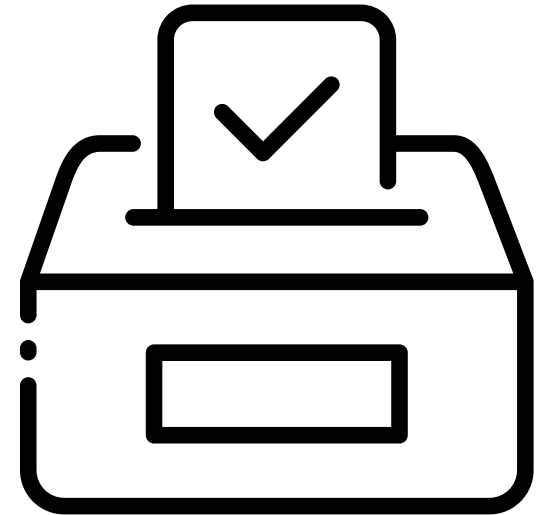
- Make signage obvious
 - Post more than just one sign at the door.
 - Use colored paper
- “Excuse me, cellular devices are not allowed to be used in the polling place according to the Texas Election Code. Do you mind putting it away until you exit the polling place?”
- Offer a sample ballot
- Don’t yell.
- Be discreet and polite.
 - “Pardon me, please put your phone away while you’re waiting in line. Thank you.”





Voting Machines

- Avoid ambiguous words like “machine” and “scanner”
- Don’t use jargon
- Use more generic terms such as “voting booth” and “ballot box”
- Avoid the “rabbit hole”
 - Best way to combat misinformation is with correct information
 - Have your workers refer complex questions directly to the main office.
 - Give your workers a “vendor information” handout with helpful facts/links to the vendor’s website.
- Do you have your vendor information readily available on your website?
- Let the voters do their own research





Customer Service

- Poll workers and Election Officials are Public Servants
- Voters are the customers
- Poll workers are the face of the election
- It's a balancing act
- Some days are easier than others
- We're all human
- Be quick, efficient, cordial
- No need to be "over the top"





Voter Record Not Found

Instead of Saying	Try Saying
"I can't find you in the system"	"It appears our system isn't pulling up your voter record. Do you mind if I make a quick call to our main office?" "Don't worry, we'll get this figured out."

- Sounds as if there's something "wrong" with the voter's registration record
- Causes voter to become stressed

- More Polite
- Reassures the voter
- Shows effort being put into solving the problem



Limited Ballot

Instead of Saying	Try Saying
<p>“You’re not eligible to vote in this county. You can’t vote here.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sounds as if there is a problem with their registration• The voter IS eligible to vote. Just not for the full ballot.• Frustrating to have to leave• Makes the voter feel as if he or she can’t cast a ballot	<p>“We found your record and can see you’re currently registered in a different county. Since you live here now, you may be eligible for Limited Ballot.”</p> <p>“Please allow me to call the main office for details”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reassure the voter that his or her record has been found• Encourage your workers to call and verify before sending the voter elsewhere• Give all the information<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited Ballots are only available during early voting• Main early voting location address and hours<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make a flyer to give to the voter



Statement of Residence

Instead of Saying	Try Saying
"You've moved? You'll need to fill out another form."	"We've found your record in the voter rolls, however the address needs an update. Let's fix this with a simple form. It's a normal procedure. Let me know when you're done and you won't have to wait in line again." "Are you still residing in the same county?"

- Can cause the voter to panic and feel as though they're going to lose their place in line
- Nobody enjoys extra paperwork

- Emphasizes that the voter's record has been found
- Reassure the voter that this is not a problem. It's normal.
- They won't lose their place in line
- Verify with the voter if they still live in the county.
- Provide your workers with surrounding counties' addresses and phone numbers.



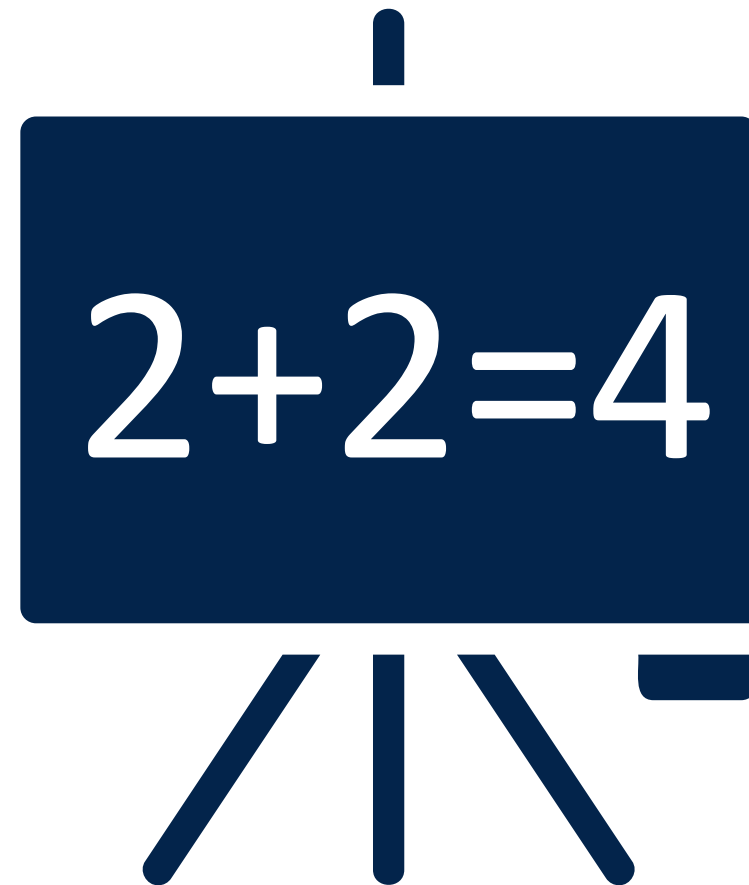
Addressing Electioneering

- Smile – Approach in a friendly manner
- Use names – If you know electioneers, use their names when conversing
- Be Transparent – Ensure signs are placed where they can be easily seen
- Curbside – Explain to electioneers that the car is an extension of the voting station and that courtesy should be given to the voter.
- Don't yell – Approach calmly but with purpose



K.I.S.S.

- KEEP
- IT
- SIMPLE and
- STANDARD





“That Person”





Take A Deep Breath





Defy Expectations

- Don't take it personally
- Keep it logical
- Stay focused
- Don't "take the bait"





Listening Skills

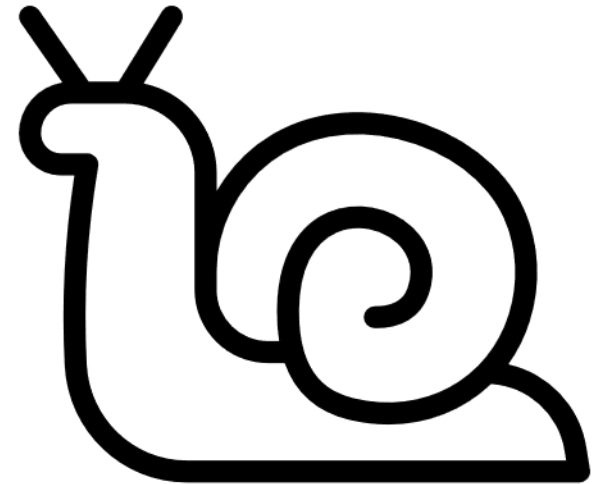
- Active listening
- Acknowledgement
- Ask Questions
- Non-verbal cues
- One-on-one





Slow down

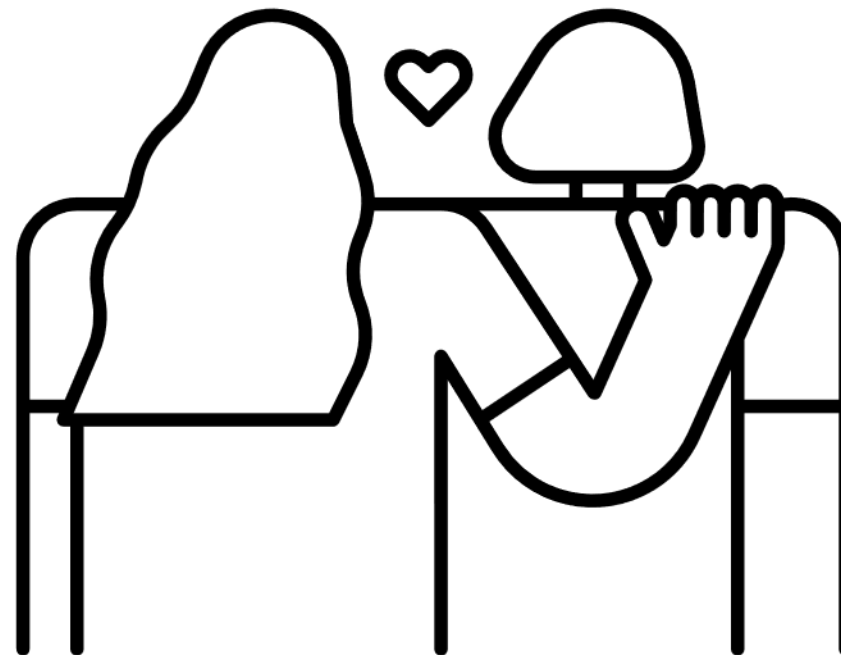
- Utilize silence
- Pause between sentences
- Think before speaking
- **REMINDER:** Deep breaths





Understand The Situation

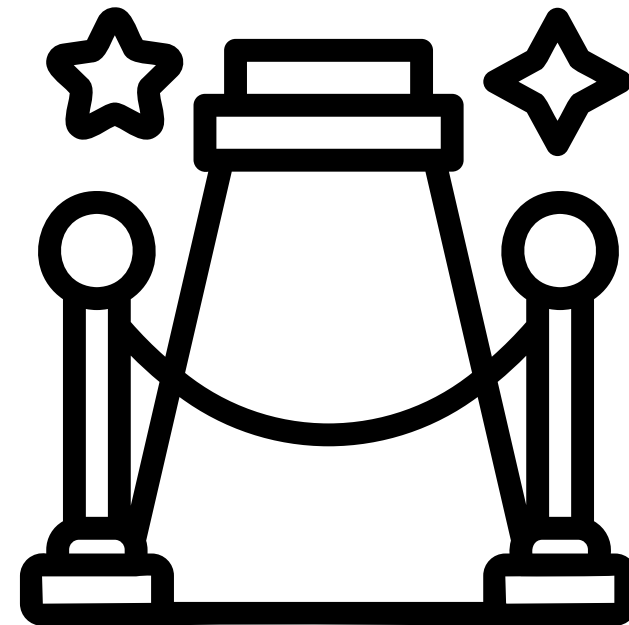
- Empathize
- Etiquette
- Be Forgiving
- Benefit of the doubt





Find A Solution

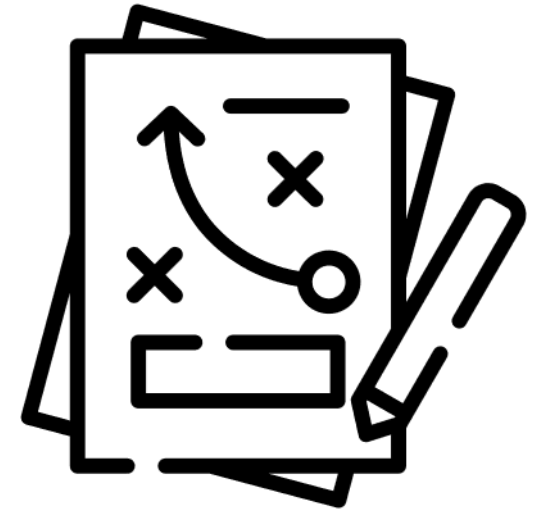
- Follow through with a resolution
- Ask for help
- Explain options
- Have resources available
- Give consistent answers
- Be thorough
- “Less Red Tape, More Red Carpet”





Stop Engaging

- Have a Plan
- Gather information
- State Law: “A person who is arrested at a polling place while voting or waiting to vote shall be permitted to vote, if entitled to do so, before being removed from the polling place” [Sec 32.075(d)]
- Weigh the options
- SOS Complaint Information Poster should be posted at all polling locations
- Emergency contacts
- Call the election office to report the incident
- Provide documentation – incident reports, if directed by the election office





The Aftermath

- Take a break/Step aside - “the shakes”
- Check on your poll workers
- Don’t stew, move on
- Ensure they feel supported
- Hindsight is 20/20
- Continue deep breathing





H.E.A.T.

- H – Hear them out
- E – Empathize
- A – Apologize
- T – Take Action





Hear them Out

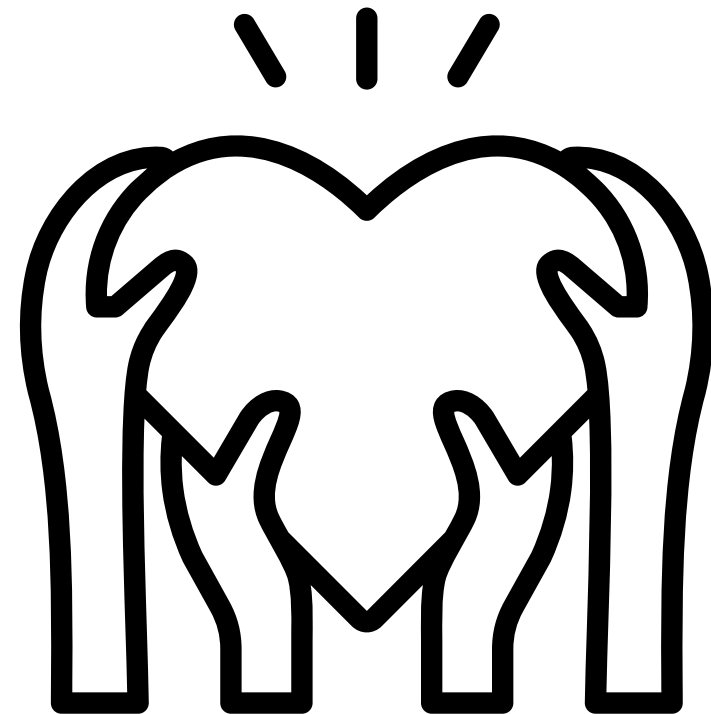
- Active vs. Passive Listening
- Non-verbal cues
- Respect their boundaries





Empathize with the Person

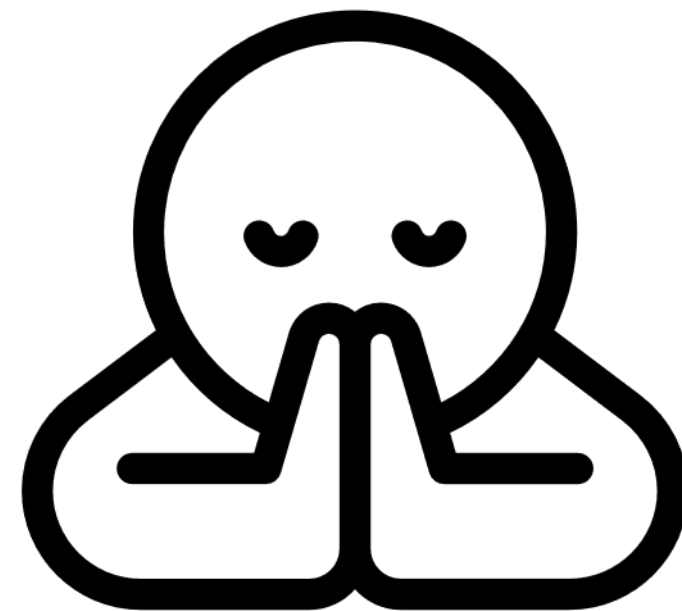
- Try to relate
- Give them grace
- Put yourself in their shoes





Apologize

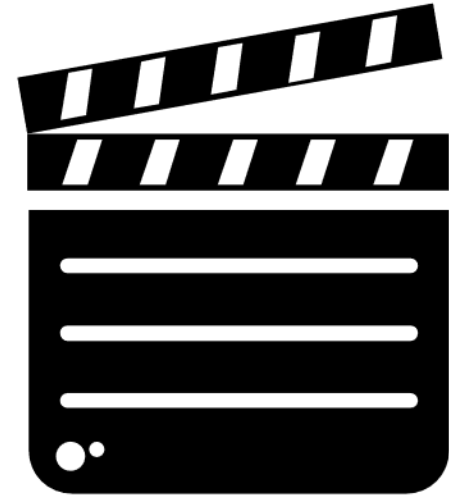
- “I apologize for what you’re going through right now”
- “I am truly sorry for the miscommunication”





Take Action

- Focus on the positive
- What CAN the workers help with?
- Find someone who can help
- Ensure all questions have been answered.





SOS Complaints Department

You may report **any** complaint about the conduct of this election, including **voting rights violations** and **complaints** about local election officials administering the election, to:

Any Election Texas Secretary of State's Office			
By Calling: (800) 252-8683 (512) 463-5650	By Writing: Office of the Secretary of State P.O. Box 12060 Austin, Texas 78711	By Emailing: elections@sos.texas.gov	By Faxing: (512) 475-2811

- If you contact the Secretary of State in writing either by mail, fax or email, include your contact information in case additional information is needed.



Key Takeaways

- K.I.S.S. – Keep It Simple and Standard
- Customer Service
- Deep Breaths
- H.E.A.T. – Hear Empathize Apologize Take Action
- Support Each other



Texas Secretary of State
ELECTIONS DIVISION



“Poll Workers Are Like Gold”

Alexa Busckemper
SOS Training Team Manager



Available Support



WEBINARS



TRAINING



RESOURCES

elections@sos.texas.gov

800-252-VOTE • 512-463-5650

sos.texas.gov