



# THE OFFICIALS

*A film by Margo Guernsey and Sara Archambault*

## **Toolkit for Community Screenings *and* Discussions**



## Supporting Election Officials

[\*The Officials\*](#) is a new film by Margo Guernsey and Sara Archambault premiering on September 17 on [TIME](#). The documentary offers a behind-the-scenes look at a politically diverse group of election officials who, despite facing increased threats, harassment and intimidation, remain committed to serving their communities by running secure elections and ensuring every eligible vote is counted accurately.

Issue One developed this companion toolkit help communities engage with the film, facilitate discussions about election integrity, and encourage local actions that support fair and secure elections.

We encourage you to host a screening and show your support for election officials during this important election season.



## Film Overview

*Our country is in a very delicate place. It is almost scary. I don't allow myself to be afraid, but I do feel it is all the more reason that we have to do what we do as election administrators. I believe democracy is in our hands.*

- Janice Winfrey, City Clerk, Detroit, MI, *The Officials*

The work of elections in the United States has fundamentally changed. For decades, election administration was considered a significant but quiet civil service job. Since 2020 election workers have dealt with endless harassment, accusations of wrong-doing, constant questioning of their integrity, and coordinated strategies designed to deter and distract them from their most important work. With a competitive and contentious presidential election ahead, U.S. election officials, in rural and urban areas of FL, OH, WI and MI, hold the line against an organized effort to undermine our democracy.

***“The biggest challenge is, in order for democracy to be true, people have to engage.”***

-Daniel Baxter, Chief of Operations  
Detroit, MI, *The Officials*

# Discussion Questions

These questions are intended to prompt thoughtful conversations after viewing [The Officials](#).

## 1. Reflect on the election officials and their stories in the film

- What struck you most about the stories of the election officials in the film?
- How did their experiences challenge or confirm your understanding of the current state of politics in the U.S.?
- Imagine being in the shoes of an election official. What would it be like to be threatened, harassed or intimidated just for doing your job?

## 2. Impact of political pressures

- What are some of the main challenges elections officials face?
- How do unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud undermine the legitimacy of election administration and trust in elections?
- How does the spread of false information impact election workers? What can be done to address false information?
- How do you think the increasing harassment, threats and intimidation against election officials impact democracy?

*“When the pandemic happened the environment was heightened. Making claims about elections to disparage the process started to take off. ...We were no longer working in a place of reality. We had crossed over to this place where facts didn’t matter.”*

- Meagan Wolfe, Administrator, Wisconsin Elections Commission, *The Officials*

## 3. Election Integrity:

- What does the film suggest about the importance of nonpartisan election administration?
- How can communities work together to support election integrity, even amid widespread misinformation?
- What are ways to increase public confidence in elections and election administration?

***“We want the community to see us as people who are fighting for what’s right and people’s voices are heard, no matter what the outcome.”***

-Tonya Wichman  
Director, Board of Elections  
Defiance County, OH  
*The Officials*

***“Now unfortunately, we’ve had to add security, because in today’s world when people come to visit us one of the first things that crosses our mind is, are you there to harm us. Those are things that have had to come into this process that weren’t contemplated before.”***

-Wesley Wilcox  
Supervisor of Elections  
Marion County, FL  
*The Officials*

#### 4. Personal action

- What actions can individuals take to support their local election officials?
- How can we encourage a culture of gratitude and support for those who work hard to ensure fair and secure elections?

#### 5. Broader implications

- What lessons can be drawn from the film about the future of democracy in the U.S.?
- How do you see the issues raised in the film playing out in your own community?



## Ideas for Action

Just like the election officials who are working hard to ensure elections are fair and secure, you can help make a difference in your community. Here are some ideas for action:

### Support local election officials

- [Election Hero Day](#), November 4, 2024, a great day to celebrate election officials, but you can thank them any day before or after Election Day. These public servants put partisan preferences aside and work hard together year-round to ensure elections run smoothly and that every vote is secure and counted accurately.
- Write thank-you notes to your local election officials. This small act of gratitude can boost morale and show support.
- Consider organizing a community appreciation event for local election workers.
- Share a gratitude post for the election officials who serve our communities on your social media accounts.

### Advocate for election officials and for a first-class election infrastructure

- Contact your elected officials and urge them to pass [election worker protections legislation](#).
- Contact your elected officials and urge them to provide consistent and regular [funding for elections](#).

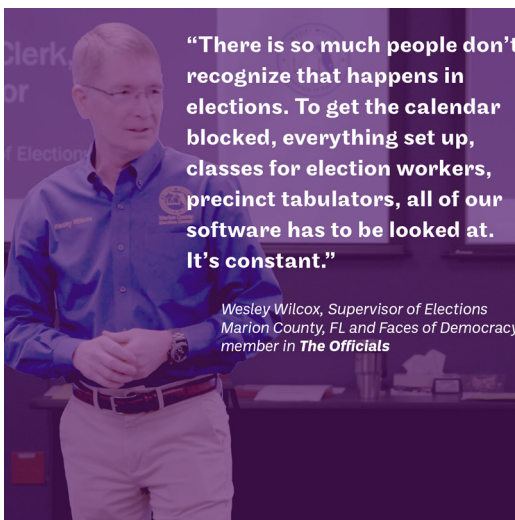


## Learn more about how elections work and who runs them at [HowElectionsWork.org](https://HowElectionsWork.org)

- Download the [Election Integrity Toolkit, State Fact Sheets and Infographics](#), as well as a [Community Safety Guide](#).
- Election workers are public servants who put partisan preferences aside and work together to ensure elections run smoothly and that every vote is secure and counted accurately.
- While elections work a little differently depending on where you live, all states have security measures to ensure the integrity of every vote. Every state has teams of people working together at every step of the voting process. Learn more about what happens after ballots are cast at [HowElectionsWork.org](https://HowElectionsWork.org).

## Constructive social media engagement

- Post about *The Officials* on your social media accounts to raise awareness and encourage others to watch the film.
- **Sample Social Media Images**



- **Sample Social Posts**

- *I just watched an awesome film about the unsung heroes of American democracy – our election officials. Check out “The Officials” for a behind-the-scenes look at the work these folks do and how they’re committed to running fair and secure elections! Watch it now: [time.com/the-officials](https://time.com/the-officials) #ElectionIntegrity #Democracy #SupportElectionWorkers #TheOfficialsFilm*
- *I just watched “The Officials” – and you should too! It gave me a firsthand glimpse into the dedication of election officials who face harassment, threats, and misinformation — all to ensure our votes are counted fairly and accurately. Watch it and spread the word! [time.com/the-officials](https://time.com/the-officials)*
- Use your own social media accounts to share accurate and helpful information from [How Elections Work](#) to bolster your friends, family, and neighbors’ confidence in the elections.
- Collaborate with local groups to amplify fact-based messages.

## **Become a poll worker**

- Poll workers are members of the community who volunteer their time (or are paid a small stipend) to assist voters during early voting and on Election Day. This includes thousands of veterans, who have continued their legacy of service by volunteering as poll workers in local communities across the United States to ensure the safety and security of our election process. According to estimates from the Election Assistance Commission, it takes a temporary workforce of about 1 million poll workers to staff polling places across the country for a general election in a presidential election year. To explore becoming a poll worker at your local precinct, visit [www.powerthepolls.org/issueone](http://www.powerthepolls.org/issueone) to find opportunities to serve. Be aware that some jurisdictions will likely be fully staffed.

## **Learn about opportunities to be an election observer or poll watcher**

- Every state has provisions for observers to witness the election process and every state allows for members of the public, or representatives from political parties, to be poll watchers. Whether you are interested or if helpful to share with your friends, neighbors, and other community members, learn what your state allows [here](#).

## **Host democracy dinners**

Bring your friends, family, neighbors or other community members together in informal settings for a screening of The Officials. Facilitate a discussion of the themes of the film and brainstorm ways to support election officials and fair elections. These gatherings can help build trust and collective action!

## **Look for local media opportunities to write a letter to the editor or op-ed supporting fair and accurate elections and election integrity**

- Your local or regional newspaper and other local media outlets are good opportunities to lend your voice about why your fellow residents should feel confident in the safety, security, fairness, and accuracy of our elections. Below are two letter to the editor samples you can customize and use.

**Letter to the Editor #1:****Support Election Workers — Defenders of Our Democracy**

*In light of questions about the integrity of our elections, it has become more urgent than ever to support the dedicated individuals who ensure our elections run smoothly: election workers. These workers are the backbone of our democracy, quietly carrying out the critical job of administering elections. Yet since 2020, they've faced unprecedented harassment, false accusations, and coordinated efforts to distract them from their essential duties.*

*A new documentary highlights dedicated election officials across states like Florida, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Michigan—areas that are also the focus of this year's election cycle. I was inspired to see how these public servants have risen to the occasion, taking their non-partisan roles seriously with a simple desire to facilitate every vote. Their work is not just about counting ballots; it's about holding the line against organized attempts to undermine the very fabric of our democracy.*

*With a contentious presidential election on the horizon, we must remember that the people running our elections are often unsung heroes. They deserve our respect, protection, and support. Without them, the very principles of free and fair elections are at risk. Supporting election workers is not a partisan issue—it's about defending the democratic process we all depend on. Let's stand with them, as they stand with us.*

**Letter to the Editor #2:****Support Election Workers During Voter Education Week**

*As Voter Education Week approaches, it's essential to focus not only on our rights as voters but also on the election workers who ensure those rights are protected. In recent years, the role of election officials has shifted dramatically. Once a quiet, non-partisan civil service job, election workers now face increasing scrutiny, harassment, and false accusations. Despite these challenges, they remain dedicated to upholding the integrity of our electoral process and our right to vote.*

*I witnessed this dedication by watching a powerful new documentary that highlights election officials in Florida, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Michigan. These workers are standing firm against coordinated efforts to undermine democracy. As we prepare for another highly charged presidential election, these men and women are on the front lines, ensuring that our elections remain free and fair.*

*Voter Education Week is the perfect time to recognize their contribution. While it's important for voters to understand their rights and responsibilities, we must also support the individuals who make elections possible. They are champions of non-partisan service, ensuring every vote is counted accurately. They are also the most trusted source of information about how elections work.*

*This week, let's not only educate ourselves about voting but also show our appreciation for the election workers who are defending the integrity of our system. They deserve our respect, support, and protection as they safeguard our democracy.*

## **Additional Resources**

- Learning Module: [How Elections Are Run](#)
- [Local Election Officials Survey, May 2024](#), Brennan Center for Justice