

## National Student Voices: Poll Workers

**MAN #1:**

*He's from our neighborhood; please help him out, Freddie.*

**MAN #2:**

*Here's the ward-recommended slate and there's the recommended for the questions.*

**VOTER:**

*You're a gentleman and a scholar.*

**MAN #2:**

*I do my best.*

**JOANNA DARAKOS, *the.News* correspondent:**

Want to participate in an election, but not quite old enough to vote? On primary election day in Pennsylvania... members of Student Voices in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia took part - despite being too young to vote.

**STUDENT and VOTER:**

*Are you registered to vote? // A... // Ok...Democrat. What is your gender...male. // Thank you*

**JOANNA DARAKOS:**

12<sup>th</sup> graders from Philly's Central High School conducted exit surveys for their Student Voices class.

**MAN:**

*How are ya? I'm \_\_\_\_\_ Wolly. How are ya? Good. Hi... How are you doing? Hi Anna, how are ya doing?*

**JOANNA DARAKOS:**

Students from Schenley High in Pittsburgh also got involved. They stood outside polling places to assist any voter denied a chance to vote.

The Pittsburgh students worked for Election Protection - a non-partisan voters' rights organization linked to the People for the American Way Foundation.

**CELESTE TAYLOR, Election Protection volunteer:**

*So we want to make sure that we're there from 7am, when the polls open, until 8pm, when it closes...*

**JOANNA DARAKOS:**

Election Protection is a family affair for Celeste Taylor, who enlists her three sons for poll-watching duty. One attended the training workshop his mother runs.

So did Schenley High School juniors Anna Rosenblum and Molly McManus, who practiced role-playing with older team members.

**ELECTION PROTECTION VOLUNTEER:**

*How would I be sure that my vote is cast?*

**MOLLY MCMANUS, Election Protection volunteer:**

*Well, when you're done they'll...it'll display "thank you" on the screen and you'll know that your vote has been put into the machine.*

**JOANNA DARAKOS:**

On Election Day Celeste Taylor's twin 15-year-olds, Forrest and Hunter McCurdy, reported to a middle school polling place.

With a 50-foot length of twine, the boys measured off the distance they were required by law to stay back from the poll entrance.

Molly and Anna did the same at their assigned polling place... after speaking to an election judge who told them no voters had been challenged here.

**ELECTION JUDGE:**

*It's boring here, in fact. Disturbingly boring.*

**JOANNA DARAKOS:**

It was a different story for the McCurdy twins - they tried to help a poll worker who was not allowed to vote.

**DONNA DOMINICK:**

*It says "no affiliation." Now I'm in the book.*

**CASEY CAPITO, Voting rights activist:**

*Registered as a Democrat or Republican?*

**DONNA DOMINICK:**

*I was always a Democrat. I never changed anything.*

**JOANNA DARAKOS:**

Donna Dominick was denied a ballot because her registration card listed her as unaffiliated - not as a Democrat or a Republican.

In Pennsylvania, a voter must be registered as a Republican or a Democrat to vote in a party primary. Some states have "open" primaries which allow all voters to participate. Pennsylvania and many other states have "closed" primaries.

**DONNA DOMINICK:**

*I could do this in the general election... I could vote.*

**CASEY CAPITO:**

*Right, because we have closed primaries in Pennsylvania.*

**JOANNA DARAKOS:**

Forrest and Hunter recounted the episode. Hunter had been on the phone with the Election Protection office.

**HUNTER MCCURDY:**

*They told me to make sure she signs an affidavit and fills everything out and then she should be able to get a provisional ballot.*

**CASEY CAPITO:**

*With a provisional ballot, you get to vote today and then it gets... there's three days for the board of elections to resolve the issue in court.*

**JOANNA DARAKOS:**

If a provisional ballot is judged valid, it is officially recorded in the final vote count.

In addition to the provisional ballot, there are other types.

An emergency ballot is a paper ballot that may be provided when the electronic voting machines break down.

An absentee ballot is given to voters who are sick, traveling or otherwise unable to vote on Election Day at their regular polling places.

And an alternative ballot allows the elderly or disabled to be assisted by another person in the voting booth.

In Philadelphia seniors in a Student Voices class at Central High School conducted exit surveys. It was a class project to help them understand the decision-making process.

**COREY ABRAMSON, Surveyor from Central High School:**

*Umm... so we're doing a quick survey. You can answer as much or as little as you like.*

**WOMAN VOTER:**

*Right...*

**COREY ABRAMSON:**

*It's completely anonymous.*

**JOANNA DARAKOS:**

A number of voters were willing to participate in the survey...

**COREY ABRAMSON:**

Most of us are first time voters going into this. We really aren't familiar with how it works out and we want to go out and vote ourselves and then poll people as they come out to kind of learn about how we vote and why we vote. And being a nonpartisan student group, it really enables us to reach out and find out why people are actually voting the way they do and how they feel about the issues at hand.

**STACEY ABRAM, Student:**

Well, I think it's a very important survey to conduct because...just to learn about the demographics and how the media affects the public opinion during this primary.

It will make me a better citizen because I can be more informed about the candidates and their issues in Philadelphia. And I can be a more informed voter.

**JOANNA DARAKOS:**

Think about how you can get involved in the election process to learn more about how the system works in your area and what matters most to the voters. For the latest election news in your area and to find out how to contact your election authorities, visit [www.student-voices.org](http://www.student-voices.org).

This is Joanna Darakos reporting for Student Voices and *the.News*.