

JAN 23 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO ELECTION WATCHERS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 11, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended
2 by amending the title of part VI to read as follows:

3 "PART VI. [~~VOTER SERVICE CENTER~~] ELECTION WATCHERS"

4 SECTION 2. Section 11-77, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
5 amended to read as follows:

6 "§11-77 Appointment of election watchers; service. (a)

7 Election watchers shall be appointed in the following manner:

- 8 (1) Each qualified political party shall be entitled to
9 appoint [~~no~~] not more than one watcher [~~who may be~~
10 ~~present at any time at a voter service center~~]. Each
11 party shall submit [~~its list of watchers~~] the name of
12 its watcher no later than 4:30 p.m. on the twentieth
13 day before any election to the clerk[~~+~~];
- 14 (2) Not less than one watcher from the news media; and
- 15 (3) Additional watchers as space and facilities permit as
16 designated by the clerk.
- 17



1 All watchers shall serve without expense to the county. [~~All~~]
2 Except for any news media watchers, all watchers so appointed
3 shall be registered voters.

4 (b) Election watchers appointed pursuant to this section
5 may be present at any time at a voter service center or any
6 other location where a clerk or county election official is
7 handling a return identification envelope or voted ballot,
8 subject to reasonable restrictions as established by the chief
9 election officer or clerk. No watcher shall interfere with the
10 orderly process of the election.

11 [~~(b)~~] (c) Each election watcher shall be provided with
12 identification from the clerk stating the watcher's name and the
13 name of the party the watcher represents[~~-~~] or news media or
14 other affiliation. Each watcher shall visibly wear the
15 identification while serving.

16 (d) Before the start of service as an election watcher,
17 each watcher shall take an oath or affirmation that will follow
18 applicable federal, state, and county election laws and rules.

19 [~~(e)~~] (e) The watcher shall call the attention of the
20 clerk, or election official, to any violations of the election
21 laws that the watcher observes. After the clerk's, or election



S.B. NO. 2735

1 official's, attention is called to the violation, the clerk, or
2 election official, shall make an attempt to correct the
3 violation. If the clerk, or election official, fails to correct
4 the violation, the watcher may appeal to the chief election
5 officer."

6 SECTION 3. The chief election officer, with consultation
7 from the county clerks, shall establish a written policy for the
8 2026 general election. By March 1, 2028, the chief election
9 officer shall adopt rules applicable for future elections.

10 SECTION 4. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
11 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

12 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on August 9, 2026.

13

INTRODUCED BY: Karl Rhoads



S.B. NO. 2735

Report Title:

Elections; Election Watchers; News Media

Description:

Specifies that each qualified political party may have one election watcher. Allows the news media to act as election watchers. Allows the clerk to permit additional election watchers. Specifies conditions for election watchers while serving. Effective 8/9/2026.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

