



September 28, 2016

**Re: Training for Poll Workers on Protecting Voting Rights of Transgender Iowans**

Dear County Auditor:

We know you are busily preparing for the upcoming general election and among the many responsibilities you have is the task of training poll workers. Poll workers must understand the requirements of Iowa's voting laws, manage poll books, register voters day-of, set-up election equipment, and, of course, understand the essential civil rights of voters.

It is no small task to train poll workers, and we commend you for the work you do.

The ACLU of Iowa, One Iowa and the League of Women Voters of Iowa, want to help make sure all voters are treated with the respect they are due on Election Day. We know you work hard to create barrier-free and non-threatening polling locations for voters. We want to assist you by providing this "tip sheet" on how to respectfully interact with transgender and gender non-conforming (GNC) people at the polls.

As you know, the Iowa Civil Rights Act protects Iowa voters from discrimination on the basis of gender identity.

We understand it is up to your discretion whether to supply this document to poll workers, but we do believe this simple one-page document could go a long way at making *everyone*—voters and poll workers alike—more confident and comfortable on Election Day.

Thank you for all you do to make democracy work in your communities. Please do not hesitate to reach out to any of us with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Rita Bettis  
Legal Director  
ACLU of Iowa

Donna Red Wing  
Executive Director  
One Iowa

Mary Rae Bragg  
President  
League of Women Voters of Iowa



## **Poll Worker Tips: Interacting Respectfully with Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (GNC) People**

### **Definitions:**

**Transgender:** Umbrella term for individuals whose self-understanding of their gender, behavior, and how they present themselves in the world is different than their assigned sex at birth, or who do not identify as either male or female, or identify as some gender in between.

**Gender Non-Conforming (GNC):** Term for individuals whose presentation in the world is different than societal expectations regarding how they “should” present themselves based on ideas or stereotypes about how they should look or act according to the female or male sex they were assigned at birth.

### **Respectful Interaction at Poll Station:**

1. At the polls, if you are greeting a transgender/GNC person, you may recognize that their voter registration record uses a name that you associate with a different gender from their presentation, or they provide you with an identity document that lists a gender that does not match their presentation. If all other legal requirements are met, transgender/GNC people are entitled to their right to vote.
2. Do not assume that a person is male or female.
3. NEVER use words such as “it” or “whatever” when referring to someone who is transgender/GNC.
4. When you are not sure of a person’s gender identity, or the name shown on a voter’s registration record or identity document does not appear to match the person’s gender presentation, it is OK to ask if the person has a “preferred” name and/or pronoun.
5. When you are not sure what pronoun to use, stick to the person’s first name or use the pronouns “they/them/theirs.” (i.e., “This is *John’s* ballot.” Or “This is *their* ballot.”)
6. NEVER ASK a transgender/GNC person what their “real name” is.
7. If you make a pronoun mistake, acknowledge the mistake, and apologize. Being honest about your non-familiarity with transgender/GNC people shows respect. It also lets transgender voters know that you recognize they are exercising their right to vote, and that you will use their preferred pronoun moving forward.
8. Being transgender isn’t dependent on any particular medical procedure. It is never appropriate to inquire about surgeries or any other intimate details about people’s bodies.
9. When you learn about an individual’s transgender/GNC identity, keep it private. It is confidential information. You should never “out” people by revealing their gender identity to others.
10. Validate how people present themselves by treating them respectfully just as you would everyone else.

*Please contact either Rita Bettis at the ACLU of Iowa ([rita.bettis@aclu-ia.org](mailto:rita.bettis@aclu-ia.org)) or Donna Red Wing at One Iowa ([donna@oneiowa.org](mailto:donna@oneiowa.org)) with any questions.*