



South Dakota Secretary of State

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Secretary of State

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South Dakota Treats DOJ Election Monitors as Any Member of the Public

(Pierre, S.D.) – Today, Monae L. Johnson, Secretary of State, wrote a letter to Allison Ramsdell, the U.S. Attorney for the South Dakota, advising her of the proper role of any Department of Justice (DOJ) election monitor who may be at election locations within 4 counties in South Dakota, Bennett, Jackson, Minnehaha, and Oglala Lakota Counties.

“Our state laws do not allow DOJ employees or members of the public to be poll watchers. Instead, they will only have the authority of a poll observer, the same as any member of the public would,” said Secretary Monae L. Johnson. “We are committed to an orderly election process while balancing transparency that does not interfere with our state’s administration of this election process.”

South Dakota has published guidelines on who can be a poll watcher and a poll observer, which can be assessed here: <https://sdsos.gov/elections-voting/assets/PollWatcherObserverGuidelines.pdf>. These guidelines distinguish the role of each. Importantly, a poll observer cannot disrupt to administration of the polling place, may not engage in the counting of absentee ballots, and cannot challenge ballots.