

Alexander Woollcott, a commentator for *The New Yorker* magazine said, “I’m tired of hearing that democracy doesn’t work. Of course it doesn’t work. We are supposed to work it.” Mr. Woollcott could not have said it any better.

The Franklin County Board of Elections believes that one of the greatest opportunities that a person has to ‘work the democratic process’ is to serve as a poll worker. Through the Champions of Democracy program, we partner with several companies throughout central Ohio to find the best poll workers to work on Election Day.

Recently cited by the **“Report and Recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration”** as an **important remedy to the “persistent challenge” of recruiting exceptional individuals to work the polls**, the “Champions of Democracy” program provides us with the opportunity to reach out to our friends in the corporate community to find enthusiastic, detail-oriented associates who are active in our county.

Our “Champions” include seven of the top thirty largest Central Ohio employers and four Fortune 500 companies. In addition, the Columbus Chamber of Commerce has recommended Champions of Democracy to all of its members.

There is no cost associated with participating and each poll worker receives compensation from Franklin County. Some organizations have provided paid leave while others require employees to take vacation or other leave time to participate. To show our appreciation, every Champion of Democracy participant is recognized in a Columbus Dispatch (central Ohio’s largest newspaper) ad following the election.

Here’s how the program works:

The Franklin County Board of Elections:

- Researches community-minded companies who can afford (from a personnel standpoint) to have several associates serving as poll workers on Election Day.
- Customizes a promotional packet that:
 - celebrates the companies’ current programs that “give back” to our community while suggesting that Champions of Democracy fits their vision.
 - highlights the awards and accolades achieved through the efforts of their employees, employees whose strengths and talents make them great poll workers.
- Dedicates a day to visit the organization to:
 - set up a display to promote Champions of Democracy and recruit employees for the program.
 - provide the opportunity for their associates to register to vote in the upcoming election.
 - bring a couple of voting machines and, working with the organization, create a “mock election” to determine a special event theme, a party menu, or whatever non-political items *they* would like to ‘vote’ on.

- Provides pre-printed posters/flyers to promote Champions of Democracy to their employees.
- Holds a training class on site (at a later date) for their associates to learn election procedures to ensure that they are fully prepared to serve.
- Recognizes each participant in a Columbus Dispatch ad following the election.

The Franklin County Board of Elections has recruited hundreds of poll workers through Champions of Democracy and we remain committed to growing the program for upcoming elections. In fact, this summer we will be adding **OhioHealth** to our Champions roster. As the tenth largest employer in the entire state of Ohio, we believe that several great poll workers will come from their 22,000 associates.

The need for competent poll workers never ceases. The nuances of every election change from year to year. Franklin County uses Champions of Democracy to maintain a steady flow of new and experienced poll workers serving on Election Day.