

Elements of Election Day Stories

Reporting:

- ✓ Know where/how to reach candidates / party officials
- ✓ Let them know that you'll be getting in touch – ask for cooperation.
- ✓ Many will do a press conference or make a statement – yes, you can use those if you can't get an interview.
- ✓ Collect color – decorations, food, music, mood, crowd quotes – at party headquarters. This can add lively details to your story.
- ✓ Find out about polling locations (note some have changed here) and hours.
- ✓ Rush hours for voting are typically morning, lunch and evening after work.
- ✓ Be aware of YOUR restrictions: Don't try to get into the polls without permission. Stay behind the line – non-voters are not allowed within a certain distance of polling places.
- ✓ Ideally, you want to check out several polling places in a variety of neighborhoods – remember, some neighborhoods are strongly connected with one party. If you go to a polling place in a heavily Democratic neighborhood, you'll get only that point of view.
- ✓ Voters do NOT have to talk to us – so be very polite and respect the wishes of any who don't want to talk.
- ✓ Talk to SEVERAL voters at a polling place – you're trying to get some sense of WHY voters are supporting the candidates.
- ✓ Be sure you have voters for both candidates in your race.
- ✓ Get the usual identification info on each voter: Name, age, occupation, neighborhood (the closest street intersection can be good), party registration.
- ✓ Get contact info for each person – and you can assure everyone that the info will NOT be published. It's for verification and follow-up, if that's necessary.
- ✓ Get diverse voters -- we want to hear from a cross-section of people in our community.
- ✓ Remember that "independent" can mean unaffiliated with any party – but there's also the Independence Party. So if someone says he/she is an "independent," be sure to check if that means unaffiliated.
- ✓ Get colorful details from voters: *Has this person always voted? First-time voter? Brought their children with them? Was it a hassle to get to the polls? Why go to the trouble? Did voter have to make special arrangements to vote – make breakfast especially early, skip lunch, talk a neighbor into driving? Anything that will bring this person to life and paint a picture of citizens doing their most important job – voting.*
- ✓ Keep an eye/ear open for voting problems. This could turn out to be a major part of the story.

Story Structure and Info:

- ✓ Be precise and accurate – don't say more than you know: If a race is too close to call, say so. If the winner is not yet known, say so.
- ✓ Focus the lede/anchor intro on the RESULTS: In a clean sweep for Democrats, first-time candidate Dan Maffei is the newly elected member of Congress from the 25th District.
- ✓ Tell **ALL** the qualifiers/caveats about your info:
 - With 80 percent of vote counted, Maffei has a two-to-one lead...
 - With half of the precincts reporting, Walsh is ahead by 500 votes...
 - As of 7 a.m., the outcome was still unclear.
- ✓ Include voter turnout, if it's available.

- ✓ Include background/context: *Polls had accurately predicted the Democratic sweep. Or Polls had wrongly predicted a Democratic sweep. This was the most expensive state assembly race in xxx years. Or With unemployment hovering at xx percent, the economy was the biggest issue on voters' minds. Whatever will give meaning to the story.*