



### Nine ways state leaders can help prevent armed intimidation at polling places

1. **Seek input** from a wide range of community stakeholders about any concerns of potential instances of armed intimidation. Should intimidation occur, it will be essential to work with diverse messengers whom different groups in your community will believe and trust.
2. **Conduct training sessions** for all law enforcement and election workers that will work to ensure everyone has access to the polls without fear of armed intimidation. The training should detail the state and local laws governing the presence of firearms in that specific polling location and provide individuals working at the polls with clear instructions for how to report intimidation (and to whom). Please be mindful of the unintended consequences of long-term police presence outside of polling locations, as that might create a different form of intimidation for certain voters.
3. **Set and model positive norms** in your public communications about any potential threat and communicate that the vast majority of people do not support and will not participate in violence. Secretaries of State, Attorneys General and local officials could use this frame to issue statements making it clear that intimidation will not be tolerated and prohibitions will be strictly enforced.
4. **Create a mechanism for community members to report potential threat information** they are hearing through their networks. Issue guidance to community members for flagging hateful or untrustworthy content through social media platforms.
5. **Share plans for protecting public safety** while preserving civil rights and civil liberties early and often and respond punctually and transparently to community concerns.
6. **Correct any disinformation as quickly as possible and use positive framing to do so.** For example, if John has been accused of being a thief, the best correction will re-focus attention on what John is (e.g., “John is an honest person who is always sharing”) rather than what he is not (e.g., “John is NOT a thief.”)
7. **Where state law permits, create temporarily and geographically limited gun-free zones** around polling places, mandating either that guns may not be visible from inside the polling area nor by individuals waiting in line to vote and/or prohibiting demonstrations by any armed person or persons that have the intended purpose or reasonably foreseeable effect of intimidating voters within 1 mile of each polling place so as to prevent unlawful armed voter intimidation.
8. **A municipality may be able to seek an injunction preventing potentially violent conduct as a public nuisance**, particularly where there is reason to believe that groups previously engaged in violence may be planning to intimidate voters.
9. **An official may declare an unlawful assembly and order the demonstrators to disperse** if an assembled group grows hostile and violent and threatens the safety of other people or their property.

### Resources:

- An [analysis of state laws governing armed intimidation](#) in North Carolina, Virginia, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin from the Coalition To Stop Gun Violence and Guns Down America.
- An analysis of [brandishing laws across all 50 states](#) from Giffords.
- How to [prepare and respond to illegal armed voter intimidation](#) from Everytown.
- Voting [access saves lives](#) from Brady.
- How voters can [document armed intimidation](#).
- How [cities can protect public safety](#) in responding to protests and intimidation from the Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection at Georgetown Law.