

# Election Day

Category: Recovering

written by Colleen T. Fogarty | February 5, 2025

The elderly farmer in faded overalls leaned on his cane as he struggled to enter the room. We ushered him to a nearby table, gave him his ballot and left him to complete it. Back at my voter greeting spot, I noticed him struggling with his glasses, peering closely at the form.

I had never worked the polls before. As an academic family physician, I had taken a six-month sabbatical in part to recover from the exhaustion of leading a department of family medicine during the COVID-19 pandemic. Getting outside my usual day-to-day experience was one way to recover. Serving as a poll worker and Spanish interpreter was a good way to get out into the community.

Prior to election day, I was asked to cover early voting in a rural community.

When I alerted the poll supervisor to this voter's apparent visual problem, she asked me and another poll worker to help him. He looked up at us. "Where's the line for Trump?" He had mistakenly marked the ballot with an "X" in the header, instead of filling in the bubble for the candidate.

We showed him how to mark the bubble for his chosen presidential candidate and "every single Republican" he wanted to endorse.

On election day I worked with Spanish-speaking voters. Several asked, "I want to vote for the woman...where is she?" and I guided them to Harris' bubble on the form. Many asked, "Trump...where is he?" I guided them, too, upholding my oath as a poll worker to remain non-partisan.

I felt proud of my fellow poll workers, most of whom had worked the polls for years or even decades. And as I assisted the voters who cast their vote for Trump, I remained fiercely committed to the process of free choice for every voter, even as I recognized the irony that this candidate, if elected, had the potential to remove that very free choice from all of us.

Both the 2024 election and Trump's inauguration have passed. I worry about presidential directives based on ignorance and hate; I worry about fellow Americans' healthcare and our public health system. Though personally recovered—mostly—from the pandemic—I fear new threats that will tax our nation in unprecedented ways, requiring ever more recovery.

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