

POLITICAL SIGNS IN BRATTLEBORO



A guide for the placement and removal of temporary political signs



Prepared by
Brattleboro Town clerk's Office
230 Main Street, Suite 108
Brattleboro, Vermont 05301-2885

ph 802-254-4541 x 129
fax 802-257-2312
townclerk@brattleboro.org

1. **You must obtain permission of the property owner before you place any sign.**
2. **It is a violation of criminal law to put a sign on any utility pole in Vermont.** 13 V.S.A. § 301
3. **In all towns in Vermont, on public or private property, the Agency of Transportation (Travel Information Council) monitors Vermont's highways for non-conforming signs and enforces Vermont's sign law. (10 VSA §§481-506) According to these statutes:**
 - Signs may not be attached to trees or to a state or town sign, post or guardrail.
 - Signs may not interfere with, imitate or resemble any official traffic control sign, signal or device or appear to attempt to direct the movement of traffic.
 - Signs may not be located in a way that prevents drivers from having a clear and unobstructed view of official traffic control signs and approaching or merging traffic.
 - Signs may be positioned so that they are readable primarily from a limited access facility (which includes the interstates and ramps and some other four-lane highways).
 - Signs must be in good repair and securely affixed to a substantial structure.
 - Temporary political campaign signs may be displayed for a period of not more than two weeks.

• In 2002 the Office of the Attorney General modified its position on the meaning of the state sign law and now advises that campaign signs are EXEMPT from the state sign law if placed along a town highway for a period of not more than two weeks. This means that political campaign signs can legally be placed along town highways, within the right of way, for a two-week period before elections.

4. Enforcement The Travel Information Council is authorized to order the removal of any illegal off-premises, on-premises or exempt sign. If the sign is within the public highway right-of-way, the Agency of Transportation or the legislative body of the municipality involved may remove a temporary sign that is not affixed to a substantial structure, without prior notice.

5. Political Sign Safety According to Brattleboro Town Zoning Ordinances Sec. 4500: Signs shall be designed and located in such a manner as:

- a. Not to impair public safety.
- b. Not to restrict clear vision between a sidewalk and street or access from the site or street onto another street.
- c. Not to prevent free access to any door, window or fire escape.
- d. To withstand a wind pressure of at least thirty (30) pounds per square foot.

6. Public property owned by Town or Public Schools. Political signs may NOT be placed on public property owned by the Town or public schools.

7. **Size** Town Zoning Ordinances Sec. 4500



- Signs four (4) square feet (2'x2') or less, do not require a permit.
- Signs more than four (4) square feet require a permit from the Planning Services Department.
- Signs requiring a permit are limited to two (2) per candidate. A fee of \$25.00 is required for each sign. *When obtaining the permit application inquire about additional restrictions for permitted signs.*

8. Political Campaign signs at the Polling Place on Election Day may be regulated by the Presiding Officer. 17 V.S.A. §2508. The law was amended in 2001 to give more authority to the Presiding Officer on the day of the election. The Presiding officer can prohibit all signs from being placed in the ground or affixed to anything on the property of the polling place. However, the presiding officer cannot prohibit a person from standing and holding a sign outside the polling place so long as the person does not hinder or impede the progress of any voter going into or out of the polling place.

For the day of the election, the Presiding Officer can adopt a policy to allow signs to be placed in certain areas so long as the policy is applied evenly to all candidates or political issues regardless of the political content. The Presiding officer can

limit the size or number of signs per candidate.

In Brattleboro, political signs are prohibited from being placed in the ground or affixed to anything on the property of the polling place.

9. Removal Town Zoning Ordinances Sec. 4500: All political signs must be removed within *twenty-four (24) hours* after the election.

10. Hand-held Signs Candidates or political activists may stand on public property owned by the Town and hold signs providing they are not obstructing pedestrians or vehicular traffic. This includes but is not limited to the traffic island in front of the Municipal Center, Wells fountain area and traffic islands surrounding Interstate 91 ramps.

11. Although not directly related to signs, candidates or political activists can stand outside of polling places on the day of election and hand out brochures or “palm cards” to voters so long as they do not hinder or impede the progress of voters going into and out of the polling place. 24 V.S.A. §2508. There is no specific number of feet away from the polling place limitation in Vermont law. It is up to the Presiding Officer at each polling place to set reasonable rules so voters can enter the polling place without interference.

These guidelines are intended to provide assistance to political candidates and activists based on commonly asked questions. They represent a combination of both State and Town regulations. They are not intended to be a complete listing of all State and Town sign regulations.

For complete sign ordinances in Brattleboro contact:

*Planning Services Department
230 Main Street, Suite 202
Brattleboro, VT 05301-2885
ph 802-254-4541
fax 802-254-6456
email planning@brattleboro.org*

For complete State laws governing political signs contact:

*Vermont Secretary of State's Office
Elections Division
Drawer 9
Montpelier, VT 05609-1101
ph 802-800-439-8683
fax 802-828-5171
email kdewolfe@sec.state.vt.us
www.sec.state.vt.us*

For information regarding towns other than Brattleboro, check the Secretary of State's website for a listing of all town clerks in VT to find out if a town has adopted zoning bylaws. The zoning administrator of the town can explain rules for temporary signs.

