Observer Qualifications and Application Process

About Election Observation

PAE-REACT recruits, deploys, and supports U.S. citizens on behalf of the U.S. Department of State to support OSCE elections initiatives. Short-Term and Long-Term Observers monitor a wide range of aspects of an election. Short- and Long-Term Observers are volunteers and receive a per diem to cover daily expenses during the deployment period.

PAE-REACT routinely recruits and deploys observers under tight deadlines, providing air travel, visas, insurance, per diem, pre-deployment information and support throughout each deployment. In order to accommodate the high level of interest among qualified election observers, PAE-REACT very rarely deploys the same person to more than one election observation mission per year.

American citizens wishing to serve as an observer may create an online application at any time. To apply to deploy to a specific Election Observation Mission, applicants must enter the specific election vacancy code in the online application.

Short-Term Election Observers

Qualified applicants are selected and briefed by PAE-REACT and deployed to the host country. Upon arrival, typically four to seven days before Election Day, STOs receive an in-depth briefing and relevant background materials. STOs are deployed in multi-national teams of two (plus local interpreter and driver) to locations throughout the host country to assess opening, voting, closing, and counting procedures on Election Day. Observers may be asked to observe the close of the electoral campaign or may be invited to return to observe run-off elections.

STOs fill out reporting forms on various aspects of the electoral process in their area of responsibility. This information forms the basis of the final election report prepared at the end of the observation mission.

Long-Term Election Observers

Qualified applicants are selected and briefed by PAE-REACT and deployed to the host country. Upon arrival, typically four to six weeks before Election Day, LTOs receive an in-depth briefing and relevant background materials. LTOs are deployed in multi-national teams of two (plus local interpreter and driver) throughout the host country, assessing the entire election cycle and gaining an in-depth

knowledge of the political environment and the election campaign in their regions of deployment prior to the vote. In certain circumstances, LTOs may be retained to observe run-off elections.

LTOs draft region-specific reports for the OSCE Election Core Team on a number of topics, such as preparedness of election administration, political party/candidate campaign activities, involvement of civil society, and inclusion of women and ethnic minorities in the electoral process. These reports track trends and developments and contribute to OSCE/ODIHR's interim and final election reports.

LTOs make logistical preparations for STOs: locating polling centers, devising Election Day deployment plans, recruiting and hiring STO drivers and interpreters, identifying suitable STO accommodations, and preparing STO briefings. On Election Day, LTOs coordinate STO reporting and compile region-specific reports for the OSCE Election Core Team.

Minimum Qualifications for Short- and Long-Term Observers
Short-Term Observers (STOs) and Long-Term Observers (LTOs) must have:
- Prior direct elections experience, which may include serving in a polling station as a poll worker or as an observer/poll watcher on Election Day, whether in the US or in another country.
- **In addition, LTOs must have** completed a minimum of three international election observation or supervision missions in at least two different countries. At least one of the three assignments should have been with OSCE/ODIHR. LTOs should also have prior experience in elections management and logistics.
- Proven ability to demonstrate cross-cultural understanding and sensitivity and to exercise sound, independent judgment in politically-sensitive environments.
- Flexibility, patience, professionalism in all written and spoken communications, a high tolerance for ambiguity, the ability to perform collaboratively and with excellence, and a positive attitude.
- Ability to perform in physically demanding and stressful environments under field conditions, including long hours over extended periods (day and night).
- Excellent health.
- Freedom from concurrent commitments that could produce conflict of interest with the election observation mission.
- Preparedness to read briefing materials, understand procedural instructions and complete election observation forms accurately.
- Commitment to one's duties, the observer Codes of Conduct, and the integrity of the Observation Mission.
- Written and spoken English language fluency; knowledge of the host-country language is desirable.
- Knowledge of the OSCE region is desirable.

Due to the challenging and complex nature of international election observation and the large amount of interest relative to spaces available, the selection process is quite competitive. Applicants without prior elections experience may wish to volunteer for local, state or general elections in the districts where they are registered to vote. Local and county election authorities welcome new volunteers and free training is usually provided.

To maintain the fact and appearance of impartiality, observers are not selected to observe in a country of which they are citizens or with which they have extensive ties.

All observers must abide by the OSCE/ODIHR Code of Conduct and national laws. PAE-REACT and OSCE/ODIHR reserve the right to withdraw the accreditation of observers. To learn more about the duties and qualifications of election observers, visit the OSCE/ODIHR Elections website.

Process of Becoming an Election Observer
To apply for a Short- or Long-Term Election Observation mission:

1. American citizens may complete an online application at any time.

2. To apply for a specific vacancy, interested parties must enter the specific election vacancy code in the online application. Election codes must appear in the following format: SUKR117. Improperly entered election codes may not be recognized by the system, which would risk the application not being received. PAE-REACT recommends saving, exiting and reopening the application to verify that the election code was entered and saved correctly.

3. New applicants with strong qualifications are pre-screened in an interview and reference check process on a rolling basis, as needed.

4. Short-listed applicants receive an e-mail from PAE-REACT outlining the terms of the assignment. The Current Opportunities page will indicate when observer recruitment has been completed.

5. Prior to each deployment, all observers must re-verify that they are in robust health. Specifically, missions require observers to have the strength and mobility to carry all personal items up several flights of stairs and to sit for up to twelve hours on an airplane or to spend up to twenty-four hours observing in polling stations and riding in vehicles on Election Day, often on uneven roads. PAE may request that observers to provide a doctor's note certifying medical clearance to deploy.

6. Observers must review pre-deployment materials, and pass the required U.S. Institute of Peace online training modules. The first three modules of the USIP online training are mandatory for every mission and consist of general information about the OSCE and Conflict Management. In addition, each mission has an associated region-specific module that must be taken. For example, observers deploying to Tajikistan are required to complete the three introductory modules (1-3) and the Central Asia module (6). The reading material may be accessed and corresponding tests taken at any time, even before applying for an election opportunity. A user name, password and link to the tests are found on the first page of the REACT online application.