

## **Citizens for Voter Choice Tips For Petitioners!**

Petitioning can be a lot of fun. You will meet new people and learn that many feel and think the same way you do. Plus, there's the bonus of knowing you are advancing fundamental reform that's essential for a democratic future – that virtually everything depends on! The tips below will help make your time petitioning more productive and enjoyable.

1. Carry multiple clipboards: Start with two; add more as you learn how to handle them. Legal-length clipboards make it easier for people to sign at the bottom of a page. Carry a pocket notebook, plenty of pens, and some voter registration forms. (Get these at your town/city hall.) You can register someone to vote and get their signature on the petition at the same time; the signature will be valid as long as you turn the registration card in at the same time or before the petition signature.
2. Tape a copy of the Burlington, VT ballot on the back of your clipboard(s). This will make it an easy reference to show what a ranked-choice ballot looks like and how it works. This is the picture that's worth a thousand words. Makes it clear how easy ranked choice voting (IRV) is!
3. Dress comfortably, and in a way that encourages people to feel you are approachable. Wear comfortable shoes. A jacket with good pockets you can use to store brochures, registration cards, etc., is often very helpful when you don't have a small table to put stuff on.
4. Have one or two "stopper" lines to get people to stop. For example: "Would you like to sign to bring more voices and choices into elections?" See other examples below. Once you've engaged someone, ask if s/he is a registered Massachusetts voter. If the individual is not registered, offer them a voter-registration card. (You can pick these up at your town or city hall.)
5. Once a person stops make your pitch quickly – in about 30 seconds. (Your talk will become more pointed and concise with experience.) Show her/him the petition while you give the extremely brief presentation. Hold a pen out to her, at about chest level, inviting her to take it.
6. Give clear instructions on how to sign. Make sure they are signing the sheet for the city/town they live in. Many signatures are lost when the signer doesn't sign completely. Say something like: "First sign here, then carefully print your name next to your signature just like you are registered to vote. Then put your street address where you are registered to vote." While they are signing, solicit other people to sign.
7. Check the signature. Once he (or she) takes the pen, say something confirming, like "Terrific!" or "Great!" or "Thank you." Then check to make sure they signed correctly – you'll be surprised to see how many people forget to put their address, or don't to print their name. When this happens, say something like, "Great. Oh, and what is your address, please?" Then ask them to write it in. Once you've verified the signature and address, take the pen back, and politely thank the person.
8. Be unflinchingly polite, no matter what kind of yahoos you run into. Don't be distressed by refusals. It isn't personal. People are busy; and often wary of strangers. Stay upbeat; you are working for democracy! You'll probably get a whole string of signatures in a row pretty soon.
9. If you regularly feel you could be doing better, practice with the petition coordinator or another petitioner. Or observe a successful gatherer for awhile. You may pick up some helpful wording or techniques.
10. Follow these simple signature rules. Assign only one town/city to each petition. (ie All the signers on a given sheet have to be from the same city or town. ) Keep petitions clean and completely free of stray marks, numbers and notes. If you get a stray mark – such as someone testing to see if the pen works -- start a new page. You don't have to fill a petition for the signatures to count. Be sure that there is only one town/city for each signature sheet.

11. If you need more petitions, you can download them from voterchoiceMA.org . Or you can photocopy a blank petition. BE SURE to print both sides back-to-back so it looks like the original. Petitions that are printed on one side only will be rejected.
12. Avoid long conversations or arguments. Be prepared to briefly answer common questions, as outlined in the frequently asked questions (FAQs). You will get 10-15 signatures per hour in a normal petition campaign. Don't spend more than a couple minutes with any one person. If s/he wants to argue, or ask a lot of questions, give them a flyer to take with them and refer them to voterchoiceMA.org .
13. Ask enthusiastic people if they'd like to help gather signatures. If so, take their contact information, and give them a flyer with the campaign's contact information.
14. Look for spots with heavy foot traffic, such as Trader Joes, supermarkets, the post office or town dump. Town festivals or discovery days are ideal – lots of people mostly from one town. Going door-to-door is slow, but if that's your preferred method, go for it. If you live in a large condominium or apartment complex, observe the non-solicitation rules, and talk with management about how you can collect signatures inside the building.
15. Start as soon as you can. Starting early makes 100,000 signatures possible for a grassroots/low budget campaign! If you spend two hours a week, you'll get about 20 signature a week (assuming a typical collection rate of 10 signatures/hour). Over 10 weeks you'd gather 200 signatures! With 500 golden volunteers like you, we'll make it to 100,000. Getting this jump start is key.
16. Multiply your efforts. Bring a friend – or two, and get them started petitioning too. Your friends are likely to share your motives and ideals. Collecting with friends is fun and a great way to get them started too.
17. Carry the legal permission form explaining your right to petition – in case a store manager is not familiar with petitioners. This puts the Secretary of the Commonwealth's authority behind your legal right to petition outside stores and shopping malls. Does not allow for blocking traffic, so attend to the flow of people around you. The form is in the Voter Choice petitioner's kit, and can be downloaded from voterchoiceMA.org.
18. If your signatures slow down.... Keep a log of how many hours you work and the results. If you begin to meet people who say they have already signed, take them at their word. You may have begun to saturate either your spot or the time of day. Change your location for awhile and see if you do better there.
19. Enjoy talking to fellow members of the Commonwealth! This is what democracy is all about.

### **Examples of Stopper Lines and Quick Pitches**

#### Stopper Lines

"Would you like to sign to bring more voices and choices into elections?"

"Would you like to sign to give voters real choices – and free people up to vote on the issues, not the horseshoe?" "Would you be willing to sign our petition to make our elections more fair and effective?"

#### Quick Pitch

Hi. We're collecting signatures for the Voter Choice referendum to give voters more choices on the ballot. It lets voter rank their choices for a given office (governor for example) rather than choosing just one candidate. This will be on the ballot next year if we can get 100,000 signatures in the next couple weeks. Would you be willing to sign to let people vote on this?