

Tips for Petitioning in Your Community

Tens of thousands of people have signed the petition for a constitutional amendment to restore free speech and fair elections to the people. That's impressive, but we need many more citizens to join us to build a grassroots movement powerful enough to take on the vast corporate corruption of our democracy.

Petitioning in your community is an excellent way to build grassroots support for a constitutional amendment. It's also simple and easy to do. Here are some tips:

1. Where to Petition: Go where people in your community congregate, such as festivals, candidate town hall meetings, farmer's markets, demonstrations, local group meetings, shopping malls or subway stops. If you're looking for ideas, check your local newspaper for a calendar of upcoming community events.

2. How to Petition: You can roam a crowd, stand in front of a table (an ironing board will do in a pinch!) or pass the petition through a seated audience.

3. With Whom to Petition: You can petition by yourself, with a buddy or as part of a group. If you've never petitioned before, you may feel more comfortable pairing up with another person — either a friend, family member, colleague, neighbor or someone else in your community who cares about this issue. We can help connect you with others in your area who might join you — just email us at amendment@citizen.org.

4. What to Bring:

- [Copies of the petition \(PDF\)](#)
- One or more clipboards
- Pens

If you have a table, consider using a visual element to attract attention and engage people passing by. For example, you could display a poster board "citizens' poll" with a question related to the issue, such as "Should corporations have the same free speech rights as human citizens?", and a divided space underneath for people to check under "Yes" or "No."

5. How to Approach People: Find a quick way of describing the petition and inviting people to sign it. It will be hard to keep people's attention if you offer a long introduction. Some sample ways to introduce the petition:

- "Hi! Want to help prevent corporate control of our elections?"
- "Hi! Want to help stop the corporate takeover of our democracy?"
- "Hi! Have a minute to help rescue democracy from corporate control?"

6. What to Say Next: Some people may immediately know what you're talking about and eagerly sign the petition. Others may want more information. You can ask them if they are familiar with *Citizens United v. FEC*, the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling that gave corporations the green light to pour unlimited amounts of money into elections, on the basis that corporations should have the same free speech rights as real people. Try to tailor your comments to the audience. For example, if you are collecting signatures at a climate change rally, you could focus on how the ruling empowers oil and coal companies to attack political candidates seeking to reduce U.S. dependence on fossil fuels. To prepare for any questions that may arise, you may want to review the our Frequently Asked Questions about the constitutional amendment and other background materials from www.DemocracyIsForPeople.org.

7. How to Return Completed Petitions: Please return the completed petitions to Public Citizen by fax, email or mail. Follow the instructions at the bottom of each petition page for doing so. If you have the time and know-how, you can also enter the information into a spreadsheet and email it to us — but please send the form(s), too.

Strategies for Maximizing Petition Signatures:

- Coordinate with others to petition at the same event, either simultaneously and/or in shifts.

- If circulating in a crowd, approach groups of two or more people, so several people hear your explanation about the petition at once.
- Have multiple clipboards available, so more than one person can sign at the same time.
- If tabling, stand in front of the table and actively invite people who pass by to sign the petition (compared to sitting silently behind the table, waiting for people to approach you).
- If at a sit down event, make an announcement about the petition (if appropriate) before circulating clipboards through the audience.
- Set a personal or collective goal for an event and/or time frame. For example, 150 petition signatures at a weekend farmer's market or 500 signatures by the end of the month.
- Bring extra pens! You may want to attach the pens to the clipboards with pieces of string and tape, to prevent them from getting lost.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What if someone asks a question and I don't know the answer?

A: Share what relevant information you do know and encourage them to visit www.DemocracyIsForPeople.org for more information. You also can offer to take their contact information and get back to them later.

Q: What if someone says they're not interested in signing?

A: That's fine. Some people may be otherwise occupied and not interested. Others may have specific reasons for not signing. No matter what, remain polite and try not to spend too much time debating the issue. Lots of potential petition signers could pass by if you spend a long time talking to one person who isn't going to sign.

Q: What if someone doesn't want to fill in all their information?

A: Some people, for privacy or other reasons, may not wish to provide all the information requested. At very least, people need to fill in their full name and zip to be counted. We strongly encourage them to include their email address too, which will allow us to send them periodic updates about the continuing problem, proposed solutions and ways to take action.

Electronic Petitioning:

If you have a portable computer and access to a table in a location with wireless internet and a power source, you can set up your computer and encourage people to sign the petition online at www.DemocracyIsForPeople.org. If you do this, please keep track of how many people you or your group is responsible for signing onto the petition, and let us know!

If you have any questions, ideas, or additional tips you would like to share, please don't hesitate to contact our action team at amendment@citizen.org. We are here to support you!

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