

Guide to Designating Petitions

To begin the election process you must have a certain number of accurate signatures on your designated petitions, or petitions specifically created for a certain party and position. Please follow the instructions below to guarantee your petitions are correctly filled out. If you are running on one of the established parties in NYS (Democrat, Republican, Conservative, Independence or Working Families), you must file Designating Petitions.

Step 1: Make sure that you are eligible to circulate petitions

One of the easiest ways for your opponent to disqualify your petitions is challenging the eligibility of the person gathering signatures. To circulate petitions, you must be a registered member of your political party within the State of New York.

The campaign office can verify your voter registration status or you can do this yourself by visiting the following website: <http://voterlookup.elections.state.ny.us/> Do not assume that this information is up-to-date; everyone should double-check their registration information.

When you check your voter registration, be certain that the party listed is correct and your address is also correct. This information must match identically to what you fill out on the "Statement of Witness" of the petition or else the signatures that you gather may not be valid.

Step 2: Get copies of your campaign's designating petitions and a walking list of voters in your district

Your campaign office will provide you with the petitions you will use to gather signatures. Use only the original petitions provided by the campaign office. If you need more copies, ask the office to supply you with more.

The campaign will also provide you with a walking list of all the registered members of your party that you will use when gathering signatures. This list should be filtered to include only the members of your party who voted in the most recent election; this will help ensure that you are only knocking on the doors of active, recent voters. It is important that you use your walking list to ensure that you are not overlapping with other petitioners and gathering duplicate signatures. In addition, using the walking list will ensure that you only reach out to eligible voters.

Step 3: Review the rules for gathering signatures.

Before you start gathering signatures, please carefully review the general tips and rules provided at the end of this document. This will help you prevent common mistakes that can disqualify petitions.

When gathering signatures, you will need the following materials:

- (1) Copies of your designating petitions
- (2) Blue or Black Pens
- (3) A “walking list” (names and addresses of registered voters in your council district)
- (4) Clipboard or stiff material to write on

Step 4: Start gathering your signatures.

Begin gathering your signatures by going door-to-door using your walking list of registered voters in your District. Typically, the best time to go door-to-door is after work hours on weekdays or on weekends.

Signatures must be from registered voters of your political party in your district and each voter is only allowed to sign the petition of one candidate.

A sample talking script is included below for use by volunteers when going door-to-door.

<p>Five steps to get an accurate signature</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Be certain that the person signing is registered to vote in your council district2. Put the <u>date</u> in the first column3. Have them <u>sign their name</u> in cursive4. <u>Print their name</u> on the line below their signature5. <u>Print their street address</u> in the column labeled “Residence”
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“Hello, My name is _____, may I speak to _____? I am volunteer for _____, who is running for _____. I am collecting signatures to allow _____’s name to be placed on the ballot for the Primary Election on September __. Would you please sign for me?”

Many voters may not understand what the petitioning process is all about. If they show hesitation about signing, don’t give up. You may respond by clarifying,

“You’re not committing to vote for anybody by signing this petition. You’re just supporting the democratic process and allowing _____’s right to run for office by being on the ballot. Will you sign just to support _____’s right to run for public office and our right to have a choice of who to vote for?”

If the voters ask questions about your background, you and/or your volunteers should be prepared to give a very short answer as to why you are the best candidate. If the voter still refuses to sign your petition, politely thank the voter for his or her time and go on to the next house or apartment.

If you make an error on the petition form, cross out the information with a single line and initial any change you make. The initials should match those of the name printed in the “Statement of Witness.” **Note: never use whiteout to correct a mistake.**

Step 6: After you are finished gathering signatures, complete the “Statement of Witness” on the bottom of the designating petition.

After you have gathered a page of signatures (note: you do not need to gather all ten signatures on each page), the petition carrier must complete the "Statement of Witness" by printing his/her name in the first space (as it appears on your voter registration), printing his/her street address (including the City - also, exactly as it appears on your voter registration) in the section blank space, writing in the total number of signatures gathered on that page, and then dating and signing at the bottom.

Step 7: After you are finished gathering signatures, assemble all the pages in chronological order and submit them to the campaign office

DO NOT complete the "Sheet No." at the bottom of each page. This will be completed by the campaign office when they assemble all the petitions together. Be sure to submit your petitions as soon as possible so that the campaign can verify all your signatures in advance of submitting to the Board of Elections. Petitions must be filed with the Board of Elections during the designated days. Any signatures gathered after the due date will not be valid.

RULES FOR GATHERING SIGNATURES

- (1) Petition carriers must be residents in the State of New York and registered and enrolled voters of the party for which they are circulating petitions before they start gathering any signatures.
- (2) All petition signers must be enrolled voters who are registered to vote in the district where the candidate is running. They cannot have signed anyone else's petition, and cannot have partaken in the nomination of any candidate of any other party for this election.
- (3) Petitions may be carried for 24 hours a day, seven days a week beginning on the first day of petitioning. **Do not begin gathering signatures until the petitioning period starts.** If you do, the Board of Elections can invalidate those signatures.
- (4) The law requires that the voter must identify himself/herself to the petition carrier to be the individual who signed the petition sheet. Thus, using your voter list, ask for the voter by name: *"Hello, My name is _____, may I speak to [insert the name of the voter from your walking list]?"*
- (5) Petition carriers must actually see the petition being signed by the voter.
- (6) All signatures must be in blue or black ink. **Never use pencil.**
- (7) Persons should sign the petitions with the same name that they used when registering to vote. No one may sign for another person. Women must sign their own first name and not their spouse's. Do not use titles (Mr., Mrs., Dr., etc.).
- (8) The date and address should be filled in when the voter signs the petition.

- (9) The Law requires that the only thing the voter must fill out on the petition sheet is his or her signature. The petition carrier can fill in all the remaining information, including the date and the addresses. **We suggest that the voter's signature is the only information that should be filled out by the voter on the petition. Before the voter signs, you should print clearly and legibly on the petition, in the voters presence, the date, the voter's address and print the voter's name in the appropriate spaces.** However, it is not wrong or incorrect for the voter to fill in all the information him or herself. If the voter desires to do so, let the voter fill in the information. Just be sure the date, the address, and the printed name are correct and legible and that the voter signs on the correct line.
- (10) **Do not erase, cross out, or white out errors.** If in error or in doubt, cross out the entire line and go to the next line below the line and have them sign properly. **Do not try to correct mistakes after you have left the voter.**
- (11) Do not abbreviate names or addresses. **Never use ditto marks.** Write out the name of the month for the date.
- (12) **Petition Carriers cannot sign a petition sheet that they are carrying, because you cannot witness the collection of your own signature.** You may sign a different page of the petition if it is gathered and witnessed by a different person.
- (13) Make sure the petition signer has the opportunity to read the entire petition. Let the signer take as much time as they wish to read all the language on the petition.