

GUIDE TO INDEPENDENT NOMINATING PETITIONS

Independent nominating petitions are for candidates seeking positions on the ballot in New York State without affiliation to the Republican or Democratic parties. The timeline and rules for filing nominating petitions are different from those used for the more common designating petitions. Before you do anything, make sure you are following the correct guidelines and using the appropriate petitions. Again, this is for anyone who is NOT running as a member of the following parties: Democrat, Republican, Conservative, Working Families or Independence.

Petition for independent parties generally takes place between the beginning of July and Mid- August.

Step 1: Make sure you have the correct independent nominating petition.

Obtain a blank independent nominating petition from the Board of Elections. It should be printed on legal size paper (8 ½" x 14") and include your county and the district in which you are running (i.e., assembly, council).

Step 2: Complete the top section of your independent nominating petition in advance then make copies as needed.

In the top paragraph, be sure to specify the name and emblem of your independent nominating body. Please note that the name and emblem must be unique and cannot include any part of the names or emblems of established political parties (for example, Democratic Party or Republican Party).

Next, print your name under the heading "Name of Candidate," and enter your full address (as it appears on your voter registration card) including the city, state and zip code under the heading "Place of Residence."

Lastly, you should designate a "committee to fill vacancies." This is important in the event that for an unforeseen reason you are unable to run and need a replacement. Below the words - "I do hereby appoint" - on each petition sheet, you should print the name and full addresses (including the city, state and zip code) of three people who are registered voters in New York State. If you do make it to the ballot, but are unable/unwilling to run, this committee can vote on a candidate to take your place (the replacement does not, then, have to gather their own signatures on petitions but would take your place on the ballot).

Step 3: Know how many signatures you need to gather.

The minimum signature requirement varies depending on which position you are running for. We recommend gathering twice the amount of signatures required, as some signatures may be invalidated.

SIGNATURE REQUIREMENTS FOR INDEPENDENT NOMINATING PETITIONS

What the Position Represents	Number of Signatures Needed
Entire State	15,000(with at least 100 from each of one-half of the congressional districts)
Any county or portion thereof outside NYC	1,500
NYC	7,500
Any county or borough or any two counties or boroughs within NYC	4,000
Municipal Court District	3,000
Any City Council District within NYC	2,700
Any Congressional District	3,500
Any State Senatorial District	3,000
Any Assembly District	1,500
Office of Trustee of the Long Island Power Authority	500

Step 4: Review the rules for gathering signatures and get your walking lists and materials.

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.

To start gathering signatures, you will need the following materials:

- (1) A copy of your independent nominating petitions with the top section completed in advance
- (2) Blue or Black Pens
- (3) A "walking list" (names and addresses of registered voters in your district)
- (4) Clipboard or stiff material to write on

Step 5: Gather your signatures.

Start gathering your signatures by going door-to-door using your walking list of registered voters. Volunteers who are circulating petitions for you must be registered voters in the state of New York. A sample talking script is included below for use by volunteers.

"Hello, Mr./Ms._____. I am a volunteer for _____, who is running for (Your Position). I am collecting signatures to allow _____'s name to be placed on the ballot for the general election on _____. Would you please sign for me?"

Five steps to get an accurate signature

1. Be certain that the person signing is registered to vote in your district
2. Put the date in the first column
3. Have them sign their name in cursive
4. Have them print their name on the line below their signature
5. Have them print their street address in the column labeled "Residence"

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 the candidate’s 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 (or another petition carrier) 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 independent nominating petition.

After you (or another petition carrier) 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, printing his/her street address in the section blank space, writing in the total number of signatures gathered on that page, and then dating and signing at the bottom. A candidate is allowed to be a witness to signatures. **No one can be a witness on the page in which they are also the signer.**

Step 7: After you are finished gathering signatures, assemble all the pages, secure them together and number the pages.

In the space labeled “Sheet No.” at the bottom of each page, write in the corresponding page number. It is essential that all the pages be numbered and placed in order. You should make a copy of all the original petition sheets and keep this for your records.



After all the pages have been numbered and copied, take the original and bind it tightly together. It is standard practice to take a sheet of heavyweight cardstock or cardboard and attach it to the front and back of your petitions to protect them. You can bind the petitions using a fastener like the one shown on the right. Fasteners are can be purchased at most stationary or office supply stores.

Make sure that all pages remain in numerical order upon binding them together. Out-of-order sheet numbers can be challenged and invalidate your petitions.

Step 8: Complete a cover sheet following the guidelines from the Board of Elections

Make and fill in a cover sheet using the guidelines from the Board of Elections website. In the space at the top, print the party name as it is stated on your nominating petitions. In the box below, fill in your name, the correct council district, the county name and your address. Be sure that this information matches exactly with your petitions.

In the following section, the number of volumes refers to the number of bound documents that you are submitting to the Board of Elections. This is most likely “one.” The identification number will be filled

in at the Board of Elections as described below in Step 9. After you complete all the remaining information, be sure to sign your name at the bottom.

Make a copy of your cover sheet for your records. This is important. In the event that your cover sheet has an error or typo, you will need to complete an amended cover sheet using the form which can be found on the Board of Elections website. If you file an amended cover sheet you need to also attach a copy of the original cover sheet.

Step 9: Bring your petitions to the Board of Elections.

First go to the Board of Election's Candidate Records Unit to request a petition identification number. You will complete a small form and receive a printed barcode sticker. Place the sticker on the outside of your bound volume of petitions. Then print the number on your cover sheet. This is important. Now bring the volume of petitions and the cover sheet to the front desk at the Board of Elections. The clerk will stamp your petitions with the date and time, indicating that the petitions have been officially filed. Ask the clerk for a copy of this "time stamp" so that you can keep it in your records.

RULES FOR GATHERING SIGNATURES

- (1) Candidates do not have to gather the petition signatures on their own but may choose to do so. Petition carriers must be residents in the State of New York and registered voters before they carry a petition.
- (2) All petition signers must be registered the district (assembly, election, council) where you are 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 24 hours a day, seven days a week during the specified timeline. **Do not begin gathering signatures until the petitioning period officially starts.** If you do, the Board of Elections can invalidate those signatures.
- (4) The law requires that the voter must identify himself 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. Everyone must sign their legal name. 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 voter's 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.