

## A BASIC GUIDE TO PETITIONING

### **Why Petition?**

In order to have the Libertarian candidates' names placed on the November ballot for any public office, Pennsylvania law requires that we "petition", meaning that we must collect a certain minimum number of signatures from registered voters, and that number varies with the office being sought. For 2022, the minimums are about 300 to 500 for state rep, a thousand or two for state senate and US Congress, and 5,000 for Governor and U.S Senator.

In addition to the required number of signatures, it's always necessary to collect extra signatures as a cushion in the event that some of the signatures are disqualified. The absolute minimum cushion is at least 50% more signatures than the required amount, and a 100% cushion is usually sufficient to dissuade most challenges—but not always!

### **Getting Petitions...**

All signatures are required to be collected using a state-approved, 2-sided petition form. The only place where you can get blank petitions in 2022 is from the Libertarian Party of Pennsylvania or any Libertarian Party candidate. (Refer to the contact info at the end of this brochure). While you may be able to obtain petitions directly from your election board or other source, it's important to use the ones supplied by the state party, because each of the petitions are pre-printed with the names and addresses of our statewide candidates. If you use petitions from other sources, your signatures likely will not count for our other candidates.

### **Before You Go Out...**

Before you start collecting any signatures, there are two items on each petition which you must first fill in using blue or black ink: the line indicating the "County of Signers" in the Preamble (Section A), and the name, address, and occupation of your local candidates in the Candidate Information part (Section B).

**Section A - County of Signers:** The County of Signers is just that -- the name of the county where the *signers* of your petition reside. For example, a person living in Erie County must sign a petition that says "Erie" in Section A or else their signature will be disqualified. So if you're collecting signatures at an event where people may reside in different counties, before they sign be sure to ask them what county they live in. They'll have to sign the petition for their particular county.

Note that some local candidates' districts may span two or more counties. In this case, your local candidate will need separate petitions for signers from each county as well.

**Section B - Candidate Information:** Before you can begin petitioning, the candidate information section of the petition must first be filled in with the names of the statewide and local Libertarian candidates. Pennsylvania law allows for multiple candidates to be placed on a single petition (provided their districts overlap), and any signatures on that petition will count for all the candidates listed.

When you get your petitions from the state party, the names of the statewide candidates will already be pre-printed on the petitions. The state party also has petitions with downticket candidates included. If you have to add any local candidates' names and addresses yourself you can get their information from our LPPA Nomination Papers website. Make sure your candidate information is accurate, and that the information is *identical* across all petitions, including middle initials and any honorifics. The address cannot be a PO Box, and when specifying a candidate's home town, be sure to specify the name of their municipality rather than the name of their post office.

### **Who Can Sign?**

There are only two constraints on who can sign your petition. First, all signers must be registered voters; and fortunately they can be registered with ANY party, not just the Libertarian Party. Second, the signers must live within all districts listed on the

candidate information portion of the petition. In other words, the signer must be eligible to vote for all of the candidates listed on the petition. Of course, come Election Day they can vote for whomever they choose, not necessarily Libertarians.

Note: A recent court decision allows voters to sign petitions for multiple candidates for the same office.

### **Where to Petition?**

Once you have the properly prepared petitions in hand, it's time to find the signers. Any place with a ready-made crowd of people works best, and the larger the crowd the better. Train stations, parades, shopping center parking lots, fairs, ball games, outdoor concerts, and other crowd-drawing event are all excellent places to petition. You can even go door-to-door. But in general, the best time and place to collect signatures is on Primary Day at the busiest polling place in your district. Not only can you be certain that the signers are registered voters, you can also be guaranteed that they live within your local candidate's district.

To avoid competing with the phalanx of poll workers handing out literature to incoming voters, be sure to ask for signatures as the voters come *out* of the polls.

Whenever you go petitioning, be sure to dress appropriately. While that does not mean you need to wear a suit and tie, it does mean that you should avoid overly-casual clothes. Sunglasses should also be avoided, as they impede eye contact.

### **What to Say?**

When asking for signatures, it's best to keep your spiel short. If you're the candidate, you can say, "Hi, I'm Joe Candidate and I'm collecting signatures to get my name on the November ballot. Would you be willing to help support democracy in your neighborhood and sign?" Or, "Can you please help me get a friend on the ballot and sign my petition?" If the person hesitates, you can add, "This doesn't commit you to vote for these people, it's just to get their name on the ballot." You can also reassure

them their name will not be put on any mailing list.

Be sure to bring a supply of flyers for your candidates, if possible, to hand out to people who sign your petition.

Remember that you're an ambassador for your candidate and the Libertarian Party, so be sure to smile and thank the person whether or not they choose to sign.

### ***How Should the Voters Sign?***

It's important that the signer personally fill out all the fields on the petition line, including their written signature in the first column, their printed legal name in the second, plus their street address (no P.O. Boxes), their municipality (*not* their post office!), and the full date. If there is any question about what to write, the information on the petition should always match what's on their voter registration card.

Use blue or black ink only, and be sure to bring a spare pen. Ditto marks are not allowed, and missing information can cause a signature to be disqualified. Pay close attention to how people sign, because once someone makes a mistake, subsequent signers tend to copy the mistake, *especially* an incorrect date.

### ***Don't I Have a Right?***

It's possible that the local property owner may decide to take exception to your petitioning activities. If it's private property, such as a mall or carnival, it's usually best to just move on. However, if you're petitioning on public property, such as sidewalks, parks, parades, or at the polls on Primary Day, you have every right to be there. The state party can supply you with a legal memo which you can present to law enforcement officers to affirm that right.

Regardless of who's right or wrong, as an ambassador for your party and your candidate, remember always to be polite.

### ***After You Return Home...***

Once you've finished collecting signatures, you must fill out the "Statement of Circulator" on the

back of each and every petition. ***If you do not fill it out completely, the signatures you collect are not valid!*** Fortunately, another recent court decision ruled that it's no longer required to have petitions notarized.

The person who signs the Statement must be the same person who collected the signatures, or personally supervised their collection. It's no longer necessary that they be a Pennsylvania resident. Be sure that the "County of Paper Signers Residence" in the Statement matches the "County of Signers" on the front of the petition.

Don't worry if there is still room for more signatures on the petition when you fill out the affidavit, but be sure that no one else signs the petition *after* it's filled out.

You'll notice that there is space at the bottom of the petition for page numbers. Just leave them blank.

### ***Sending in Your Petitions...***

Once you've completed a petition, mail it to the state party at the address below. To help the party maintain an accurate count of signatures, don't delay sending them in. Be sure to send in all petitions no later than the middle of July to allow for collating and processing prior to the August 1 deadline.

### ***Good Luck!***

Petitioning is a very simple, yet extremely important way to help the Libertarian Party. The mere presence of our candidates on the ballot helps add credibility to the party. Your invaluable help in making it come to pass is truly appreciated.

### ***Contact Info...***

Mail all completed petitions to Richard Schwarz, PO Box 350, Chaddsford, PA 19317. If you have any questions or need help, contact LPPA election manager Chuck Moulton at 215-768-6812 or [chuck@moulton.org](mailto:chuck@moulton.org).

# The Libertarian Party



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