

MassACT! Campaign Signature Drive

Preparation for Petitioning

DO I NEED TO NOTIFY A MANAGER IN ADVANCE OF PETITIONING AT A PARTICULAR LOCATION?

Type A	Type B
No , when the petitioning location is on public property, such as a sidewalk, you do NOT need to notify the manager in advance. It is your legal right to petition here without advance notice.	Yes , You must notify the manager 24 hours in advance . Once you have done so it is your legal right to petition at the location. The manager must grant you permission if no other group has already been granted petitioning access there. Negotiate another time to petition if this is the case.
Subway/T stations	Shopping malls (examples: Auburn Mall, Braintree Mall, Natick Mall)
Public sidewalk	Strip malls
In front of a fast food restaurant or coffee shop on a public sidewalk	Several free standing stores on the same property that share a parking lot
Town Fair	A single free standing store with a private parking lot
Town common	A buying club with membership (examples: Cosco, BJ's)
	Town dump

TIPS FOR CONTACTING STORE MANAGERS:

Visit the store in person and speak directly with the manager. Go in pairs if possible.

Plan ahead! Know what you would like and where you would be willing to compromise.

Talk with an organizer beforehand if you have any questions or concerns.

Before You Visit:

Walk the site and take note of foot traffic. Would this be a good place to collect signatures?

If so, where would volunteers stand? Would it work to have a small card table?

Determine the number of volunteers you would like to have at the store during each shift. What is your ideal number? Minimum number? Possible compromise plan?

Understand your basic legal rights as a petitioner. Know what category of location you are visiting (see chart above). Familiarize yourself with the law by reading the attached bulletin from the Massachusetts Secretary of State's office.

Practice your opening line and what you are going to say! (See reverse for sample script)

During the Visit: Ask for the store manager. Often times they will need to page him or her.

Sample Introductory script: *“Hello, my name is _____ and I’m a volunteer with the MassACT! campaign. I live in _____ and I am organizing a group of local volunteers to collect signatures for our healthcare reform ballot initiative. We are planning to collect signatures on _____ (date) at _____ (time) in front of your store. I am here to introduce myself and discuss the arrangement that would be most workable for both of us.*

3 POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

Reaction #1: The store manager says, ***“Sure, we often have petitioners here”.***

Sample Response: *“Terrific. I am planning a team of _____ volunteers. I would like them to stand _____ . We will be petitioning on _____ (day) at _____ (times). Are there any other details I should know before we arrive. Would it be possible to get your business card? Thank you and I’ll see you on the _____.”*

Reaction #2: The store manager says, ***“I’m sorry, you won’t be able to petition here. I really don’t want people blocking our entrance and disrupting or harassing my customers.”***

Sample Response (polite but firm): *“While I respect your concern for your customers and your business, according to state law, if I have given you 24 hour notice and there are no other petitioners, it is my legal right to petition in front of your store. I am organizing a group of _____ volunteers. My volunteers have been instructed to be polite and will not disrupt your business. My volunteers have been well trained and will be here only to gather signatures for our petition. What would be a reasonable number of volunteers?”*

[NOTE: At this point, you are in a negotiation. Try your best to get as close to your ideal number of volunteers as possible. Also come to an agreement as to where your volunteers will stand. You may also need to negotiate the time when petitioners will be able to petition. If a group is already petitioning at the time you were planning, negotiate another available time.]

Reaction #3: The store manager says, ***“I’m sorry, you won’t be able to petition here. Our store policy does not allow petitioners.”***

Sample Response (again, polite but firm): *“There must be a misunderstanding about petitioning laws. According to state law, if I have given you 24 hour notice and there are no other petitioners, it is my legal right to petition in front of your store. I will be contacting the MassACT! campaign office to inform them of this misunderstanding. Thank you for your time.”*

After speaking with the store manager:

If you had difficulty getting permission to petition in front of a store-please contact the campaign office immediately: Lisa Vinikoor at 617-275-2807 or David Jordan at 617-275-2904. We will be able to support you in this effort.

If you were successful

- 1) Continue to work on recruiting volunteers for your shift.
- 2) Contact the campaign office/GBIO office to tell us the dates/times and locations of your shift for our master calendar of volunteer shifts.