

Organizing a Petitioning Campaign

OVERVIEW

Constituent-generated petitions have two uses:

- 1) Lobbying: as something tangible to present to your representatives to show that there is support in your (and their) community for single-payer legislation.
- 2) Outreach: as a way to collect supporters' contact information.

Petitioning or signature-gathering campaigns are a great way to hone in on the core tenet of organizing: meeting people where they are at. Interacting with your community members at nearby farmers' markets, churches, grocery stores, or community board meetings is a great way to build and/or expand your list of local contacts. This may be particularly useful for new and emerging groups looking to build a base of support in your area, or established groups looking for a way to rejuvenate after stretches of inactivity.

WHY ORGANIZE A PETITIONING CAMPAIGN?

Petitioning enables the opportunity for Awareness, Education, and Outreach in the fight for single-payer healthcare.

Awareness: Petitioning campaigns show that people are actively organizing around universal, single-payer healthcare in their community at the city, state, and/or national level.

Education: They can inform people in your community about 1) What universal, single-payer healthcare is; 2) Legislation you're organizing around; and 3) How to get involved.

Outreach: Help you to find others in your community who also are passionate about getting active around the issue and invite them to your next meeting, event, etc. (**Be sure to have a flyer of your next meeting or event with you when you gather signatures.*) These could be future volunteers or fellow organizers.

PROCESS

Below you will find several steps we've identified as critical to executing a successful petitioning campaign. These are not necessarily in chronological order because many of them will overlap throughout the course of your campaign.

1. **Coordinate volunteers.** People have different levels of comfort and experience. Some people want to become lead organizers and others may only have a few hours a week to spare for the cause. Creating different roles so everyone can participate at the level they feel most comfortable is crucial. Giving people small tasks to do helps them to not be intimidated by the idea of becoming a leader, builds their investment in the movement, and increases the likelihood that they'll come back next time. You can assign people to enter data, design a petition, scout locations to petition at, and gather signatures.

2. **Hold meetings.** Holding town hall meetings in different neighborhoods within your city can be a great way to reach people outside of your network. You might have already given a presentation on single-payer to your local school board, rotary club, or union. Take that presentation and travel to new parts of your city, and invite members of local organizations and community and/or faith-based groups to speak at your event, from their point of view, on single-payer. This is a great way to establish or enhance solidarity amongst partner organizations in your area. Community meetings are also a great way to inform people about any legislation – such as HR676 or a state bill – that you’re gathering signatures for. **Tip: Don’t let people leave without collecting their contact information and giving them a flyer promoting your next meeting or event. This is how you will begin to identify volunteers to help develop a campaign.*

3. **Develop materials.** You will need to create materials for all stages of your campaign, and have necessary supplies on hand.

PEOPLE COLLECTING SIGNATURES WILL NEED:

- The petition and plenty of copies of it.
- Information packets with talking points on single-payer and the state or federal bill they are collecting signatures for.
- Clipboards and pens.
- Flyers for your next event or meeting.
- Any “branding” items you want such as T-shirts or pins with your group’s logo.

4. **Fundraise.** Printing flyers and petitions, making T-shirts, traveling around your town or city, and all of the other tasks involved in organizing a petitioning campaign require money. It’s important to pass the hat at events and meetings, and look for innovative ways to raise funds. Healthcare-NOW! – New York City created a campaign on www.indiegogo.com – an online platform that can collect pledges – and Healthcare-NOW! can process donations for you through our own online system. **To learn more about HCN’s tech services, visit our website at <http://www.healthcare-now.org/takeaction/organizational-affiliation/>.*

5. **Trainings.** It’s important to train your volunteers on best practices for petitioning, and not expect them to be experts the first time around. You can do role-playing and pair newcomers with more experienced organizers. Remind people that how they present themselves is important (smile, stand up straight), and that they need to be prepared (memorize one or two key talking points and use simple phrases like “Universal healthcare for all – sign the bill” to get people’s attention).

6. **Petition!** Follow up with your volunteers – especially new ones – after their first time gathering signatures. Go over what went well, and what issues arose that you may not have considered before. It’s important that your volunteers feel supported. Also, be sure to enter signers’ contact information into your database before you deliver the petitions to legislators.

PETITION for UNIVERSAL SINGLE-PAYER HEALTHCARE in NEW YORK STATE

Dear Governor Cuomo,

We the undersigned believe that healthcare should be treated as a human right and that our existing system of public programs and for-profit insurance is both unjust and unsustainable. A universal, single-payer system in New York State would replace our current patchwork of health insurance with a statewide public plan that guarantees comprehensive care to all New Yorkers throughout their lives without premiums or any out-of-pocket fees. Funded by progressive taxation, this plan would realize substantial savings by concentrating spending on healthcare delivery and preventative care instead of administrative waste, marketing, and profit. Therefore, we urge you to enact a single-payer bill to make New York's healthcare system both socially just and economically sustainable.

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Name	Street	Email	
Signature	City/State	Zip	Phone
Name	Street	Email	
Signature	City/State	Zip	Phone
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Send completed petitions to: Healthcare-NOW! NYC 949 Amsterdam Ave, Apt 2S, NY, NY 10025 • Contact us at: hcn.nyc@gmail.com • www.hcn-nyc.org

WITNESS _____ LOCATION _____ DATE _____

<i>For Our Records Only</i>	
DE _____	DATE _____