

IMPORTANT we set-up a webpage to help validate signatures. That webpage links you directly to several search engines where you can verify zip codes, county, address, birthdate, etc. That page is <http://www.harriscountygreenparty.org/verification.htm> Let us know if you need an additional link and we will look for it. PLEASE READ THE SECTION ON SIGNATURE VALIDATION (at the end) it is very important

While sitting in traffic court, I made a list of action areas that were useful to us during the petition drive. I hope I do not come across as patronizing. Now that our drive is over (I bet you wish you were there!!) please feel free to contact me anytime if you have any questions.

Below: info on

- 1. ATTRACTING/TRAINING NEW PETITIONERS**
- 2. MULTIPLY THE EFFORTS (petitioning + office support)**
- 3. LEGAL SUPPORT**
- 4. MAXIMIZE EXPOSURE**
- 5. THROW PARTIES – (Get others to organize them for you, within the artist community)**
- 6. UPDATES – UPDATES – UPDATES (how to keep track of signatures gathered)**
- 7.**
- 8. FUNDRAISING**
- 9. VALIDATING SIGNATURES – VERY IMPORTANT - START EARLY**

ATTRACTING/TRAINING NEW PETITIONERS

- This is very important, particularly for people who are intimidated by petitioning for the first time.
- What helped us A LOT was to have a small sheet of paper with a suggested spill about the petition drive, and a spill about the Green Party. In TX we found it more productive to talk about the party and our statewide candidates than about Nader. The sheet also had my cellular phone number incase of cop action or other.
- That sheet also included the name and title of relevant legal authorities in the area (see below LEGAL SUPPORT)
- Then an experienced petitioner would go on the spot with the rookie and start petitioning (for the rookie to see how it is done) and encourage the rookie to do it. Then offer suggestions on how to do it better (tone of voice, eye contact, flow of people, etc.) Make sure your petitioners have several clipboards with them, sop when one person is signing, that petitioner can talk to somebody else.
- In Austin, they had weekly training sessions at their offices. In Houston, we did it on the spot.
- We also had buttons for every petitioner (we sold T-shirts too) to identify them and differentiate from Buchanan petitioners.
- Make sure you always have plenty of Green Party (or Nader) brochures to pass around, with a contact. We also always had plenty of voter registration cards (they could not sign the petition, but those people are most likely to vote green in November – We must have given away close to 2,000 cards in Houston alone). Also, always have cold beer, juice and beverages for volunteers when they come to turn-in petitions. Make the office a place to gather and congregate.

MULTIPLY THE EFFORTS (petitioning + office support)

- I am sure you heard about multiplying your efforts. I only petitioned myself the first week or two (so I knew what was involved in it) and never saw daylight again. I spent the rest of the time updating the calendar of events, calling people, sending emails, counting, making sure there is enough brochures and printed material, motivating event organizers, etc.
- We activated the phone tree about three weeks into the drive to call all greens on our list to get them out, or help out at the office. Some people prefer to get introduced to the effort doing office work
- We found that the purpose of the ballot is not only to get signatures, but also to create the structure for a viable Green party. If the structure develops well, you automatically also increase the number of signatures because petitioners will remain motivated (people are attracted to healthy organizations)

Early on we identified the core group of petitioners and met all together. We gathered everyone for their input into the drive – how to do it, how to improve it, ideas, places, etc. In Houston we met monthly (at our monthly general meetings) to evaluate the drive.

Then I regularly delegated to these greens the organizing of petitioning “expeditions” to festivals, the beach, etc. I did provide the support by booking the booth at festivals, making sure there was enough printed material, arranging the legal stuff, forwarding volunteers who contacted me, and most of all, emailing a calendar of events every Wednesday for the coming week-end (in addition to the Yahoo calendar linked top our page)

We had regular telephone conference calls with key petitioners in the state. For a very inexpensive conference call service, contact Turtle Island Communications (<http://webcity.arc.losrios.cc.ca.us/~sherb/myinfo.html>, Benjmsher@aol.com, 530-622-6598, Ben Sher is a green from CA). The call costs \$15 to set-up; it works by having everyone call a particular number in CA. Every caller pays her/his own long distance call.

Retirees are great for office support. Be patient because they often need serious training and support with computer work, but they are wonderful to work with because they tend to be very relaxed. Plus they often are huge Nader fans!!!

LEGAL SUPPORT

To counter police harassment, this is what we learned:

- Identify a lawyer friendly to the cause (one of our best friends in Houston is a very well known criminal attorney, who knows personally the county attorney, the district attorney, etc.). You can do it yourselves as well – I did the work with the county attorney.
- Contact the city attorney, the legal department of the police department, and every single entity you can think of. We faxed them info on the petition drive (remember, you are trying to comply with the legal requirements, which makes our case special, plus political speech enjoys a very high level of protection – supposedly)
- The fax was followed-up with phone calls. They usually understand every well the situation. Request that police be trained about petitioners.
- MOST IMPORTANT: collect the names of all these persons and their title. Include that with the cheat sheet given to petitioners.
- It is REALLY IMPORTANT that all petitioners be trained to take the name and badge number of the security officer doing the harassment – request to speak with their superior. It is often a matter of ignorance, power/ego issues and poor training.

MAXIMIZE EXPOSURE

- We jumped at every opportunity to be on the radio (calling talk shows). Our local Pacifica station (infamous KPFT) has a couple really good current affairs programs: Progressive Forum played Nader’s speech twice (once for the fundraising drive) and had us as guest for a few minutes twice.
- We also played shows on cable access TV (we had a show back in December)
- YARD SIGNS are really good advertising.
- One of our green party members arranged for a benefactor to donate an airplane banner. Yes, we had an airplane fly a Green Party of Texas banner, followed by the trailer: Sign the Petition!! We flew that over large festivals. It was a huge hit.
- We did not get media coverage until the end of the drive, but the coverage was very useful.

THROW PARTIES – REALLY GOOD

- We benefited from support from the artist community. One songwriter/singer called to ask if he could throw a benefit at one of the hip/countercurrent coffee houses. There we met at least three new petitioners that turned out to be fabulous and made a couple hundred bucks.
- THROW A PARTY right before the drive is over. Get somebody else to organize the party for you, because the buzz will be around about the greens – it can be the perfect theme for a party. The Art Car Museum, in Houston, contacted us to organize a Green Party 4 days before the drive was over. The party was for the opening of a new exhibit, the theme was green; to get in, you had to wear green or sign the petition (or bring signed petitions). They booked the band, food, printed the invitations and sent them to their own list. We sent the invitations to our own greens list. This provided the perfect opportunity for people to gather a few signatures or bring the forms they had. I notarized petition forms all night long – we collected over

1000 signatures in a couple of hours. We did not spend any money – the museum got many new people to see their exhibits, etc. (The museum is still very new so good PR for them)

FUNDRAISING

- We were fortunate in that we started organizing for the drive early in the year. In December we sent a fundraising letter to our membership (our brand new database of greens) and collected some \$6000. That provided seed money to produce material for Ralph's appearance right before the drive (we raised an additional couple thousand there).
- During the drive, when we thought we should consider bringing greens from other states or hiring some professional petitioners, we did another major fundraising mail-out (fortunately we had the list of a friendly organization that we were not able to use in December). Our own David Cobb did additional fundraising with greens across the country (larger donations) directly and through a green called Gary Crane. We raised an additional \$18,000, MOSTLY IN DONATIONS of \$15-50. We had an amazing response.
- Our ballot access drive must have cost overall approximately \$35,000, including cost of printing, mail-out, airfare for out of state greens, professional petitioners, etc.
- The out of town petitioners and paid petitioners we had contributed approx. 10,000 signatures. We would have reached our goal even without their help, but they really helped reinvigorate greens.

UPDATES – UPDATES – UPDATES

- We found it critical to send updates throughout the state on a weekly basis. We have more numbers internally, because we received petition updates from other locals at different times of the week. Every update was accompanied by the accomplishments of the week, encouragement, petitioning tips and locations, local contacts
- In Houston we sent the calendar of upcoming events for the next two weeks with petitioning contact name/tel for the key events. I know other locals did the same thing, in addition to the yahoo calendar.
- I sent weekly emails, and we also sent snail-mail updates every 2-3 weeks for those without email (very important) except at the end (no more time)
- People need to know where we stand so they can see how their effort fits in. We knew we were going to be short on signatures all the way till the end, but we kept track of the increasing pace and that was very motivating.
- WE ESTABLISHED a GRAPH of the petitioning effort (I think it is still up on the txgreens.org site). The bar chart had the number required, our running/cumulative goal for the time of the update, and the numbers gathered. It was VERY useful and provided a quick look at how the different parts of the state were doing. IT WAS ALSO MOTIVATIONAL TO SEE HOW WE WERE PICKING UP THE PACE.
- This is important because little by little it gets people trained to turn-in the petitions regularly.
- **THIS IS THE SYSTEM WE ESTABLISHED to keep track of the numbers;**
 - When a petitioner turns in a bundle, I would clip the bundle together and stack all petitions received.
 - Once/ Twice a week, I would go over the stack of petition forms, verify for proper notarization (some validation could have started here). I counted the number of signatures in each bundle and tagged that bundle with a small piece of paper with the total # of signatures.
 - We had a manila folder for each petitioner (plus a couple of aggregate folders for petitioners who only turned in a couple sheets or less). On the tab of the folder, I wrote the name of the petitioner, and the cumulative total for that petitioner. On the folder itself, I would keep track of the bundle totals. Petitioners were inserted in the manila folders in bundles as they were turned in That allowed me to keep track of progress for each petitioner. The folders were ordered alphabetically in my file cabinet.
 - After putting away all the petition bundles and updating cumulative totals, I just had to count the totals for each petitioner. That made keeping track of totals really simple.
 - It also allowed me to post totals for individual petitioners on our website and on the updates.

VALIDATING SIGNATURES – VERY IMPORTANT - START EARLY

- We regularly called the Secretary of State (in charge of elections and ballot stuff in Texas) to verify what was allowed and required for a petition form or a signature to be valid. **IT IS CRITICAL TO DO THIS EARLY.**
- We established midway toward the end of the drive, that the city was a statutory requirement, but not the zip code. That is, if the city was not written down for a given signature, that signature was not valid.

- Strangely enough, if the zip code was missing, it was not a problem. If we had the zip but not the city, the signature was invalid.
- The last 2 days of the drive, when we were validating signatures (to maximize the number of good signatures in hand) we came to the signatures from the Dallas area (they had sent them to us). **ALMOST NO SIGNATURE HAD THE CITY WRITTEN DOWN.** We almost lost it because in Houston we did not know the streets in Dallas/Fort Worth in order to ascertain which was the city. **WE WOULD HAVE LOST ALMOST 5,000 SIGNATURES from Dallas-Fort Worth alone IF WE HAD NOT DONE THE VALIDATION!!!!**
- It is really key that you contact your authorities EARLY ON to make sure what is required and not, color ink, paper, etc. In TX, for example, the birthdate must be there, the street address (PO BOX is not valid), and ditto marks are ok (“). It is MUCH MUCH easier when petitioners make sure their signatures are complete as they are gathering them.
- We purchased CD-Roms with databases of registered voters from the Secretary of State (\$125). We did an initial check to verify the validity rate of our signatures. We sampled petitions from a variety of petitioners (sampled some 20% of their signatures). Some came at only 65% validity, some at 85%. The average was 70% validity rate. We basically just checked that signors were registered to vote and listed on the SOS database. **WORD OF CAUTION:** There are mistakes in the SOS databases, and be creative when you do your searches. Contact me for details once you are validating.
- **PAPER FLOW FOR VALIDATION AT THE END OF THE DRIVE:** You will end up with a mess of paper everywhere if you are not careful. This is most important at the end when the pace picks-up.
 - Validation went through 3 stages:
 - ✓ Facial check (manual check for missing city, and things that could be remedied easily) The sheets with errors or missing info were flagged with cut-up Post-it notes.
 - ✓ Database check: check signatures against Secretary of State database. At this stage we checked only those sheets with flags. We would complete the info missing and took the flags out for those signatures we could verify and leave the other flags on.
 - ✓ Internet check: We would check on the internet for information missing for the remaining signatures. Please remember that the SOS databases were incomplete, since they only included some counties, and also did not include recently registered voters. Furthermore, the SOS does not go through every single signature. They also do sampling to determine whether you collected enough signatures. There fore, the more signatures that look good and complete, the better.
 - It is important to keep a good flow of paper. We kept the different validation steps somewhat physically separated from each other, with plenty of bankers boxes and folders to keep things really neat and organized and signs so everyone knew what was what (even then, it was really hard to keep track of it).
 - ✓ Petitions would come to my living room for facial check, volunteers were on the couches.
 - ✓ From there, the forms were placed in two boxes in my dining room, where I had rigged two computers with the secretary of state databases (**BOTH OF THESE COMPUTERS HAD BEEN LENT BY GREENS AND WERE OLD. WE HAD TO PLAY WITH THEM TO MAKE THEM WORK – IT WAS A HASSLE. TRY TO RESOLVE THIS EARLY ON**)
 - ✓ Then petitions went to the make-shift offices we have at home (I have had a home office for many years). My husband and myself each have a computer, so we connected them to the internet using the 2 lines we have installed at home. I used the cell phone for communications during that time. Here you also need a box for the petitions that still have flags, and another box for the petitions that are completely finished.
 - Finished petitions need to go in a separate box. Once a box was full, we sent a team of 2-3 people to the copy center to copy every single sheet (in case of a dispute with the authorities). The boxes with originals were placed in one room, the boxes with our copies in another room (to avoid mix-ups)

GREAT LOCATIONS TO PETITION INCLUDE

UNIVERSITIES and UNIVERSITIES (make sure you know the school-year calendar so you don't miss the semesters), Drivers License Offices (however they are called in your state Some of the Best spots), friendly coffehouses, COURTS (municipal, county, etc. These are great early in the morning, they tape off in the afternoons), COURTS and Drivers License offices again, PUBLIC HOSPITALS, PARKS, TRANSPORTATION ENTERS/BUS STOPS, main public libraries, social security offices (?) CITY AND COUNTY, ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDINGS, concentrations of office buildings, grocery stores (where allowed, very rare in Texas), concerts, sports events, festivals, conferences & shows, arts-theatre districts, RAVES are great (even though a lot are under 18), friendly clubs. We petitioned in the morning at public buildings (courts, etc.), rested during the

intense afternoon heat, and then hit the road again focusing on sporting events and concerts. Make sure that for these you get A LOT of people to petition together (more fun) and you really work the crowd efficiently.

Note: A lot of these places are really good early in the morning, others later in the afternoon. It makes a difference to know traffic patterns

I apologize if I went too much into details, I hope this is useful to you. I am very glad this is over!!!