

## PETITION

In the eyes of public officials, petition signatures carry a lot of influence. Politicians get into office because their constituents vote them into those leadership positions. When hundreds of constituents sign their support for a certain policy, the elected official would be stupid to ignore the public's wishes. After all, a public official will not stay in office long if he ignores the interests of his constituents. In August of 2006, Ignite activists gathered 318 petition signatures from people wanting Atlantic City casinos to go smoke-free. The petition signatures were sent to 21 state legislators who were in the position to amend the smoke-free law. In June of 2007, the New Jersey Senate unanimously passed a bill that would close the loop-hole allowing smoking in casinos.

### Things To Keep in Mind:

- Save Money: use an Exacto knife to cut a reticular piece of cardboard and then simply use two rubber bands to hold the paper in place and VOILA- you have everything you need (except for pens)
- Brevity! People are busy- try to get your message out in less than five seconds. This is a good opportunity to use your elevator speech!
- Stay Hyped: smile and be positive- anyone with a heart likes seeing happy, energetic people
- Folks Need Direction: tell people exactly how they can help out, don't assume they know what petition gathering entails.
- Seek 'Em Out: try finding people who are sitting down or waiting in line- they can't run away from you. Also, if you get a whole groups attention, you are more likely to get more signatures.
- No Joke: don't let your appearance detract from the seriousness of the issue (no cutoff shirts, short shorts, etc)
- Don't get Down- the majority of the public supports our cause. When people brush us off, it typically isn't because they disagree with what we are doing. It's because they are busy.

### How to Respond to People:

Advocate: Would you like to sign a petition to protect public health?

Scenario 1: Absolutely!

Advocate: Great! Please sign this petition which we will later send to Representative \_\_\_\_\_ .

Scenario 2: No, I'm busy.

Advocate: Thanks anyway. Have a nice day.

Scenario 3: What is this about/Tell me more?

Advocate: I am from \_\_\_\_\_ and I think it is absurd that people who choose to smoke have to sit in a restaurant and breathe in more than 4,000 chemicals coming from the smoking section. That's why we're petitioning for a Smoke Free Texas this legislative session!

Adapted from: <http://www.kickbuttsday.org/search-activities/>

Here's how to do this event:

A few days before the event:

- Investigate who is in the leadership position(s) to push your issue in the legislature.
- Create petition sheets that are worded carefully and concisely.
- Number each page of the petition along with each individual row

Day of the event:

- Visit a popular place and get people to sign the petition!
- Create a strong visual to get people interested in your event
- Submit COPIES of petitions to policy makers who can lead this policy to becoming law. It is critical that you save the original petitions for your own records.
- Send a copy to [staff@txsaywhat.com](mailto:staff@txsaywhat.com) with your event report!

**Don't Forget!:**

- Email your event report to [rm72@txstate.edu](mailto:rm72@txstate.edu) for a chance to win scholarships to the 2014 Say What! Texas Tobacco-Free Conference!

\*\*\*The first amendment guarantees your right to assemble and petition. However, if you are in a mall or outside a grocery store and a manager/storeowner/security guard ask you to leave, be polite and leave. Storeowners have the right to ask you to leave their property, and there is no reason to create conflict- there are hundreds of places to collect petition signatures.