Section 5: How to Get on the Ballot and Stay there
With Rich Means, Attorney at Law

GETTING ON THE BALLOT

Unless you are an incumbent with a pre-existing organization, it is unlikely that you will have your areas and precincts completely organized when you start the petition drive. In fact, the Petition Drive and the Voter Registration Drive are the times to fill out your areas and precincts.

BEGIN VIDEO

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In Illinois candidates for public and party office get on the ballot by petitioning. For the campaign organization, that means gathering signatures on printed petition sheets. In addition the candidate must file a statement candidacy and, optionally, a loyalty oath bound with the petitions. Also, for most offices, the candidate must file a statement of economic interest.

You should get a copy of the State Board of Elections Candidate Guide for your election either from their office in the State of Illinois Building or online at www.elections.il.gov (click on the Candidates tab on the top of the screen). The site contains sample petition forms, maps, and the number of signatures needed for your office for this election. Forms may also be obtained from lawyers specializing in election law, or from printers accustomed to printing political materials. Be sure to have the original petition forms checked for typographical errors and legal conformity by a campaign lawyer. Then the petition form can be printed or reproduced. The State Board will furnish you with copies of the Statement of Candidacy and the loyalty oath. Blank Statements of Economic Interest should be obtained from the Secretary of State, the State Board of Elections, or the County Clerk, depending on the office sought.

The City of Chicago also has forms which must be filled out and submitted. These forms should also be checked for typographical errors and legal conformity by a campaign lawyer. Petitions traditionally are printed with number spaces for 10-20 signatures on each sheet. Be sure to order enough so that you can file well over the number required. Each office requires a minimum number of signatures to be filed. Here we will discuss primarily the filing signatures for a party or primary or non-partisan municipal election. It is also possible to file as an independent or a new party in the general election; the rules are somewhat different and should be obtained from the State Board of Elections or from your campaign lawyer.

It is important for a number of reasons to gather many more signatures than the minimum. First, your opponents may challenge petition signatures after they are filed. If you file only 505 for state representative and six of your signatures are successfully challenged, your candidate will not be on the ballot.

Second, petition gathering is an opportunity to build a precinct organization and you should use it to make that organization a good one. Do not just send workers out and expect that they will come back a month later with 50 good signatures. You should set up a reporting structure not only to monitor the progress of your petition drive, but to get precinct workers accustomed to the rhythm and discipline of the door to door campaign.

Start with a training session about six weeks before the deadline. It is not legal to gather petition signatures earlier than 90 days before the last day for filing. Try to have an experienced petition gatherer give the pitch at the training session. This person should emphasize that each circulator must be 18 years old and a U.S. citizen. The pitchperson should explain that the circulator no longer needs to be registered voter in that district but that s/he must accurately disclose his/her current residence address.

Each voter should sign his or her name as it is on the precinct register or poll sheet. In other words, Mary K. Brown should sign that way, not "Mrs. Albert Brown." A block printed signing is objectionable unless the voter printed his/her signature on the voter registration card. For this reason, the best petition forms will have a box for signature and another box for printed name.

Husbands and wives (or other family members) must not sign for each other. It's easiest if the voter fills in his or her own address, although anyone may do so as long as the voter signs his or her own signature. The circulators themselves should sign another worker's sheet, not their own. It's good to give each worker at the meeting an instruction sheet. It's also useful to have some simple, inexpensive campaign literature, such as a combination candidate biography, citizens' committee list, and short issues platform for the workers' use. This piece can be a single piece of paper printed from the campaign computer.

Organize your workers by precinct. The best signatures, the "goldplated or bullet-proof' ones, are gathered door-to-door using the printed poll sheet to make sure signers are registered voters. Each circulator should fill one sheet before starting another. **The worker should not sign the circulator's affidavit at the bottom of the petition without having it notarized.** For that purpose, plan to have a notary or two present at the time you ask the workers to turn in their sheets. Before using a notary, check with the Secretary of State's website http://www.i1sos.gov/notary/ to ensure the notary is registered and her/his commission has not expired.

It is best to have frequent notarization meetings and petition collections; the sooner they are notarized and in the campaign's hands the better. As petitions are turned into the office, they should be crosschecked against the database of registered voters to get an accurate count of how many valid signatures have been collected. The names should also be entered into the campaign masterfile (see section on the Office Manager). Set a final deadline for workers to turn in their petitions, no later than the Friday before the first day for filing. That will give you time to copy your petitions, prepare them for filing, and have your attorney check that everything is in order before you file with the election authority. For most

offices, filing at 8 a.m. on the first day ensures that your candidate will be in the lottery for first ballot position.

The petition training session is not too early to have ward coordinators and area chairs in place. You will want the workers to report on a regular basis, usually each Thursday and Sunday, during the petition campaign. Workers report to the precinct captain, who reports to the ward coordinator who reports to the overall precinct coordinator.

Reports tell you how well your organization is working. The first report should show that each worker has begun; five signatures is not bad. The second report should show that each worker has at least 25 signatures gathered. By the third report date you want the workers to have gone through 1/ 3 of their assignments. By the fifth or sixth report (three weeks) they should have finished. Along the way be prepared to replace workers who are not out knocking on doors, and possibly replace even captains, area chairs, or ward coordinators who are not giving good, verifiable reports (if an area chair tells you that all 14 of his or her workers have exactly 20 signatures at any report, for example, you want to ask to see some of those signatures.)

Say you have set a final campaign deadline for workers to turn in their completed petitions Thursday before the Monday filing date. You've arranged to have two notaries present (make sure that their commissions have not expired). It's nice to have some refreshments, too, for your hard working circulators, and it's a good idea for the candidate to be present to thank each worker. Line up one driver who can take a notary to a worker who finds he or she can't leave the house. Make a list of each worker and the number of signatures he or she has turned in. About 9 p.m. start calling workers who have not yet shown up. If you have built a good organization during the petition drive, you should be able to gather every sheet this night. Everyone who turns in a sheet should receive, within a few days, a thank you letter from the candidate. What remains to be done? You should eyeball each sheet, making sure of a number of things:

1. The address of each signer must be complete: that is, street number, street direction, full name of street and type of street (street, avenue, boulevard, place, etc.) all must be present. Anyone may fill in any gaps that exist in the address. If you don't have city, county and state printed on the petition sheets and the signer didn't put them in, fill them in, too. The following standard abbreviations for direction, "S", 'W", etc. and type "St., "Ave.", "Rd.", may be used.
2. The circulator must sign on the signature line of the circulator's affidavit. Failure to sign the signature line invalidates the entire petition.
3. Make sure the notary has signed the notary's line and applied his or her seal; failure to do either invalidates the entire petition.
4. Make sure that all blank lines of the circulator's affidavit (address, notary's date) are filled in. Remember you can't change any entries in a sworn affidavit outside of the presence of both the circulator and the notary.

Once these chores are complete, arrange the sheets in the order in which you want to file them. You will want to put your best foot forward and begin with full sheets. You should put a