Intro
If you’re reading this, odds are you have embarked on a journey that will lead you down the path of a community organizer, or at the very least, a petition circulator. While it can be a very rewarding venture, it can also be an incredibly challenging one. Petition circulators are often the unsung heroes behind social change in our country, regularly putting themselves in uncomfortable situations to advocate for an issue they’re passionate about - in our case, marijuana reform.

What is a citizen-led initiative?
A citizen-led initiative is a process in the American political system in which voters can bypass the legislative process by taking an issue to a vote of the people. It is one of the most empowering aspects of American democracy. It provides all of us the opportunity to directly engage in the political process.

Requirements and restrictions for petition circulators.
A petition circulator, also called a "circulator," or "signature collector," is a volunteer who is working to place a ballot initiative, referendum, recall, or candidate on a local or state ballot. Each state and locality is different, so make sure that you know the rules governing this process.

All too often entire initiative campaigns are derailed by a simple procedural misstep or other technicalities. Something as simple as not putting the date on a packet can disqualify every signature collected. In the past, activists gather the number of signatures needed only to have the initiative rejected due to minor issues.

The processes can be extremely different so make sure you do your research!

Be Prepared
As with most conversations that involve politics, we only have a short window of time to connect with potential petition signers. Regardless of the issue, most Americans are unwilling to have a lengthy conversation about public policy so be prepared to have a rushed conversation. In addition to the obvious items such as petition packets, pens, talking points and other organizing tools, you must fully understand the rules and procedures for the initiative process in your municipality or state.

Practice
Collecting signatures for a citizen-led initiative can be challenging simply because of our lack of experience with engaging the general public on political issues. Role-playing is one of the best things we can do to prepare for a day out gathering signatures. By going through the motions with someone you know and you’re comfortable with will help build your confidence to engage complete strangers in the same way. This is an easy exercise that you can do with a fellow activist or a friend.
**Good locations matter.**
Finding a good location is incredibly important. Even in heavily populated areas, a petition circulator can sometimes find themselves standing alone. The right spot can make all the difference. Even understanding a location’s peak hours will help determine how your organization should allocate volunteers and other resources.

**Below are a few suggestions for locations and events often frequented by petition circulators and typically net positive results.**

- Local park
- Grocery stores
- Farmer's markets
- Parades
- Political Rallies
- Outdoor events
- Casual gatherings
- Public library
- Public transit
- Movie theater
- Concerts (inside or out, sometimes you even can get free tickets by calling ahead)

**Do's and Don'ts**
A few best practices never hurt:

**Do:**
- Know the issue
- Establish goals
- Be confident
- Make eye contact
- Know when to pivot

**Don't:**
- Ask open ended questions
- Misrepresent your intentions
- Alter voter information
- Provide false or misleading information