

A Field Guide to Gathering Signatures

Gathering signatures for the 2012 California Marriage Protection Act can be fun and thought-provoking. But it is also serious business with serious rules. Not following those rules can lead to criminal charges, including felony perjury. So it is important to know the rules and follow them to the best of your ability.

We're going to give you a basic version of the rules in plain English. If you want to read the entire rules, they can be found here: <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ballot-measures/initiative-guide.htm>

Rules You Must Follow

1. You must be 18.
2. You must be a registered voter or qualified to register to vote in the State of California.
3. You must personally witness each signature as it is written.
4. Each sheet can only contain signatures from a single county. (You can have a separate sheet for each county, though.)
5. You can sign your own petition – once.
6. You cannot preprint the date on the petition. Don't fill anything out for the people signing.
7. Don't scratch out names. If there is a mistake made, just flag it with a highlighter or a post-it.

Things You Can Go To Jail For

1. Lying about the contents of the petition is a crime. So don't lie.
2. Refusing to allow people to read the text of the initiative or the Attorney General's summary is also a crime.
3. It is a misdemeanor to knowingly or willfully allow the signatures on an initiative petition to be used for any purpose other than qualification of the proposed measure for the ballot.
4. It's a crime to give anyone money or any other form of payment in exchange for signing.
5. It's illegal to sign or solicit to sign false, forged, fictitious, or ineligible signatures and names.

Rules They Must Follow

1. They must be a registered, qualified voter at the time they sign.
2. A voter can only sign a petition that is designated for his or her county of registration.
3. Each person must personally sign the petition, as well as fill out the address, date, etc.
4. Each person may only sign once.
5. Any voter who has signed an initiative petition may withdraw his or her name by filing a written request for the withdrawal with the appropriate county elections official prior to the date the petition is filed by the proponent.

6. Once they sign, they cannot scratch out their name, or have you scratch out their name for them.
7. It's illegal to threaten you to get you to stop circulating the petition.