



Grassroots Candidate Guide

Independent Nominating Petitions

Step 1: Make sure you have the correct independent nominating petition.

Obtain a blank independent nominating petition from Grassroots Initiative. It should be printed on legal size paper (8 ½" x 14") and include your county and the council district you are running in.

Step 2: Complete the top section of your independent nominating petition in advance then make copies as needed.

In the top paragraph, be sure to specify the name and emblem of your independent nominating body. Please note that the name and emblem must be unique and cannot include any part of the names or emblems of established political parties (for example, Democratic Party or Republican Party).

Next, print your name under the heading "Name of Candidate," and enter your full address (as it appears on your voter registration card) including the city, state and zip code under the heading "Place of Residence."

Lastly, you should designate a "committee to fill vacancies." This is important in the event that for an unforeseen reason you are unable to run and need a replacement. Below the words - "I do hereby appoint (all of whom are enrolled voters of said party)" - on each petition sheet, you should print the name and full addresses (including the city, state and zip code) of three people who are registered voters in your district.

Step 3: Know how many signatures you need to gather.

The minimum signature requirement for special elections to the Council is the lesser of either 2,700 - OR - five percent of the total number of votes cast from the council district in the last gubernatorial election. In Council District 30, the minimum signature requirement for the 2008 Special Election is 986 signatures. We recommend gathering twice the amount of signatures required, as some signatures may be invalidated.

Step 4: Review the rules for gathering signatures and get your walking lists and materials.

Before you start gathering signatures, please carefully review the general tips and rules provided at the end of this document. This will help you prevent common mistakes that can disqualify petitions.

Confused? Have Questions?

Grassroots Initiative is available to help. Please feel free to contact our office at (212) 400-0531 or via email at info@gograssroots.org if you get confused or run into problems. You can also visit our website at www.gograssroots.org for additional resources and useful information.

The information contained in this document is provided as a service to first-time candidates and does not constitute legal advice. Although we go to great lengths to make sure our information is accurate and useful, we recommend you consult a lawyer if you want professional assurance that our information, and your interpretation of it, is appropriate to your particular situation.

In addition, you will need the following materials:

- (1) A copy of your independent nominating petitions with the top section completed in advance
- (2) Blue or Black Pens
- (3) A "walking list" (names and addresses of registered voters in your council district)
- (4) Clipboard or stiff material to write on

Step 5: Gather your signatures.

Start gathering your signatures by going door-to-door using your walking list of registered voters in your Council District. Volunteers who are circulating petitions for you must be registered voters in the state of New York. Signatures may be from registered voters of any political party; however, each voter is only allowed to sign the petition of one candidate. A sample talking script is included below for use by volunteers.

*"Hello, My name is _____, may I speak to _____?
I am volunteer for _____, who is running for
City Council. I am collecting signatures to allow
_____’s name to be placed on the ballot for the
Special Election on _____. Have you signed any
petitions for candidates in this Special Election? If not, would you please sign for me?"*

Five steps to get an accurate signature

1. Be certain that the person signing is registered to vote in your council district
2. Put the date in the first column
3. Have them sign their name in cursive
4. Print their name on the line below their signature
5. Print their street address in the column labeled "Residence"

Many voters may not understand what the petitioning process is all about. If they show hesitation about signing, don't give up. You may respond by clarifying,

"You're not committing to vote for anybody by signing this petition. You're just supporting the democratic process and allowing _____’s right to run for office by being on the ballot. Will you sign just to support _____’s right to run for public office and our right to have a choice of who to vote for?"

If the voters ask questions about your background, you and/or your volunteers should be prepared to give a very short answer as to why you are the best candidate. You should also feel free to explain why there is a special election in your district and how the special election process works.

If the voter still refuses to sign your petition, politely thank the voter for his or her time and go on to the next house or apartment.

If you (or another petition carrier) make an error on the petition form, cross out the information with a single line and initial any change you make. The initials should match those of the name printed in the "Statement of Witness." Note: never use whiteout to correct a mistake.

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Step 6: After you are finished gathering signatures, complete the “Statement of Witness” on the bottom of the independent nominating petition.

After you (or another petition carrier) have gathered a page of signatures (note: you do not need to gather all ten signatures on each page), the petition carrier must complete the “Statement of Witness” by printing his/her name in the first space, printing his/her street address in the section blank space, writing in the total number of signatures gathered on that page, and then dating and signing at the bottom.

Step 7: After you are finished gathering signatures, assemble all the pages, secure them together and number the pages.

In the space labeled “Sheet No.” at the bottom of each page, write in the corresponding page number. It is essential that all the pages be numbered and placed in order. You should make a copy of all the original petition sheets and keep this for your records.

After all the pages have been numbered and copied, take the original and bind it tightly together. It is standard practice to take a sheet of heavyweight cardstock or cardboard and attach it to the front and back of your petitions to protect them. You can bind the petitions using a fastener like the one shown on the right. Fasteners can be purchased at most stationary or office supply stores.



Step 8: Complete a cover sheet using the Attached Form.

Fill in the cover sheet that is included as an appendix to this guide. In the space at the top, print the party name as it is stated on your nominating petitions. In the box below, fill in your name, the correct council district, the county name and your address. Be sure that this information matches with your petitions.

In the following section, the number of volumes refers to the number of bound documents that you are submitting to the Board of Elections. This is most likely “one.” The identification number will be filled in at the Board of Elections as described below in Step 9. After you complete all the remaining information, be sure to sign your name at the bottom.

Make a copy of your cover sheet for your records. This is important. In the event that your cover sheet has an error or typo, you will need to complete an amended cover sheet using the form at the end of this guide. If you file an amended cover sheet you need to also attach a copy of the original cover sheet.

Step 9: Bring your petitions to the Board of Elections at 32 Broadway, 7th Floor by the filing deadline or contact Grassroots Initiative for assistance in this process.

First go to the Board of Election’s Candidate Records Unit at 32 Broadway, 7th Floor in Manhattan to request a petition identification number. You will complete a small form and receive a printed barcode

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sticker. Place the sticker on the outside of your bound volume of petitions. Then print the number on your cover sheet. This is important. Now bring the volume of petitions and the cover sheet to the front desk at the Board of Elections (same location: 32 Broadway, 7th Floor in Manhattan). The clerk will stamp your petitions with the date and time, indicating that the petitions have been officially filed. Ask the clerk for a copy of this “time stamp” so that you can keep it in your records.

RULES FOR GATHERING SIGNATURES

- (1) Candidates do not have to gather the petition signatures on their own but may choose to do so. Petition carriers must be residents in the State of New York and registered and enrolled voters before they carry a petition.
- (2) All petition signers must be enrolled voters who are registered to vote in the councilmanic district where you are running. They cannot have signed anyone else’s petition, and cannot have partaken in the nomination of any candidate of any other party for this election.
- (3) Petitions may be carried for 24 hours a day, seven days a week beginning the day that the special election is officially announced. **Do not begin gathering signatures until the special election has been officially announced.** If you do, the Board of Elections can invalidate those signatures.
- (4) The law requires that the voter must identify himself/herself to the petition carrier to be the individual who signed the petition sheet. Thus, using your voter list, ask for the voter by name: “Hello, My name is _____, may I speak to [insert the name of the voter from your walking list]?”
- (5) Petition carriers must actually see the petition being signed by the voter.
- (6) All signatures must be in blue or black ink. **Never use pencil.**
- (7) Persons should sign the petitions with the same name that they used when registering to vote. No one may sign for another person. Women must sign their own first name and not their spouse’s. Do not use titles (Mr., Mrs., Dr., etc.).
- (8) The date and address should be filled in when the voter signs the petition.
- (9) The Law requires that the only thing the voter must fill out on the petition sheet is his or her signature. The petition carrier can fill in all the remaining information, including the date and the addresses. **We suggest that the voter’s signature is the only information that should be filled out by the voter on the petition. Before the voter signs, you should print clearly and legibly on the petition, in the voters presence, the date, the voter’s address and print the voter’s name in the appropriate spaces.** However, it is not wrong or incorrect for the voter to fill in all the information him or herself. If the voter desires to do so, let the voter fill in the information. Just be sure the date, the address, and the printed name are correct and legible and that the voter signs on the correct line.

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- (10) **Do not erase, cross out, or white out errors.** If in error or in doubt, cross out the entire line and go to the next line below the line and have them sign properly. **Do not try to correct mistakes after you have left the voter.**
- (11) Do not abbreviate names or addresses. **Never use ditto marks.** Write out the name of the month for the date.
- (12) **Petition Carriers cannot sign a petition sheet that they are carrying, because you cannot witness the collection of your own signature.** You may sign a different page of the petition if it is gathered and witnessed by a different person.
- (13) Make sure the petition signer has the opportunity to read the entire petition. Let the signer take as much time as they wish to read all the language on the petition.
- (14) If you have any questions contact Grassroots Initiative at (212) 400-0531.

COVER SHEET FOR INDEPENDENT NOMINATING PETITION

Name of Party or Independent Body:

NAME OF CANDIDATE	PUBLIC OFFICE	PLACE OF RESIDENCE
	City Council Member of the _____ Councilmanic District _____ County, New York State	

Total Number of Volumes in Petition: _____

Identification Numbers: _____

The petition contains the number, or in excess of the number, of valid signatures required by the Election Law.

Contact Person to Correct Deficiencies:

Name: _____

Residence Address: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

(Include if notice by fax desired)

I hereby authorize that notice of any determination made by the Board of Elections be transmitted to the person named above:

Candidate or Agent

AMENDED COVER SHEET FOR INDEPENDENT NOMINATING PETITION

(**** Original Cover Sheet to be Attached ****)

Name of Party or Independent Body:

NAME OF CANDIDATE	PUBLIC OFFICE	PLACE OF RESIDENCE
	City Council Member of the _____ Councilmanic District _____ County, New York State	

Total Number of Volumes in Petition: _____

Identification Numbers: _____

The petition contains the number, or in excess of the number, of valid signatures required by the Election Law.

Contact Person to Correct Deficiencies:

Name: _____

Residence Address: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

(Include if notice by fax desired)

I hereby authorize that notice of any determination made by the Board of Elections be transmitted to the person named above:

Candidate or Agent

"This is to certify that I am authorized to file this amended cover sheet."

Signature

Date