Strategic Tactic Guide: Write and Circulate a Petition

Strategic Value: Ultimately, elected officials are accountable to their constituents and because of this, they should (hopefully) care about how their constituents feel about a particular issue. One of the clearest indicators on where constituents stand on an issue can be expressed in sheer volume through a petition. **Use a petition to show an elected official that many people care about a particular issue.** Petitions work best when you have enough time budgeted to collect signatures and a plan for a proper delivery.

This guide will go over creating and circulating traditional petitions.

Tips:
- Signature petitions have very little impact without big numbers.
- The strongest kind of petitions include a clear ask and a strong position on the issue.
- Petitions that are mailed are less effective than petitions delivered by a large number of people with coverage from the media.
- Make sure that all signers live in your district. To make it simpler, you can have different petitions for different congresspeople, or target a senator.

How-to create a petition:
1. **Choose a target.**
   - An effective target is a person who has the power to give you what you want. In most cases, this will be your elected official. Address the petition directly to the target.
2. **Write the message.**
   - Keep this short and sweet. Start with a two to three sentence overview of the issue.
   - Add two to three facts to support your position. Feel free to use talking points from our issue guides here.
3. **Make a Specific Ask.**
   - Ask your target to take a concrete action. You can ask them to vote for or against a specific bill, ask their colleagues to support or oppose a piece of legislation, or make a statement opposing an executive order.
4. **Create space for people to sign and fill their information.**
   - Aim for six to ten lines per page. You want to provide plenty of space to write, but perhaps more importantly, you want the pile to look large.
   - At the minimum include space for the person's name and ZIP code or address to show the elected official that the signer is a constituent. You can also add space for email addresses, phone numbers or a volunteer check box.

How to collect signatures:
1. **Collect signatures in high-traffic areas** and places where you know you can get support. Remember, you are going for quantity, so don't spend a lot of time in difficult areas.
2. **Recruit other people to help and go out in groups**. You'll be able to collect more petitions this way. Remember, there's strength in numbers.
3. **Go door to door** in your neighborhood.
4. **Bring your petition to group meetings** you go to, like the PTA or church, or your band practice.
5. **Watch how people sign your petition**; you want to make sure they fill in all the fields correctly.
6. **Create an online version** of your petition through a site like petitions.moveon.org and promote it through social media. Find tips on our Strategic Tactic Guide: Social Media.

Deliver the petition: While you can mail or fax in your petitions, you can draw more attention to your issue by planning a delivery. You can use our Strategic Tactic Guide: Earned Media Events or follow the tips here.
1. **Bring as many folks with you as possible.** Even one to two other participants make a huge difference.
2. **Be creative.** Are you asking your congressperson to vote against repealing the Affordable Care Act? Deliver bandages to go along with your petition or have all your participants wear surgical masks.
3. **Create a visual with the petitions.** Again, petitions are strategic because of their numbers. What can you do to emphasize the number of signers?
    a. String the petitions together
    b. Paste them on a giant sign
    c. Stack them in small boxes
4. **Pitch the event to local media outlets.** See our Strategic Tactic Guide: Garnering Media Attention
5. **Make copies of your petitions before you give them away.** It's useful to for follow-up emails and phone calls.

Sample Petition:

Tell Sen. Rubio:
Don't Privatize Medicare or Social Security

President-elect Donald Trump has put forward plans to privatize some of our nation's vital services. Working people are concerned that he may consider House Speaker Paul Ryan's Medicare privatization plan as well as Social Security privatization because his advisors are calling for harmful policies that put these important services at risk.

Our Communities Rely on Medicare and Social Security, and Privatization Does Not Work
- Last year, over 4 million Floridians benefited from Medicare, and over 570,000 people relied on Supplemental Security Income through Social Security.
- Instead of reducing health care costs, Ryan's plan would likely increase them.
- Medicare as we know it is already efficient, and offers health care at rock-bottom costs.

By signing this petition, you are telling Sen. Marco Rubio not to privatize Medicare or Social Security because these services are important to our communities.

Printed Name	Address	Comment	Date

By completing this petition and providing your name and e-mail address, you are joining Working America. As a member, you will receive updates and action alerts on how you can help build a better future for working families. By providing your mobile phone number, you authorize Working America to call or text your cell phone with updates that may be automatically dialed or prerecorded. You can revoke the consent at any time by contacting us or texting "STOP."

Printed in house.

After the delivery: Organize!

Build on your delivery by reaching out to folks who signed your petition and plan further actions.

- Post about your delivery on social media. Post pictures and describe the experience.
- Call all your signers. If you don't know the person, ask to meet up for coffee and talk about their interest in the issue.
- Plan a meeting for next steps. Invite everyone who signed the petition, and ask folks who attended the delivery to speak about the experience.