

ARKANSAS VOLUNTEER CANVASSER GUIDE

Clear, consistent, and legally accurate information
so you can volunteer confidently and safely.



U
ofA
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION
University of Arkansas System

PUBLIC POLICY
Center



Arkansas Volunteer Canvasser Guide

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Note About Court Ruling

On Nov. 19, 2025, a federal court judge issued orders to temporarily pause several new canvasser laws mentioned in this guide. When this guide went to publication, the judge's order applied only to the ballot question committees involved in the lawsuit: Save AR Democracy, Protect AR Rights, and For AR Kids.

The court order issued by Judge Timothy Brooks says the Secretary of State's Office can not disclose or facilitate disclosure "to any member of the public any information provided" by the three ballot question committees to satisfy **Arkansas Code § 7-9-601**, which requires paid canvassers to submit their names and residences to the Secretary of State before collecting voter signatures.

Other laws on hold for the ballot question committees include: **Act 218** of 2025, which requires canvassers to inform voters that petition fraud is a criminal offense; **Act 240** of 2025, which requires canvassers to see voters' photo ID before signing a petition; and **Act 274** of 2025, which requires canvassers to read the ballot title to signers or see them read it before they can sign a petition.

Contact your ballot question committee or sponsor if you have questions about this lawsuit and how it affects your efforts to collect voter signatures.

It is possible for other BQCs to request a similar temporary injunction, but it is not automatic.

Lawsuit Information:

Name: League of Women Voters of Arkansas, Save AR Democracy, Bonnie Heather Miller and Danielle Quesnell vs. Secretary of State Cole Jester (5:25-cv-05087).

Intervening Plaintiffs: Protect AR Rights and For AR Kids.

Read: The federal court system uses an online record system that is behind a paywall. Some lawsuit documents that have already been "purchased" are publicly available at <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/69919853/league-of-women-voters-of-arkansas-v-jester/>.

Section 1: Welcome, Purpose, and Who We Are

Introduction

This guide is a joint undertaking of the Arkansas Civic Action Network (ArkCAN) and the Public Policy Center at the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture (PPC). Together, we are committed to protecting the integrity of Arkansas's citizen-led initiative and referendum process.

1.1 Purpose

Our shared goal is to give volunteers clear, consistent, and legally accurate information so you can volunteer confidently and safely. The ballot sponsor (also called the Ballot Question Committee or BQC) will provide all training, direction, and oversight for their specific signature gathering process. This guide offers a broad overview that applies to all volunteers to support consistent statewide practices.

Important Note: This guidebook is for volunteer canvassers (sometimes called circulators) only. If you are a paid canvasser, different legal requirements apply. Consult your ballot sponsor or the Secretary of State's Office for specific guidance.

1.2 Who are We?

- Arkansas Civic Action Network (<https://www.arkaction.net>) promotes civic education and non-partisan engagement.
- Public Policy Center (PPC) as part of the University of Arkansas System, Division of Agriculture (<https://www.uaex.uada.edu/ppe>) provides neutral, research-based information to help citizens make informed decisions.

By working together, we aim to protect volunteers from legal trouble, build confidence in the petition process, minimize signature disqualifications, and promote consistent training across Arkansas.

1.3 The Power of Direct Democracy in Arkansas

Under Article 5, Section 1 of the Arkansas Constitution,

citizens have the right to propose laws and constitutional amendments or call for a public vote on laws passed by the legislature through petitions. This is called the initiative and referendum process.

1.4 What this Training will Cover

- The legal responsibilities of volunteer canvassers.
- Who can circulate petitions and who can sign them.
- How to collect signatures that count.
- How to stay safe, confident, and compliant in the field.
- How standardized guidance helps avoid confusion across campaigns.

1.5 Scope and Limits of this Guide

This guidebook provides general educational information for volunteer canvassers. It is designed to help you feel confident and prepared. However:

- It does not replace or override Arkansas law, Secretary of State rules, or the official instructions provided by your ballot sponsor or BQC.
- It is not legal advice. If you have legal questions about petitioning, consult your ballot sponsor or an attorney.
- Your ballot sponsor or BQC is responsible for giving you specific instructions, materials, and oversight for your petition campaign. Always follow their guidance.
- Volunteers should review official materials from the Arkansas Secretary of State's Office for the most current legal requirements (<https://www.sos.arkansas.gov/elections>).

Top 10 Rules for Volunteer Canvassers

1. **Be Eligible** – Must be 18+, a U.S. citizen, and live in Arkansas (registration to vote not required).
2. **Know Who Can Sign** – Only registered Arkansas voters.
3. **Verify ID** – Accept only IDs allowed under Arkansas law (§ 7-1-101(40)), including mobile IDs.
4. **Attach Required Documents** – Petition text, ballot title, and popular name must be attached at all times.
5. **Witness Every Signature** – Never leave your petition unattended.

- 6. Remember to Include Only One County Per Page –**
Each petition page can only contain signatures from one county.
- 7. Prevent Fraud –** Remind signers that petition fraud is a crime.
- 8. Notarize Affidavits –** Sign in front of a certified Arkansas notary only.
- 9. Respect Property Rules –** Public spaces are open; private spaces require permission.
- 10. Report Issues Promptly –** Contact your sponsor/BQC first, then SOS if necessary.

Note: A federal judge put laws involving No. 3 and No. 7 on hold for specific ballot question committees attempting to qualify their measures for the 2026 ballot. Please view the note on Pg. 3 in this guide for more information.

Section 2: Standardizing Practices Across Campaigns

This section explains why following the same steps across campaigns protects you and helps ensure all signatures count.

2.1 Why have Unified Training for Volunteer Canvassers?

Standard practices protect volunteers from legal trouble. They reduce the chance of rejected signatures, help the public trust the process, and make training consistent. This happens because:

- All volunteers follow the same legal rules for who can sign and who can circulate, which means fewer invalid signatures.
- The public sees a professional and fair process that builds trust.
- Volunteers do not get confused by different instructions from different campaigns.
- Accidental mistakes are avoided that could bring legal problems or rejected petitions.

2.2 Requirements for a Volunteer Canvasser

To circulate a petition in Arkansas as a volunteer canvasser must:

- Be at least 18 years old
- Be a U.S. citizen
- Live in Arkansas
- However, they do not need to be a registered voter.

The responsibilities are to:

- Verify the signer's ID (see section 5).
- Ensure the signer has either read the ballot title, or read the ballot title to them.
- Inform the signer that petition fraud is illegal.
- Personally witness each signature.
- Sign an affidavit in front of a notary that swears:
 - Every signature was made in your presence.
 - To the best of your knowledge, each signature is genuine and from a registered voter.
 - The full petition text was attached while you collected signatures.
 - Your address is correct.
 - Whether you were paid or unpaid. Paid circulators must meet additional requirements, like background checks and registration with the Secretary of State before collecting signatures.
- Ensure the ballot title, popular name, and full measure text are always attached.
- Only include signatures from one county on each petition page.
- File a true affidavit with the Secretary of State certifying that the canvasser has complied with the Arkansas Constitution and all Arkansas laws regarding canvassing, perjury, forgery, and fraudulent practices in the procurement of petition signatures during the current election cycle.

2.3 Avoid Confusion or Contradictions

Follow this training as your base. When volunteers apply these rules the same way, errors that can cause signatures to be rejected are less likely. This also allows the public to be confident in the process since they see all volunteers acting the same way.

2.4 Volunteers on Multiple Campaigns

Volunteers working on more than one campaign will learn specific procedures that relate to each sponsor's ballot measure, but this handbook covers those things that are common to all campaigns. Using it will help you avoid confusion and protect all petitions you support. While this guidebook provides general educational information, it does not replace Arkansas law or official rules from the Secretary of State's Office (SOS). Finally, only use materials approved by the SOS or the designated sponsor. Your sponsor or BQC is responsible for giving you specific instructions but if you are concerned there are conflicting directions, please notify the SOS.

Section 3: What is a Petition and Who Can Circulate One?

Real Life Example

Alex volunteers on multiple campaigns. Alex always follows the core legal steps: checks ID when required, keeps the petition text attached, and has the affidavit notarized. When unsure, Alex contacts the sponsor rather than guessing. This protects the signatures collected and the campaigns supported.

A petition is an official document Arkansas citizens use to propose new laws, change existing laws, or call for a vote on a law recently passed by the legislature. This process is called the initiative and referendum process and is protected by the Arkansas Constitution. If enough valid signatures are collected, the proposal goes on the ballot for voters to decide.

3.1 Overview of Citizen-Led Initiatives and Constitutional Amendments

Petitions are the way Arkansas voters express their agreement that there is an issue they would like brought to voters in the next General Election. The initiative or referendum is prepared by the sponsor (also known as Ballot Question Committee or BQC) and appears with the petition in two parts. The ballot title is the summary of the proposed law. The ballot measure is the proposed amendment in full.

The number of required signatures depends on the type of petition and is based on the number of votes cast in the most recent governor's election:

- Constitutional amendment: at least 10% of votes cast statewide.
- New state law (initiative): at least 8% of votes cast statewide.
- Referendum: at least 6% of legal votes cast statewide.

Signatures must come from at least 50 of Arkansas's 75 counties, within a certain percentage.

3.2 Your Role as a Volunteer Canvasser

As a volunteer canvasser, you are agreeing to collect voter signatures on behalf of the sponsor. However, Arkansas law requires you to also act independently to ensure the people who sign are aware of the penalties for fraud, are who they say they are, and not misled into signing.

3.3 Who can Circulate a Petition?

To circulate a petition as a volunteer in Arkansas:

- Be at least 18 years old.
- Be a U.S. citizen.
- Live in Arkansas.
- However, you do not have to be a registered voter.

3.4 Summary

Collecting signatures for a BQC is guaranteed in the Arkansas Constitution and therefore is an activity that must be considered of utmost importance. Canvassers must be honest, follow state law, and personally witness every signature they collect. Canvassers are being entrusted by both the BQC and the voter and therefore, should always do their utmost to be truthful, accurate, and conscientious.

Example

Taylor is a volunteer circulator who understands the importance of their role in supporting direct democracy. Taylor respects that each signer is exercising their First Amendment rights by participating in the petition process. Taylor watches as each signer adds their name, keeps the petition text attached, and reminds signers about fraud laws in a respectful way. Throughout the interaction, Taylor remains friendly, polite, and professional. Without stress or pressure, Taylor calmly follows the law, signs the affidavit before a notary, and helps protect the validity of each signature and the integrity of the campaign.

This guidebook provides general educational information. It does not replace Arkansas law or official rules from the Secretary of State's Office. Your sponsor or BQC is responsible for giving you specific instructions – always follow their guidance.

Whether collecting one voter signature or 10,000 signatures, the canvasser is responsible for the trustworthiness of each petition page. Arkansas law spells out specific moments in the signature collection phase where canvassers must promise under oath that they followed state law.

Section 4. Legal Responsibilities and Risks

4.1 Canvasser's Oath

Before a petition sheet can be submitted to the state, canvassers must sign the bottom of the page in front of a notary public. The state considers this section of the petition page an affidavit, or a written oath that is legally binding. Place your signature in this section when instructed to do so by the notary.

A notary public is someone approved by the state to verify the

identity of a person who appears before them. The notary acts as a witness to the identity of the person who is taking an oath or signing their signature on a legal document. They will ask canvassers to show their driver's license or state identification card to verify their identity before the canvasser signs the page in front of them.

Each petition page must be signed by the canvasser and by a notary before sponsors can submit the voter signatures. The notary will also include their legal notary stamp by their signature on the page. By signing the oath on each petition page, the canvasser promises:

- Witnessed each person sign the petition.
- Believed each signature came from a registered voter.
- Believed each signature was genuine.
- Always attached an exact copy of the popular name, ballot title and text to the signature sheet throughout the collection process of voter signatures.

The canvasser also writes their current residential address and checks the box to say they are a volunteer or unpaid canvasser. If any of these statements are false, the canvasser can be accused of violating state law and can face criminal charges.

Only sign the canvasser affidavit on a petition page when a notary who is certified by the State of Arkansas is physically with you. The notary cannot witness your signature through virtual meetings or over the phone.

4.2 Petition Crimes

Several Arkansas signature collection laws include criminal penalties for a person who wrongly signs a petition and for canvassers who allow the incident to happen or violate other parts of election law. Canvassers should be aware these laws exist and never leave their petitions unattended.

Misdemeanor Acts

If convicted in court of a Class A misdemeanor, a person can be punished with a fine of up to \$2,500 and a sentence of up to one year in county jail. Under Arkansas law, a person faces a misdemeanor charge if they:

- Knowingly sign a person's name other than their own on a petition.
- Knowingly sign their name more than once for the same ballot issue proposal.
- Signs a petition when they are not legally able to, such as when a person is not registered to vote in Arkansas.

- Print the name, address, date of birth, or date on a petition for another person except when the signer is disabled and has requested help (see 6.2).

Canvassers are specifically warned under Arkansas law that it is a misdemeanor crime to:

- Lie about the purpose and effect of the petition.
- Lie about the purpose and effect of the proposed ballot issue.
- Ask or obtain a signature from someone they know isn't qualified to sign the petition.
- Pay a person money for signing the petition.

Arkansas legislators in 2025 passed additional election laws making it a misdemeanor crime for canvassers to:

- Allow a voter to sign a petition before either (a) witnessing the voter read the petition ballot title or (b) reading the ballot title on the petition aloud to the voter.
- Allow a voter to sign a petition before telling the voter through spoken words or a written notice that petition crime is a criminal offense.

Note: a federal judge put these two laws on hold for specific ballot question committees attempting to qualify their measures for the 2026 ballot. Please view the note on Pg. 3 in this guide for more information.

Felony Acts

If convicted in court of a Class D felony, a person can be punished with a fine of up to \$10,000 and a sentence of up to 10 years in state prison. Felonies also disqualify a person from being able to vote in Arkansas until their fines and court requirements are completed and they request their voting rights to be restored.

Under Arkansas law, a canvasser faces a felony charge if they:

- Sign the canvasser oath on any petition page when knowing they didn't follow state laws regarding collecting those voter signatures.
- Allow another canvasser to sign their petition form as if that other canvasser witnessed the voter signing the petition.

Additional penalties exist specifically for paid canvassers. Paid canvassers should check with their employers or the secretary of state's office for information about those laws.

4.3 Record Keeping to Protect Yourself

Arkansas law can sound scary, especially when the word "crime" or "punishment" is mentioned. Just as you want to protect yourself physically when collecting voter signatures, you can help protect yourself legally by being aware of the risks and how you can avoid problems.

Canvassing Tips

- **Check your materials.** Before you ask a voter to sign a petition, make sure your petition is complete. Every page is attached. All text is legible. If any page is torn or covered, voter signatures on that petition could be discarded and not counted by the state.
- **Keep records of your petitions.** Keep a notebook or use your phone's note app to write down the days, hours and locations where you collected voter signatures. Also note when you and a notary signed petitions.
- **Document incidents or confusion.** Do voters keep asking the same question? Or do you have the same issue with a petition over and over? Did someone try to block you from collecting signatures? Write these incidents or questions in your notebook, along with the date, location and how or whether the issue was resolved.
- **Ask for help.** Sponsors want you to be successful so ask a campaign representative to clarify instructions or answer questions you may have about the ballot measure, the signature process, or your role.

4.4 Dealing with Stressful Situations

You've dealt with hot summer days before. You know not everyone will sign your petition. But sometimes more stressful situations can arise, such as being told to leave a property or hearing people tell voters they shouldn't sign your petition. What should you do?

First and foremost, leave any situation that makes you feel unsafe.

Be Aware

- Despite being a volunteer, you are responsible for following city, county, state and federal laws. Check whether there are city ordinances for areas where you are interested in petitioning.
- Asking voters for their signature is political speech protected by the First Amendment and is not considered commercial soliciting (think of those "no soliciting" signs).

- You can approach people on public property such as a sidewalk and ask if they will sign your petition. Doing this on private property can result in you being asked to leave.
- Respect “no trespassing signs” when you see them on private property.
- Arkansas law allows people who, like you, are registered with the state to tell voters they shouldn’t sign your petition.

Law Enforcement

Sometimes city police officers or county sheriff’s deputies may approach you while you’re seeking voter signatures. Remain calm and respectful.

Section 5. Who Can Sign and Who Can’t Sign a Petition?

Know that:

- It is not illegal to ask a person for their signature. You do not need to notify law enforcement or a city official before canvassing an area.
- Other than identifying yourself, you have the constitutional right to remain silent when being questioned by a law enforcement officer.
- Other people need to use sidewalks, too. Avoid blocking entire sections of sidewalk for canvassing.
- Some public buildings and their entrances or parking lots may have rules about public access. They may have designated areas for canvassing or other political activity. Events taking place on public property may restrict access inside if it’s a paid event.

Part of being a successful canvasser is knowing who can sign the petition you’re carrying. All states with a citizen initiative process limit whose signatures count on election petitions.

In Arkansas, the phrase “legal voter” or “qualified elector” is used in state laws and documents to describe people eligible to sign ballot issue petitions. These phrases are another way of saying “registered voter.” The Arkansas Secretary of State’s Office will discard signatures from people who aren’t registered voters.

5.1 Whose Signature Counts?

For a person’s signature to count toward the state’s petition requirements, the person must:

- Be registered to vote in Arkansas.
- Show you their approved form of photo identification.
- Sign their name exactly as it appears on county voter rolls.
- Provide a residential address (no post office boxes or commercial addresses).

5.2 Whose Signature Doesn’t Count?

Occasionally you may end up with someone’s signature on a petition who shouldn’t have signed. For example, someone who lives in Missouri but signed your petition at a busy festival booth.

People who are ineligible to sign ballot issue petitions include:

- A person not registered to vote in Arkansas.
- Arkansans who are under 18.
- Out-of-state visitors.
- Anyone signing on behalf of someone else.

A person who signs the petition using their nickname rather than the name they are registered to vote under will have their signature discarded. Suggest a person check their voter registration on Voter View to ensure they are signing the correct version of their name. It’s possible a person may have a photo ID with a nickname (Bobby instead of Robert, for example) rather than the name they are registered to vote under.

5.3 ID Verification

Starting in 2025, canvassers must look at a copy of a person’s approved form of photo identification to verify their identity before the voter is allowed to sign the petition. (See Section 4 for why this is important to canvassers).

According to Act 240 of 2025, photo identification means a document or identification card permitted under Arkansas law § 7-1-101(40), the same law that defines what photo identification voters must show on Election Day when casting their ballots.

Allowed forms of ID include:

Note: a federal judge put these laws on hold for specific ballot question committees attempting to qualify their measures for the 2026 ballot. Please view the note on Pg. 3 in this guide for more information.

- Driver's license.*
- Photo identification card.*
- Concealed handgun carry license.
- U.S. passport.
- An employee badge or identification document issued by an Arkansas accredited postsecondary educational institution.
- U.S. Armed Forces identification document.
- Public assistance identification card if the card shows a photograph of the voter.
- Voter verification card issued by county clerks under Arkansas law § 7-5-324.

*Mobile IDs, or digital versions of Arkansas driver's licenses and state identification cards, are included.

When in doubt ask your sponsor, clarify with the Secretary of State's office, or decline to accept the person's signature and suggest they sign later when they have a proper ID with them.

You're ready to start collecting voter signatures. But do you have the right size paper and the right format?

The State of Arkansas tells ballot issue groups what size paper they must use for petitions: legal size paper. When thousands of voter signatures are submitted for counting, they will all appear on the same size paper with the same number of signatures per page (10 signatures maximum per page).

You play a role in this uniformity.

Section 6. Collecting Signatures: Step-by-Step

6.1 Before the Ask

- Review each petition sheet before use to ensure all text is present and readable.
- Use only approved, official petition forms provided by the ballot question committee.

- Be sure that the ballot language is attached to the petition.
- Prepare a script that will help you figure out what you want to say to voters when you approach them and in what order you will tell them required information. Know how you will explain the petition to them.

6.2 Filling Out the Petition

Note: a federal judge put these laws on hold for specific ballot question committees attempting to qualify their measures for the 2026 ballot. Please view the note on Pg. 3 in this guide for more information.

Before handing over the petition to a signer:

- Verify the voter's approved form of photo identification.
- Ensure you have a copy of the ballot title for the voter to either read or be read to as required by law.
- Be prepared to read the ballot title aloud if the voter requests it.
- Notify the voter that petition fraud is a crime.

Once this conversation is complete, present the petition to be signed. Each petition page includes the following sections the voters must fill out:

- Signature
- Full printed name
- Date of birth
- Residence (Address)
- City or town of residence
- County
- Date of signing

Do not pre-fill any of the sections for the voter.

If the voter has a disability that prevents them from filling out the petition, another person may print the name, address, birth date, and date of signing for the voter. The person who helps fill out the information must sign and print their own name in the margin of the petition.

If the voter makes a mistake when filling out the petition sections, ask them to initial above the section that was corrected. Minor mistakes such as signing in the full printed name section will not prevent the signature from being counted. If the voter chooses to redo the line they have been working on, ask them to draw one line through the entire

signature line they were working on. They will then initial it and move down to the line below to do a correct signature. The canvasser should not mark out any signature lines without the signer present.

6.3 Handling Completed Petitions

Voter signatures have been collected. Petition sheets are full. Now it's time to:

- Check petition sheets for blank fields.
- Make sure dates are filled in.
- Have a notary public present to witness while you sign the affidavit section on each petition page.
- Ensure you have filed a true affidavit with the Secretary of State's office, certifying you complied with all applicable laws.
- Turn in completed pages following the deadline and steps provided to you by the ballot question committee.

The Arkansas Constitution sets the deadline for when ballot question committees must submit voter signatures by—four months before the date of the election when voters might consider the proposal.

Starting in 2025, voter signatures will expire once a general election has passed. Completed petition sheets cannot be used for elections years away. For example, signatures collected in 2025 now expire after the November 2026 statewide election. Previously, a ballot question committee could have collected signatures in 2025 for an election in 2028.

It is normal to feel a little nervous the first time you canvass. This section will help you feel prepared, safe, and confident as you gather signatures. Your sponsor or BQC is there to support you if you have questions or concerns.

Section 7: Building Confidence in the Field

7.1 Why Confidence Matters

When you approach the public with confidence, you are more

likely to follow the law, avoid mistakes, and protect yourself from legal risk. Voters are also more likely to engage and sign when you speak clearly and calmly about the petition. A confident approach helps prevent or defuse difficult interactions in the field. Using these techniques keeps everyone safe and helps ensure signatures are collected properly.

7.2 Tools for Confidence

Note: a federal judge put these laws on hold for specific ballot question committees attempting to qualify their measures for the 2026 ballot. Please view the note on Pg. 3 in this guide for more information.

A helpful approach is to have a standard script that you follow until you are comfortable presenting information to the public. This will ensure that you say the right thing, don't forget important information, and are consistent. Include:

- A warm welcome
- Your name
- The name of the ballot title and a short description of what it is about
- Ask if they would like to sign the petition so that the ballot title can appear on the General Election ballot.
- Ask if they are a registered voter and if they have ID with them.

When someone does not have ID, kindly explain that Arkansas law requires a signer to show photo identification. Acceptable forms include:

- Mobile ID authorized by the state in 2025
- Physical driver's license
- Voter ID card (with photo)
- Concealed carry permit
- Other forms listed earlier in this guide (refer to Section 5)

Let them know they can return with a proper ID and sign later.

Once you have checked ID, you should remind signers about the fraud law. A friendly way to do this is:

"Just so you know, the law asks me to remind everyone that petition fraud – like signing for someone else – is a crime. I appreciate you helping me follow the rules!"

They must be a registered voter to sign. If someone is unsure about their registration, offer to help them check their voter registration status using Voter View (www.voterview.ar-nova.org/).

However, be aware that Voter View is not definitive, is not always up to date, and should not be relied on to prevent someone from signing the petition. Further, Voter View may confirm registration but does not serve as ID. If they are not registered, encourage them to register so they can sign in the future to vote.

Examples of other qualifying questions might include:

- Are you registered to vote in Arkansas at this address?
- Do you have your photo ID with you today?
- Would you like to check your voter registration status on Voter View?
- Did you read the ballot title, or would you like me to read it aloud for you?

7.3 Tips for Respectful Public Engagement

Your role is to follow the law, not to judge or challenge voters beyond what is required. If you have concerns about a signer's eligibility or a situation that seems wrong, do not argue or accuse. Instead, document the concern and report it to your sponsor or BQC. This protects you, the campaign, and the petition process.

7.4 When to Disengage from a Conversation

The right not to sign is as important as the right to sign. If someone chooses not to sign, thank them for their time. Do not argue or debate them. If the person needs more information, refer them to your BQC materials. If someone is in a hurry, doesn't have ID, or isn't interested, it is OK to tell them they can sign another time and let them know where they can find another canvasser or petition signing opportunity.

If you encounter petition blockers or hostility, stay calm and do not argue. You can say:

“Thank you for sharing your view. I’m simply here today to collect signatures.”

Move to a different location if needed and report the encounter to your sponsor or BQC. This helps avoid unnecessary conflict and protects you from potential legal claims such as trespass or disorderly conduct.

7.5 General Tips for Confident, Professional Canvassing

- Use your sponsor's approved script or talking points to describe the measure in addition to the ballot title.
- Practice your introduction before you go out, for example: “Hi, I’m a volunteer collecting signatures for a statewide petition. Would you like to learn more?”
- Always have the petition text attached and ready to show.
- If someone seems confused or hesitant, take a breath and explain calmly.
- If someone becomes confrontational, thank them and walk away.
- It can be helpful to have another volunteer with you when you are out in the field collecting signatures. Ask your sponsor to help connect you with other volunteers.

This guidebook provides general educational information. It does not replace Arkansas law or official rules from the Secretary of State’s Office. Your sponsor or BQC is responsible for giving you specific instructions – always follow their guidance.

This section will help you stay safe and confident while gathering petition signatures. You’ll learn where you can lawfully collect signatures, when to call for help, and how to handle difficult situations calmly and within the law.

Section 8. Safety & Support

8.1 Where You Can and Can’t Collect Signatures

Where you set up impacts your success and your safety. In general, you may collect signatures in public spaces that are open to everyone. It is best to collect signatures with another person, be aware of your surroundings, and not canvass in neighborhoods at night. Your BQC will have specific instructions on their best practices. In general:

Allowed:

- Public sidewalks, parks, town squares, and other outdoor public spaces.

Allowed with permission:

- Private property (including store entrances, parking lots, or shopping centers).
- Events or festivals: Some public events may require prior approval or an assigned space—check with your sponsor or BQC before setting up.

Not allowed:

- Inside government buildings or courthouses, within 100 feet of the entrance of polling places during elections, or anywhere that blocks doorways, driveways, or creates a hazard.

Tip: If someone tells you to leave a location and you aren't sure if you have the right to be there, calmly move, and check with your sponsor or BQC.

8.2 When to Call for Help or Law Enforcement

Most conflicts can and should be de-escalated by following the protocols that are given to you by your BQC. Calling 911 or the police in non-emergency situations could escalate tensions so be cautious and thoughtful.

However, there are times calling law enforcement should be your first step. For example:

- Someone threatens you with physical harm or tries to hurt you.
- You are followed in a way that makes you feel unsafe.
- You witness or are the victim of a crime (such as assault or theft).

If you are simply feeling uncomfortable, move to a safer place. Then contact your sponsor or BQC for guidance.

If someone argues with you, disagrees with your petition, or tries to discourage people from signing, this is not usually a reason to call the police unless it turns into threats or violence.

8.3 Handling Petition Blockers and Hostility

- Stay calm and do not argue.

- You can simply say: "Thank you for sharing your view. I'm simply here today to collect signatures."
- If someone keeps interfering, move locations and report the interaction to your sponsor or BQC. Remember, petition blockers are allowed under Arkansas law. However, there are limits to their protest.

8.4 General Safety Best Practices

- Work with a buddy when you can.
- Share your location and schedule with your sponsor or BQC.
- Keep emergency contacts and sponsor/BQC numbers handy.
- Bring water, dress for the weather, and take breaks as needed.
- Carry your ID and your petition materials at all times.

If approached by law enforcement:

- Stay respectful and calm
- Explain that you are a volunteer canvasser lawfully collecting petition signatures.

Show your petition and affidavit if asked.

- Contact your sponsor or BQC right away.

Example:

Luis and Fatima are collecting signatures on a public sidewalk near a library. When someone tells them to leave, they politely explain they are in a public space where signature gathering is allowed. When another person becomes loud and aggressive, they move down the block and call their sponsor to report the situation.

8.5 Complaint and Reporting Procedures

If you witness, experience, or suspect a violation of Arkansas petition laws or the procedures in this this guide, it is important to report the issue promptly to protect the integrity of the petition process.

When to Report:

- Suspected petition fraud (for example, signing for someone else, falsifying information, or knowingly allowing an ineligible person to sign).
- Harassment, threats, or intimidation while canvassing.
- Repeated interference by petition blockers beyond lawful protest.
- Misrepresentation of the petition's purpose or content by a canvasser.

Who to Contact:

1. Your sponsor or BQC – Contact them first to document the incident, receive immediate guidance, and determine whether further action is needed.
2. Arkansas Secretary of State's Office (SOS) – If the issue involves a suspected violation of Arkansas law, the SOS Elections Division can be reached at:
 - Phone: (501) 682-5070
 - Website: www.sos.arkansas.gov/elections
 - Address: 500 Woodlane Street, Suite 256, Little Rock, AR 72201

What to Include in Your Report:

- Date, time, and location of the incident.
- Names or descriptions of individuals involved.
- Description of the conduct or suspected violation.
- Any supporting evidence (e.g., photos, video, witness statements).

Confidentiality:

Your report will be handled as confidentially as possible, but some information may be shared with relevant authorities if required by law.

can exercise their right to direct democracy. Your work as a volunteer canvasser is a vital part of safeguarding our initiative process – you help ensure Arkansans' voices are heard and election integrity is upheld.

If you have questions, concerns, or encounter a situation not covered in this guidebook, contact your sponsor or campaign manager right away.

You may also contact the Arkansas Secretary of State's Office (SOS) if you have legal questions about petition procedures, need to confirm filing rules, or require official forms or affidavits. Check their website or call for guidance before taking legal or filing actions.

9.2 Quick Reference Guide

DO:

- Carry the petition text and ballot title at all times.
- Ask for and check valid photo ID before allowing a voter to sign.*
- Ensure the voter reads the ballot title or has the ballot title read to them.*
- Personally witness each signature.
- Politely explain petition fraud laws before signature collection.
- Keep signatures from only one county per petition page.
- Stay calm and professional, even if challenged.
- Move if asked to leave private property.
- Report problems to your Sponsor/BQC immediately.

DON'T:

- Allow anyone to sign without proper ID.
- Fill in information for a voter (unless allowed for disabilities and with your own signature in the margin).
- Leave petitions unattended.
- Sign for someone else or allow someone to do so.
- Misrepresent the petition's purpose or contents.
- Argue with or confront petition blockers.
- Collect signatures on torn or incomplete petition sheets.
- Forget to have your affidavit notarized before submission.

**a federal judge put these laws on hold for specific ballot question committees attempting to qualify their measures for the 2026 ballot. Please view the note on Pg. 3 in this guide for more information.*

Section 9. Closing and Additional Resources

9.1 Conclusion

Thank you for your commitment to making sure Arkansans

9.3 Additional Resources

Helpful websites include:

www.sos.arkansas.gov/elections

www.voterview.ar-nova.org/voterview

www.arkansas.gov

2023-2024 Secretary of State's Office Handbook:

www.sos.arkansas.gov/uploads/elections/2023-2024_I_R_Handbook - October 2023.pdf

Summary of 2025 rule changes:

<https://katv.com/news/local/new-arkansas-legislation-requires-more-disclosure-id-verification-for-petition-signatures-katv-news-inform-politics-civics-measures-citizens-impact-propose>

Final Word:

Always stay connected:

- Attend any additional training or debrief sessions offered by your sponsor or BQC.
- Ask your sponsor or campaign manager for updates or changes to procedures.

Keep learning about your legal responsibilities as a volunteer canvasser.

Glossary of Terms

Act 240 of 2025: An Arkansas law that requires canvassers to verify a signer's identity with photo identification before accepting their signature on a petition and to inform the signer that petition fraud is a crime.

Affidavit: A sworn statement that circulators must complete to verify that signatures were collected legally. The statement appears on each petition page.

Arkansas Constitution, Article 5, Section 1: The section of the Arkansas Constitution that grants citizens the power to propose laws and constitutional amendments or to call for a public vote on laws passed by the legislature through the initiative and referendum process.

Ballot issue: A proposed constitutional amendment, state law, or referendum. Also known as a ballot measure.

Ballot measure: A proposed constitutional amendment, state law, or referendum that appears on the ballot for voters to approve or reject.

Ballot question committee (BQC): An organized group responsible for supporting or opposing a ballot measure.

Ballot text: The full text of the measure as it will appear on the ballot.

Ballot title: The official summary of the measure that appears on the ballot and that circulators must display or read to signers.

Canvasser: A person (also known as a circulator) who gathers voter signatures for a petition to qualify a measure for the ballot.

Direct democracy: A form of government in which voters have the power to propose and vote on laws or amendments.

Fiscal impact statement: An official estimate of the financial effect a ballot measure would have on the state budget.

Fraud: Any false statement, misrepresentation, or illegal action related to petition signing, such as signing for someone else or forging a signature.

General election: A regularly scheduled statewide election held in November of even-numbered years in which voters choose public officials and decide ballot measures.

Initiative: A process that allows citizens to propose new laws or constitutional amendments by petition.

Mobile ID: A digital version of an Arkansas driver's license or state identification card that is stored on a mobile device and authorized by the state as valid photo identification. www.dfa.arkansas.gov

Notary public: A person authorized by the state to witness the signing of documents and administer oaths, including those on circulator affidavits.

Petition: The document circulated to collect signatures from registered voters to place a measure on the ballot.

Petition blocker: A person who attempts to prevent canvassers from gathering voter signatures, often by arguing or interfering in public spaces.

Petition fraud: Any false statement, misrepresentation, or illegal action related to signing or collecting signatures for a petition, such as signing for another person, forging a signature, or knowingly allowing an ineligible person to sign.

Popular name: A short, plain-language name for a proposed ballot measure. It appears on the petition and on the ballot alongside the ballot title to help voters identify the measure.

Qualified elector: A person who is registered to vote in Arkansas. State law uses the terms "qualified elector" or "legal voter" to describe someone eligible to sign a ballot issue petition.

Referendum: A process that allows voters to approve or reject laws passed by the legislature.

Sponsor: The individual or group that files the petition and oversees the signature-gathering effort.

Voter ID: An official form of identification required to sign a petition under Arkansas law.

Voter View: The Arkansas Secretary of State's online voter registration database. Voters can use it to check their registration status, polling location, and sample ballot.

On Jan. 8, 2026, the Secretary of State's Office released the form below as a template for the true affidavit which volunteer canvassers are required to complete to comply with Act 241 of 2025.

Note: A federal judge has ruled that volunteer canvassers collecting signatures for Save AR Democracy's petition do not have to submit this form. Save AR Democracy's proposed ballot measure is known as "An Amendment Concerning Constitutional Amendments, Initiated Acts, and Referendums." See Page 3 for more information about the judge's pause of this law for this campaign as part of an ongoing lawsuit against the state.

AFFIDAVIT OF COMPLIANCE

Election Cycle: November 6, 2024 through November 3, 2026

I, the undersigned, being of sound mind, do hereby swear and affirm that I have complied with the Arkansas Constitution and all Arkansas law regarding canvassing, perjury, forgery, and fraudulent practices in the procurement of petition signatures during the current election cycle, which runs from November 6, 2024 through November 3, 2026.

Affiant's Full Name (Print): _____

Affiant's Date of Birth: _____

Affiant's Signature: _____

Date: _____



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