

Stand with Dr. Dean

Organizing a Healthcare Canvass

Canvassing – walking a neighborhood, knocking on doors and talking with neighbors – is both easy and fun. It is also by far the best way to win votes in an election and educate people on an issue. Canvassing has a high impact on people because it allows for two-way communications between the campaign and community members.

Canvassing is an important part of the Stand with Dr. Dean campaign. It allows you to:

- Educate entire communities on important issues, like healthcare
- Engage residents face-to-face on the Stand with Dr. Dean campaign
- Network with progressive activists and healthcare advocates you might not otherwise meet

Building an educated, engaged network of activists and advocates in your area will be influential in convincing your elected officials to stand with us and take Dr. Dean's pledge.

Before your Canvass

1) Set goals

Set clear, quantifiable goals for yourself and your canvassers. Setting tangible goals will make recruiting volunteers much easier and put your work in context of the larger campaign.

Start at the end goal – healthcare reform with a public option – and work backwards: get local elected officials to sign pledge, get community members to sign pledge to pressure local officials, knock on doors to get community members to sign pledge.

Then, fix real numbers to goals based on what local official you're lobbying – mayor, state legislator, congressperson, etc. – and the type of area you're canvassing. Urban Canvassers can knock on more doors than rural canvassers, but push volunteers to knock on 15 doors an hour.

- Goal 1: Knock on 200 doors in two hours
- Goal 2: Get 50 petition signature in two hours
- Step 1: Recruit 20 volunteers
- Step 2: Have 10 volunteers turn out
- Step 3: Knock on 30 doors per volunteer
- Step 4: Make 10 contacts per volunteer
- Step 5: Get five petition signatures per volunteer
- Step 6: Recruit two new volunteers

2) Recruit volunteers

Healthcare has a profound impact on everyone in a community, but you'll want to start recruiting close to home:

- Family, friends and neighbors – those with a personal connection to you will be most likely to commit time and turn out to your event
- Progressive activists – people with a declared interest in healthcare reform and progressive politics in general are also likely to join you
- Websites – social networking websites like Facebook will help get the word out fast
- Bring a friend – encourage your volunteers to bring people they know who are interested in healthcare reform and progressive politics

Also, let the DFA Field Team know that you're holding an event. We can help you:

- Create an event on DemocracyForAmerica.com and invite other DFA Members
- Send an e-mail blast to DFA Members in your area alerting them of the event

(Contact us at field@democracyforamerica.com.)

As your event approaches, you need to follow-up with everyone who has committed to volunteering to make sure they actually turn out to the event:

- Follow-up with RSVPs through e-mail, phone, and whatever other contact information you have for them
- Make sure everyone knows the date, time and meeting location, including the actual street address

Quick tip:

Usually only half of those who commit to volunteering will actually turn out to help, so be sure to consistently follow-up with those pledge their time.

3) Gather your materials

Make sure you have everything you need for the canvass:

- Bottled water
- Clipboards
- Google map of walk areas
- Pens and / or pencils
- Petition sign-up sheets
- Scripts
- Your contact information in case they need to call you during the canvass

You'll also want to remind your volunteers to bring some of the necessities:

- Extra clipboards, pencils and pens
- Umbrella
- Walking shoes
- Weather-appropriate clothing

At your Canvass

1) Greet your canvassers

Your canvass is a great way to build a list of progressive activists and healthcare advocates in your area for future actions. You'll want to make sure to get all of your canvassers contact information and take the time to greet each person as they arrive.

Give latecomers a few minutes to arrive, but don't start more than five minutes late. Running any later will discourage those canvassers who arrived on time and may lead them to come late to future actions.

2) Canvass

Canvassing is really fun. It gives activists an opportunity to talk about candidates and issues that excite them and meet people in their area that share their enthusiasm that they might not otherwise meet. Still, try to keep some of these tips in mind when you're canvassing:

- **Safety first:** Watch out for dogs, even if they seem friendly
- **Safety first:** Never go inside a person's house, kindly remind them you have many more doors to knock on
- Never argue with someone, politely agree to disagree and move on
- Maintain eye contact with everyone you engage
- Keep your conversations short and simple
- Have the materials you carry in order
- Have fun!

After your Canvass

1) Thank your volunteers and recap

Meet up with your volunteers at your starting point after the canvass to recap the event and discuss the pros and cons:

- What went well?
- What could have gone better?
- What did you learn from the event?
- Did everyone have fun?

Be sure to thank everyone one last time before they leave.

2) Tell us how it went!

Send your feedback and pictures to field@democracyforamerica.com. We'd like to hear and see how great it was! And, with your permission, we'd like to share your stories and pictures with other DFA Members across the country.

Quick tip:

Remember that everyone works at their own speed. Some volunteers will exceed your goals and others will struggle to meet them. Be sure to thank them all and congratulate them on a job well done.

Finally, send us your sign-in and petition sheets. You can send them to us by mail, e-mail or fax:

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