

## Austinites for Geographic Representation – Petition Instructions

6705 Hwy 290 West Suite 502 #173 \* Austin, TX 78735 \* 554-2710

Getting folks to sign petitions is easy and fun! Just read and follow these instructions! We need you to help make sure that the signatures you are gathering are going to be good, legible and valid signatures that will qualify us for the ballot.

**Use this easy way to ask:** *Are you an Austin voter? Great, would you sign my petition? We need 20,000 signatures, to get a public vote on changing how we elect the City Council from all citywide seats, to geographic representation. We want our neighborhoods to be represented on the Council, not the big money contributors from just a few zip codes. OK?*

### **Rules and Procedures: you MUST follow these to get us legal, valid signatures that we can read!**

- **Only Austin voters should sign but anyone can collect signatures.** Folks who live in the “ETJ” or Extra Territorial Jurisdiction cannot sign petitions, nor vote in city elections. The vast majority of Austin voters live in Travis County. *But* there are 10,000 Austin voters who live in Williamson County. **Anyone can gather signatures, no matter where you live or if you’re even registered to vote.**
- **The signer must sign their name.** You can fill out the rest for them, but they must sign their own name, unless they have given power of attorney to someone who can sign papers for them. *Get a legible printed name as well!*
- **The phone number and email is a request** – in other words, it’s optional. However, you can tell them that we hope they will join our network, because we’re going to need lots of help to make sure it passes. **Hint:** Also, if you make sure the first person who signs gives a phone or email, it’s likely the rest of the folks who sign below them will too.
- **If someone doesn’t want to give their DOB** – that’s date of birth – ask them to give some of it, like the month and day and not the year, of whatever. This is the easiest way for the City Clerk, who will be checking these signatures, to make sure the “Mary Smith” that signed, is “Mary Smith, born on November 11<sup>th</sup>.” If they happen to have their voter card on them, the “VUID” number can substitute for the DOB.
- **If someone doesn’t want to give a street address** – the same thing applies. Try to get some of the address.
- **If they ask you if this is public record** – it is. That is, it will be filed with the City Clerk, so it will become public record. We will be crossing out the phone numbers and email addresses before we file the signatures, so that will not become public record.
- **How to set up your petitions** – you can attach as many additional petition grid pages to the petition as a stapler will allow you to staple. **ALWAYS, however,** make sure that the wording of the petition – the several pages of text – is right there, attached to the petition grid pages you are gathering signatures on. If this is not clear, call us!

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

\* **Why is it necessary to collect signatures? Answer:** Because, though most Council members support some kind of geographic representation system, the system proposed by the Mayor, for example, is inadequate, from our point of view. First, 6 single-member districts is not enough for a city the size of Austin. Second, having only 6 districts is unlikely to pass the standards set by the Voting Rights Act for a district that clearly is an “opportunity” district for African-Americans. Third, we know the Council is reluctant to give up their power to draw their own district lines. Our plan has an independent citizen’s redistricting commission that will draw the lines, with lots of input from ordinary citizens.

\* **Hasn’t this failed before, many times? Answer:** Yes, and that’s why we’re doing this via a citizen’s petition drive. We are going out to thousands of Austin voters, to get them involved. It’s never been done as a grassroots campaign before. A broad coalition working on this TOGETHER – Democrats, Republicans, independents, Greens, the NAACP, LULAC, neighborhood organizations, etc.

\* **When do we get to vote on it? Answer:** In May, unless the Council moves the election to November. Stay tuned.

\* **Where can I collect signatures? Answer:** Anywhere that is public property, including sidewalks, in front of public buildings, parks, outside libraries. Believe it or not, this does NOT include post offices. Unless you are a student at UT, this does NOT include campus. However, you can petition on 26<sup>th</sup> Street, next to UT. We suggest you petition at early voting sites starting on Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>. Just remember to keep outside the 100-foot limit. [Here are the early voting locations.](#)

\* **Can I take one and get my family to sign this? Answer:** You bet! (Give them a petition if you have one, or they can download it from our website at [www.AustinGeoRep.org](http://www.AustinGeoRep.org)). If you give them a petition, get them to sign your petition and give their phone number and email. We want them to join our growing network of activists to get this petition drive done!

**Got Questions? Call our petition coordinator, Linda Curtis at 512-657-2089.**