

SPSF Guide to Non-Binding Ballot Questions for 2018

1. Non-binding ballot questions show support for an issue within individual legislative districts. To get a BQ on the ballot in a representative's district requires 200 signatures; for a senatorial district, it's 1200. Because signatures are scrutinized and often eliminated for various reasons, it's suggested to get 50% - 100% more than required.
2. SPSF has discussed and agreed on specific wording and suggests that we all use the same wording so results can be reported together. The question has already been reviewed by the Attorney General's office, so it's ready to roll (see below).
3. Blank petitions will be available from the Secretary of State after April 24th. Each coordinator will need to type in our question, and then photocopy as many copies of the petition as needed. Photocopies must look exactly like the original petition – plus our question, of course.
4. The next step is to collect signatures - easily done in a weekend or two with a committed team. Signatures must then be certified by the town or city registrar. SPSF and local coordinating groups can arrange trainings for signature-gatherers. This signature-gathering process would be repeated in each district running a BQ.
5. It would be best to gather signatures as soon as possible after April 24th, and return the certified petitions to the Sec. of State asap (but no later than July 15). Only three such BQs are allowed in any one district, and it's first come, first served.
6. The rest is up to your group! We can do public education about the BQ, canvassing, etc. It's a wonderful opportunity to bring the issue to the public, strengthen our own organizing skills, develop an ongoing team in the district, and recruit new activists. In November, we can do GOTV, stand with signs on Election Day, etc. None of this is required, however. We want to win, and have a track record of winning when BQs have been run before, but the amount of work will depend on each group's capacity.
7. Follow-up -- SPSF as a whole, and individual groups, can think about how to use these victories (we hope!) to promote single payer as an issue in the district and statewide. This is an important step! The ballot questions are part of a broader strategy to build our movement, not an end in themselves.

Here's the question:

“Shall the Representative from this District be instructed to vote for legislation to create a single-payer system of universal health care that would provide all Massachusetts residents with comprehensive health care coverage including the freedom to choose doctors and other health care professionals, facilities, and services, and that would eliminate the role of insurance companies in health care by creating a publicly administered insurance trust fund?”