

From <https://represent.us/canvass/>

## **The Basics of Canvassing:**

Canvassing is going door to door to talk with your neighbors about **Black Ballot Power**.

You can do this by yourself or with a couple friends. Or, better yet, get a larger group together and cover a whole neighborhood in one day.

## **Usually canvassing has one of two main goals:**

1. Identify people who are not aware of the BlackBallotPower.com Campaign and ask them to become cosponsors.
2. Identify community members who already support BlackBallotPower.com and ask them to take an action like calling their representative or attending an upcoming event.

## **Step-by-Step: How to Organize a Door-to-Door Canvass:**

### **1. Logistics**

- If you're trying to affect your representatives' stance, it's a good idea to figure out where they live and canvass that neighborhood. Just think of the representative coming home to find all his/her neighbors saying that they were canvassed to support BlackBallotPower.com!
- Another good spot to canvass is your own neighborhood where you'll be talking to your own neighbors.
- If your goal is to grow support in a specific district, be sure to double check that the area you are canvassing is within your target district.
- Canvassing typically works best between 5 and 8 pm on weekdays or during the day on weekends when more people are home.
- Pick a meeting spot where everyone can gather before setting off to go door-to-door. This could be a coffee shop, a parking lot, or just a convenient corner.

### **2. Recruit a team of canvassers:**

- Find a time that works best for the most interested people. You may not be able to accommodate everyone's schedule, but find a time that works for most people.

- Make a list of friends, family, or members of the community who may be interested in helping. Give them a personal phone call to invite them to canvass. It can be a really great experience for a new volunteer.
- It's more fun and effective when you can get a team of canvassers to go at one time. You'll be able to cover more turf (knock on more doors) and have fun doing it all together. So ask district committee members and supporters to commit to a 2 or 3-hour block of time to canvass.
- Let them know you'll provide a quick training and all the materials they'll need.

### 3. Materials

- Figure out what you want to say at the door and write out a quick script. Remember these are personal conversations so you don't have to memorize numbers or facts, just a 30-second "rap" about why you're there, why getting money out of politics is so important, and what you'd like them to do.
- It is helpful for canvassers to have a memorized script or a "rap" explaining the organization and the campaign concisely but thoroughly. Remember, people are not expecting you to come to their door so don't be surprised if they are in a rush. There is a sample Rap below.
- If the goal of your canvassing is to mobilize current supporters, you'll want to figure out an "ask" in advance for how supporters can take action. For example, bring a cell phone and your representative's phone number so that supporters can instantly place a call to his/her office in support of your issue. Because some folks won't be home, be sure to have a flyer or some information you can leave with them so they can read up a bit afterwards.
- If the goal is to persuade people to become cosponsors, you will want to have one or two key points prepared to emphasize, plenty of AACA 1-page summaries, cosponsor sheets, and flyers/ fact sheets to leave behind.
- Be sure each canvasser has a map and "walk-sheet," or a simple list of addresses to help you keep track of all the doors you've already knocked on. Not only will it make you feel good to know how many people you've talked to and what they said, but keeping track is important so you can avoid talking to the same people twice.  
Coordinate with your team beforehand so that nobody accidentally overlaps!
- Print out copies of each of these materials (plus pens and clipboards) for all the people who said they would come.

#### 4. **Prepping your canvass**

- Gather everyone at your meeting spot about 30 minutes before your canvass start time to do a quick training.
- Thank everyone for coming and explain how important neighbor-to-neighbor communication is to winning on the issue. Then, go over the script, flyers and any materials people are bringing door to door. (If it's hot outside, be sure that folks bring plenty of water!)
- Then have people pair up and spend ten minutes practicing canvassing each other; this will get everyone energized and prepared to go door to door.
- Set goals for how many people everyone should talk to and how many signatures they should strive to collect. This will keep canvassers motivated throughout their shift. For a 3 hour shift – a canvasser should talk to 30 people and get 15 to sign up.

#### 5. **Canvass:**

- Everyone should have his or her own sheet of addresses to knock on so that only one person is knocking on each door.
- Stay aware of your surroundings and be safe. Don't knock on a house if there are dangerous pets or other obstacles in your way. Don't go into anyone's home. Don't do anything that may endanger your safety.
- Plan to meet back at the starting spot at a set time.

#### 6. **Debrief:**

- Gather everyone up for a quick five-minute debrief. Go over how your team did and how many doors you knocked on. Have people share one or two good stories about their experiences.
- Pat yourselves on the back –you've just canvassed!

#### **Sample Rap:**

**Intro:** Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am with a non-partisan campaign called BlackBallotPower.com. We want encourage you to vote. As Black Americans our vote has tremendous impact.

(Pause here. Many people will agree to sign at this point- If that is the case, you can give them one or two more facts if they seem interested. If not, continue using the rap)

**The Problem:** Whether you're Progressive, Conservative, or somewhere in between, corruption affects you. It's the reason our government isn't working for us the way it should. Special interests from both sides of the aisle fund candidate's election campaigns — and as a result, those candidates end up answering to the special interests instead of the people once they get in office. In the 2012 Election, candidates who won seats in the House of Representatives had to raise on average over 1.5 million dollars, for the Senate it was over 11 million dollars. It's a completely corrupt system.

**Opportunity:** We know that the American public is fed up with corruption and it's time to act. It's going to be a tough fight, but we're working on passing a new law called the American Anti-Corruption Act.

**Action:** We need at least 1 million people behind the Act, so we're asking people to add their names today to show their support. Will you Sign?

**Follow Up:** If Yes: Thanks! We are working to start a local group, here in (town). If would you be interested in becoming more involved check the "volunteer" box. Here is some more literature about the issue. Have a great day!

If No: Okay, thank you for your time, here is some literature about the issue. Have a great day!

If they ask for more information about the act, say the following:

It was drafted by some of the top constitutional lawyers in the country in consultation with advocates, academics and activists from both sides of the aisle. It focuses on 3 things: 1) It stops political bribery by stopping Members of Congress from taking donations from industries they regulate, 2) It removes the secrecy in political spending by requiring full transparency, and 3) it gives everyday voters power over elections through an innovative form of election funding.

**Tips for great canvassing:**

- Smile and make eye contact while you're speaking.
- Introduce yourself and the BlackBallotPower.com campaign at the beginning.
- If the person you're speaking to is very busy or is strongly not with us, it's best to move on quickly.

- Move quickly between houses and cover as much ground as you can.
- If there's a doorbell, push hard and listen for the sound of the bell. If there isn't a doorbell or you don't hear it ringing, don't be afraid to knock. And be sure you knock loudly enough so that they can hear you!
- Canvassing can be intimidating for people who haven't done it before. So if you're leading a group, be sure to give everyone lots of encouragement and support. Make sure that brand new canvassers canvass with a "buddy" for at least the first 20-30 minutes to get them off on the right foot.
- Wear comfortable shoes.
- Always end the conversation on a positive note.