

If you are harassed, intimidated, or assaulted while collecting signatures

You are protected by state and federal laws.

In the vast majority of cases, gathering signatures is quite uneventful. But on some occasions in the past, homosexual activists and others have attempted to keep citizens from gathering signatures on the marriage issue, or otherwise disrupted their efforts or intimidated them. We don't know if it will happen this time, but we are being proactive. We have discussed this with the Mass. Attorney General's office and the U.S. Justice Dept, and also local police.

You are protected by the Massachusetts civil rights statutes, in particular:

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 265: Section 37:

No person, whether or not acting under color of law, shall by force or threat of force, willfully injure, intimidate or interfere with, or attempt to injure, intimidate or interfere with, or oppress or threaten any other person in the free exercise or enjoyment of any right or privilege secured to him by the constitution or laws of the commonwealth or by the constitution or laws of the United States. Any person convicted of violating this provision shall be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than one year or both; and if bodily injury results, shall be punished by a fine of not more than ten thousand dollars or by imprisonment for not more than ten years, or both.

Each petition sheet also contains the following text regarding defacing the petition:

WARNING – criminal penalty for unlawfully signing, altering, defacing, mutilating, destroying, or suppressing this petition: fine up to \$1,000 or imprisonment for up to one year.

In addition, there are Federal laws that deal with conspiracy to deprive a person of his civil rights and constitutional rights.

The law protects both petition gatherers and potential signers. People may not harass or threaten you, assault or touch you in any way, attempt to dissuade signers or potential signers near you, or otherwise disrupt or attempt to disrupt your signature gathering efforts.

If you feel so inclined, you might consider bringing a digital camera or even a video camera or tape recorder.

If you are harassed, assaulted, touched, threatened, etc., as described above, you should (a) attempt to photograph or record the perpetrators and (b) immediately call the local police in that town or city (probably "911").

Show the police this sheet with the state law, describe what happened, and insist that the persons be arrested and charged. If the police are reluctant to get involved but you still believe a civil rights violation has been committed, continue to insist. Take as many notes as you can about the situation. You can also call us at 781-890-6001. We intend to pursue every offence to its fullest extent.

Again, we don't anticipate that most signature gatherers will run into any trouble. But having information never hurts. *Bring this sheet with you just in case.*

This sheet may be updated from time to time. Check www.MassResistance.org