

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Montana Marijuana Legalization Campaign Announces Launch of Ballot Initiative Signature Drive

Helena, MT — New Approach Montana, a political campaign working to legalize, regulate, and tax marijuana in the state, today announced the launch of a statewide signature drive starting this Saturday in support of two complementary marijuana legalization ballot initiatives.

“As our state reopens for business, we must also reopen for democracy,” said Pepper Petersen, Political Director for New Approach Montana. “Our signature drive will allow Montana voters to exercise their constitutional right to a ballot initiative in a safe and responsible way.”

The campaign is instituting a set of internal public health protocols to limit contact between circulators and petition signers.

“Our team has taken a very conservative and cautious approach, and this is going to be the most public health-focused signature drive ever conducted in Montana,” said Petersen. “Our circulators will be trained to follow specific protocols so that we can limit direct contact with signers to the greatest degree possible.”

Joan Miles, who served as the Director of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services under former Governor Brian Schweitzer, reviewed the protocols and endorsed the campaign’s plan.

“As a public health professional and former Director of DPHHS, I am encouraged to see the concentrated effort that New Approach Montana is putting forth to protect the health of Montanans as it moves forward with its signature gathering,” said Miles. “New Approach Montana is closely following the Governor’s phase one recommendations for return to public life in light of the COVID pandemic, so their signature drive looks different than it did before the pandemic. The protocols they have put in place to lessen public risk are very considerate.”

New Approach Montana’s protocols include the following rules:

- Circulators must wear masks at all times except when on a break;
- Disposable single use wrapped pens will be provided to signers and discarded after each signature;

- Disposable single use gloves will be provided to signers and discarded after each signature;
- Circulators must be provided disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizer while in the field;
- Circulators must stay six feet away from members of the public at all times;
- Circulators will provide tables for voters to sign so that circulators can witness the signature while maintaining the six foot distance requirement;
- Circulators will be issued with a single use, disposable clear plastic bag each day that contains their petitions, pens, gloves, masks and other supplies for the day (backpacks or other reusable storage solutions are not allowed for any petition supplies);
- Canvassers must wear gloves to handle petitions that have been touched by members of the public.

New Approach Montana is supporting two ballot initiatives this year. The first, I-190, is a statutory initiative that would legalize marijuana in Montana for adults and establish a regulatory framework for cultivation and sales. The second, CI-118, is a constitutional initiative that would set the legal minimum age for purchasing, consuming, or possessing marijuana at 21.

To qualify for the November 2020 ballot, the campaign must gather 25,468 signatures for I-190 and 50,936 signatures for CI-118. Under state law, all signatures must be submitted to county clerks by June 19.

Last month, the campaign filed a lawsuit asking the Montana courts to allow the use of electronic signatures for ballot qualification and to extend the June 19 deadline for submitting signatures. A Missoula District Court judge denied that request last week.

“We were disappointed in that ruling. At this juncture, we believe that a conventional signature drive is a viable path to ballot qualification,” said Petersen.

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