

MEMORANDUM

Petition Circulator Compensation Structures

Chicago Mayoral Race — Recommended Pay Rates

TO: Campaign Leadership
FROM: GOTB Consulting — Field Analysis
DATE: October 7, 2026
RE: Petition circulator pay — walking canvass, Chicago mayoral ballot access

Overview

A Chicago mayoral petition needs a minimum of about 12,500 valid signatures. Serious campaigns target two to three times that volume so a challenge does not knock the candidate off the ballot. Paid petition circulators are almost always classified as independent contractors. Illinois permits pay-per-signature compensation. Current local market data — Craigslist, Indeed, active campaign postings, and prior mayoral cycles — shows three structures in use.

Pay structure comparison

Structure	How it works	Pros	Cons	Typical earnings
Pure per-signature	Fixed dollar per valid signature after verification. Invalids pay \$0.	Strong volume incentive. Pay only for results. Most common for pure petition drives.	Income swings. Quality risk if verification is slow.	\$120–\$300+ per day
Hourly only	Fixed rate for time worked.	Predictable. Easier compliance.	Weaker volume motivation. Less common for dedicated petition work.	\$20–\$30 per hour
Hybrid (preferred)	Guaranteed hourly floor plus per-signature or tiered daily bonuses.	Attracts reliable walkers. Rewards high producers. Preferred by serious campaigns.	More tracking. Needs a daily valid count.	\$20–\$25/hr base, \$30–\$45+/hr effective

Current Chicago / Illinois market (2025–2026)

- Low-end / basic independent petitions: \$1.50 per valid signature. At 80–150 signatures a day, that is \$120–\$225 a day.
- Typical competitive mayoral range: \$4–\$6 per valid signature. In the prior cycle the Lightfoot campaign moved from \$4 to \$6.
- Premium / last-minute: \$8–\$10+. Historical highs have reached \$16 in extreme deadline pushes.
- Active hourly postings: \$20/hr guaranteed plus upside (\$30–\$40+/hr for strong performers). One live pattern is \$25/hr base plus daily production bonuses — \$35 above 50 signatures, \$75 above 75, \$125 above 100 — inside a 7-hour shift.
- Expected validity rate on quality sheets: 70–85 percent. Campaigns pay only on verified valids.

Recommendation — walking / foot canvassers

For on-foot circulators working commercial corridors, transit stops, events, and high-traffic public locations:

Recommended rate: \$5–\$7 per valid signature.

Or hybrid: \$22–\$25 per hour guaranteed floor, plus \$2–\$4 per valid above a daily threshold.

Rationale:

- \$1.50 is too low to attract and retain experienced, reliable walkers.
- \$4–\$6 remains workable with strong locations and fast payment.
- \$6–\$8, or the hybrid above, is the practical range for quality volume, bilingual capacity, and lower fraud risk. Top performers can still clear \$250–\$400 effective days.

Preferred operational structure:

- \$25/hr floor until 40–50 valids, then pure or boosted per-signature.
- Flat \$6–\$7 per valid with same-day or next-day payment after rapid verification.
- Daily production bonuses of \$50–\$100 once 80–100 valids are reached.

Field notes

- Pay only on verified valids, and pay quickly. Delayed pay destroys retention.
- Location quality — foot traffic plus registered-voter density — often matters more than the last dollar on the rate.
- Budget for two to three times the legal minimum so a challenge does not end the race.
- Keep top performers on preferential rates or crew-lead incentives. Pure piece-rate churns the bottom of the book.
- Rates rise sharply near the filing deadline once competing campaigns enter the market.

Bottom line

For a Chicago mayoral field operation, \$5–\$7 per valid signature — or \$22–\$25 an hour plus performance — is the realistic sweet spot for walking circulators if the goal is consistent quality volume without constant rehiring. Rates below \$4 primarily attract the bottom of the market. Rates above \$8–\$10 are typically reserved for crisis-mode pushes.

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