



DC Committee to Build a Better Restaurant Industry
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Sign the
petition to put
Initiative 82
on the ballot.

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District of Columbia Tipped Workers Close in on Hike in Base Pay *Astonishing Voter Response to Signature Drive Boosts Initiative 82 Toward Success* *DC Committee to Build a Better Restaurant Industry Vows to Beat Feb. 22 Deadline*

WASHINGTON, DC -- Backers of a District of Columbia ballot initiative, which would gradually increase the base wage for tipped workers and make it the same as non-tipped workers by 2027, announced it has begun the final push to collect enough signatures to get Initiative 82 on the primary ballot with at least 23,000 valid signatures collected of the estimated 23,000 to 26,000 needed.

"Initiative 82 gives the D.C. community a powerful tool to help low wage tipped workers who want higher pay with tips on top," said Ryan O'Leary, who filed Initiative 82, with the DC Board of Elections in June 2021. "For the sake and livelihood of tipped workers in D.C., and democracy, we cannot afford to be deterred by COVID or winter weather. We will get the collection of signatures done in the coming few weeks using 100 percent volunteers."

The D.C. Committee to Build a Better Restaurant Industry (DCCBBRI) is a political campaign organized by current and former tipped workers in the group One Fair Wage with major support from the Open Society Foundation, fair trade and organic body care brand Dr. Bronner's, as well as over one thousand concerned DC citizens who believe in eliminating the archaic tip credit in D.C.

The campaign developed a COVID-era election strategy to position itself to succeed in getting Initiative 82 on the ballot utilizing in-person collection of most signatures, including outside of free covid testing sites at public libraries and fire stations.

Seeking to muster signatures from hard to reach voters in December, DCCBBRI mailed over 13,000 D.C. voters petitions for gathering signatures required to get Initiative 82 on the ballot. Still unfolding is the total number of voters signing the petitions and mailing them back with postage paid for by the campaign. Early mail returns of signed petitions are exceeding the return rate achieved in 2020 with Initiative 81 which was 5.2 percent.



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For the final stage, the campaign will be deploying unpaid, volunteer petition circulators on DC streets in targeted locations to gather enough signatures by the Feb. 22 deadline to ensure Initiative 82 gets on the primary ballot in D.C. The primary is scheduled for Tuesday, June 21.

“Although optimistic, the campaign is not taking anything for granted,” said Adam Eiding, treasurer of the D.C. Committee to Build a Better Restaurant Industry as well as the Campaign to Decriminalize Nature D.C., which successfully passed Initiative 81 in November 2020. “We are closing in on our goal of 27,000 validated signatures, which we believe will exceed the 5 percent of active D.C. voters required by law. There is currently some confusion within the campaign as to what the final number of signatures will be and inquiries have been made to the DC Board of Elections. We are collecting more signatures to have a cushion to exceed higher estimates of the final number needed.”

The sign-by-mail tactic to gather ballot signatures was first deployed successfully in D.C. in the 2020 election with the passage of Initiative 81 led by the Campaign to Decriminalize Nature D.C. (which shifted enforcement of laws against natural plant medicines to the lowest D.C. law enforcement priority).

“This election cycle the campaign to raise the base wage for tipped workers has adopted Covid era tactics,” says Communications and Training Lead Nikolas Schiller. “Fortunately, there was an overlap of activists and veteran tipped workers in both campaigns, making the direct mail tactic to getting signatures more productive due to the advantage of knowing likely signers from the sign-by-mail petitions gathered in 2020.”

Tipped workers in D.C. make a base wage of \$5.05 per hour paid by employers, who are allowed to credit the first \$10.15 in tips per hour to satisfy their responsibility to pay tipped workers DC’s minimum wage of \$15.20 per hour over a two week pay period. So, when you leave a tip, the business owner essentially credits your tip against the amount they are required to pay their tipped workers and they are using the average per hour rate of tips made over two weeks making it possible to use Saturday night tips to pay a tipped worker on a slow Tuesday.

“In the COVID era we believe tipped workers are accepting work that puts them in harm’s way and thus deserve a reasonable expectation of actual wages that are not subject to the latest business crash or boom, but rather pay people who come to work. The campaign’s slogan is “Fair wage, with tips on top!,” says Kris Furnish, field director for DCCBBRI.

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