

President PHILIP RUMORE



July 2, 2014

MEMO TO: All Buffalo Teachers
FROM: Philip Rumore, President, BTF
RE: Let's Get Them on the Ballot

BUFFALO TEACHERS
FEDERATION, INC

271 PORTER AVENUE
BUFFALO, N.Y. 14201
(716) 881-5400
FAX (716) 881-6678

Please send or deliver petitions to BTF by Monday, July 7, 2014, at the very latest.

Let's send a message to the Governor - No Charter Schools, stop cutting educational funding, your call for a "death penalty" for a so called "failing school" is insulting.

If you can circulate a petition before or after summer school, petitions can be downloaded by going to the BTF website. See [Petitioning Instructions](#) and [Designation Petition](#).

PR:su

Teachout says 25,000 signatures collected so far to challenge Cuomo

July 2, 2014 - 12:59 PM

By Tom Precious

NEWS ALBANY BUREAU CHIEF

ALBANY – A Fordham law professor seeking to challenge Gov. Andrew Cuomo in a Democratic primary says she has obtained 25,100 signatures as of today in her bid to get on the Sept. 9 ballot – nearly double the minimum amount needed.

Zephyr Teachout said an army of volunteers and paid canvassers have been working the state the past month gathering signatures from Democrats at public events and going door-to-door at homes of registered Democrats.

But Teachout, a first-time candidate who says she is running because she believes Cuomo has abandoned some of the core progressive principles of the party, knows the governor or his supporters are likely to mount an effort to try to invalidate enough signatures to block her primary path. Forcing a Democratic primary against Cuomo is far from a slam dunk, her supporters caution.

"We anticipate a challenge," she said in an interview. "His campaign will do what it can to keep us off the ballot, directly or indirectly."

State elections law requires Teachout, 42, to gather 15,000 signatures from enrolled Democrats with at least 100 apiece coming from half of the state's congressional districts. In practice, though, candidates – notably challengers to incumbents – generally try to get at least double or triple the minimum signature level to help withstand New York's long history of employing a cottage industry of election lawyers who gear up this time of year to help incumbents from both major parties keep challengers off ballot lines.

Teachout said her confidence level is "very high" her campaign will submit at least 45,000 signatures to the state Board of Elections by the July 10 deadline, which her campaign believes is a safe comfort level to get on the ballot. But even reaching that level still means the campaign must ensure it is getting high enough numbers from "geographically diverse" regions of the state to help withstand the looming challenges expected first at a Board of Elections hearing and finally the courts.

Courts and changes to the law over the years have made for less-strict interpretation of the election law, though local election boards still advise office-seekers to, for instance, use staples and not paper clips when filing designating signature sheets.

An election lawyer who spoke on condition of anonymity said fraud is the number one reason a signature is determined to be invalid, followed by signers putting down the wrong town they actually reside in. Incomplete witness statements, which are filled out by enrolled party members who gather the signatures from enrolled party members, are another way signatures are often ruled invalid. A mistake can also lead to an entire page of signatures being ruled invalid, even if some of the signatures are legal.

Other common ways signatures can be deemed invalid is if a volunteer dates a witness page, say, on a Tuesday but then collects one more signature dated the following day. Writing "Brooklyn" instead of "Kings" for the county can lead to problems, as can not properly numbering individual signature pages submitted to the state.

Teachout, who was the online organizing director for Howard Dean's 2004 presidential campaign, quickly started her Democratic challenge to Cuomo after losing her bid to secure the gubernatorial nomination of the left-leaning Working Families Party at its convention in late May. That has meant trying to build an organization where there was none.

As a result, Teachout is relying, in part, on collecting signatures at various kinds of public gatherings, such as street fairs. Such a route, any election will say, is risky. The preferred route –

or as one election lawyer said: “the only way to do it” – is obtaining voter registration data and then going door-to-door hitting up registered voters for signatures. Unlike the street rally method, the signature collector has a far better chance of scoring a “valid” signature from the door-to-door route.

Teachout said she understands the potential shortcomings, but said the public gathering approach has also been a way for her to spread word about her fledgling campaign. “It may be Byzantine,” Teachout said of the state’s election laws pertaining to collecting signatures, “but it has had the wonderful side effect of creating opportunities for our campaign to get into communities,” she said.

Teachout said her volunteer effort in Buffalo has been exceptionally strong. “In Buffalo, you see people who understand the economy is upside down,” she said.

Teachout’s campaign is by any measure a long shot, but she has been reaching out to people her campaign believes Cuomo may have alienated after four years in office, from public school teachers to environmentalists who turned out just this week to protest Cuomo over not resolving the natural gas fracking issue.

One aspect of the Teachout campaign Cuomo allies are keeping an eye on is Tim Wu, a Columbia law professor who is running as her lieutenant governor candidate. If Teachout and Wu get on the primary ballot, Wu will run in a separate contest on the Democratic line against Cuomo’s running mate, Erie County’s Kathy Hochul. If Wu emerged victorious, he would become Cuomo’s running mate on the Democratic line in the November general election contest. Also, Cuomo would still be running with Hochul on the Independence and Working Families Party lines, but could not count votes he received on those lines in his overall tally if Wu is his Democratic running mate.