

story by Tabatha Gardner, special to The City Wire



BENTONVILLE — A group hoping to put the issue of having a wet Benton County on the ballot in November is getting a little help from technology.

The group, Keep Dollars in Benton County, created profiles on the popular social networking sites, Facebook and Twitter, earlier this month to keep everyone apprised of its activities. The two websites are used to dole out information on the effects of allowing retail sales of alcohol and liquor in Benton County.

The group's [Facebook site](#) updates followers as to where petitions will be located for signatures. There, photos of Benton County residents signing the petitions are posted to the wall and people are encouraged to post their questions and comments.

Keep Dollars in Benton County, which [formally launched its signature effort](#) on Feb. 13, has hired National Ballot Access (NBA) to gather signatures needed to place the question on the November ballot. Signatures are submitted to the Benton County Clerk for verification.

The Keep Dollars in Benton County's Facebook page had 309 followers Tuesday morning (Feb. 28) and the number is growing each day. The Twitter page, @KeepDollarsinBC, had just 18 followers Monday afternoon.

Factoids like the \$33 million annual economic impact retail alcohol sales will have in Benton County are posted in 140 characters or less on the group's Twitter page.

Many of these facts are from a February 2012 study by the University of Arkansas which study that Benton County stands to gain around 541 new jobs and \$1.4 million in sales tax revenues should the county become wet.

Local reception to the group's signature drive has been good, said attorney Marshal Ney, spokesperson for Keep Dollars in Benton County.

"We are very happy with the turnout since we started gathering signatures a little less than two weeks ago," said Ney, noting that there is still much work to do.

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The group will need to gather nearly 40,000 signatures from registered voters in Benton County before the issue will be placed on the Nov. 6 ballot, County Clerk Tena O'Brien said. Ney said the group does not have tally of the signatures it has collected.

Alan Simmons of Bella Vista said he will sign the petition and supports the group's efforts.

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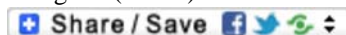
"Oh yeah I'll sign it," Simmons said, "I don't want to have to drive across the county line to get what little bit of booze I do drink during the year."

Simmons isn't alone. Ney said the group has 10–15 petitioners in Benton County gathering signatures at static sites where there has been a steady flow of traffic while others are going door-to-door.

"Although we have a good start to meeting our signature goal of 38% of Benton County's voters, we still have a long way to go," Ney said. "We need Benton County residents to continue to sign the petition to make sure their voice is heard on this issue."

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