

Are petitions effective tools for change?

Letter to the Editor

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Kim Dares asks whether petitions are effective tools for change (“Do facebook petitions make a difference,” 23 January 2008). Dares neglects to ask the prior question whether we should use petitions even if they are effective.

Petitions are instruments of force, not persuasion. The next time you are tempted to start or to sign a petition, think instead to write a letter or to pick up the phone. Explain your concern and develop an argument in defence of your position.

What I am urging is for you to put discussion before politics, at least until you are sure that the bonehead at the other end responds only to politics.