



Coalition of Independent Voters in Colorado “CIVIC”

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Independent Survey Shows Support for Political Reforms Runs High

Popular Support for “Let Colorado Vote” Initiatives and Kent Thiry Evident

A group representing independent voters in Colorado, the Coalition of Independent Voters in Colorado (“CIVIC”), pledged this summer to reach out to at least 100 fellow independents during the month of August to discuss their concerns about the presidential elections, the democratic process and the need for political reform. The results of the 120 conversations, part of an outreach campaign undertaken by CIVIC and its national umbrella, IndependentVoting.org, strengthen the voice of independents, registered as “unaffiliated” in Colorado, and now constituting nearly 38% of all Colorado voters.

“Support for reform has never been higher and these are voters who definitely are not apathetic,” said Gwen Ballard of Carbondale, a founder of CIVIC. “They are paying attention, they are talking with friends and family, and they are pretty disgusted with the way the political process has been operating.”

The independent-to-independent conversations, conducted from Carbondale and IndependentVoting.org’s national headquarters in New York, are part of an effort to link non-aligned voters to one another. “We’re not a party, we’re actually a movement against the kind of politics practiced by the parties,” said Jacqueline Salit, president of the national association. “People all across the country are looking for a new direction in politics. Independent voters can be the engine for that change.”

Following several years of involvement in voter registration, Ballard sees her work with CIVIC as continuing her interest in opening up the political process to greater participation. Among the reforms favored by the independents contacted by CIVIC, over 84% felt that presidential party primaries should be open, allowing independents to vote. “Fortunately, independents will have the chance to vote to establish those open presidential primaries this November,” said Ballard, referring to the new reform initiatives sponsored by Let Colorado Vote.

In the survey, independents were asked to weigh in on Initiative 98, which would allow unaffiliated voters to participate in a primary without affiliating with a party, and on Initiative 140, which would replace the caucus system with a presidential primary and allow unaffiliated voters to participate. While only 29% had heard about Initiative 98, over 87% said they would vote for it. Similarly, 30% had heard about Initiative 140 and 86% said they were in favor of it.

The survey also introduced independents to Kent Thiry, a business leader and Co-Chair of Let Colorado Vote, whose perspective on the unique potential for new coalitions around reform issues resonated strongly. Eighty percent said they agreed that “process issues can bring Coloradans together in a new coalition.”

“Independents have a powerful ally in Kent Thiry,” added Salit who has discussed these issues with Thiry in the past. “He recognizes that independents are the new force in the mix.”

CIVIC is the Colorado affiliate of IndependentVoting.org, which was recently credited with driving state-based political reform efforts around the country in a New York Times opinion piece by author and former Times DC bureau chief Hedrick Smith.

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