



December 8, 2016

National Conference of Independents - March 18, 2017

In the midst of more political uncertainty -- and opportunity -- than we've had since the independent voter rebellions during the Perot era, IndependentVoting.org will convene our Ninth Biennial National Conference of Independents on Saturday, March 18 in New York City.

In her [letter of invitation](#) to the conference, Jackie Salit wrote:

"Just a week after this very turbulent national election, I delivered a keynote at the Arizona State University (ASU) annual Morrison Institute "State of Our State" conference. I closed my remarks about independent voters and the independent movement by reading a few verses from a Leonard Cohen song, "Anthem." Cohen, the poet/singer/songwriter who died the day before the election, penned this haunting-and to me, very relevant-refrain:

*Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.*

Independents, I told the audience, are one of the cracks in everything. And, I explained, our movement wants to bring in the light. This mission -- and how to pursue it -- is the subject of our biennial National Conference of Independents to

be held on March 18, 2017 in New York City. I sincerely hope you will join me there."

For details and to register for the conference visit,
www.conferenceofindependents.org .
 You'll find a hotel discount on the "coming to the conference" tab.



The Politics of The Top Two Primary

The California Senate Race 2016

Jackie Salit spoke at a forum entitled "The Politics of the Top Two Primary: The California Senate Race 2016" sponsored by the USC Schwarzenegger Institute.

Salit pointed out that in the Senate race, over three million Californians who voted for Donald Trump, then continued down the ballot and voted for one of the two politically progressive women of color - both Democrats - running for U.S. Senate. This, she said, demonstrates how, as a practical matter, independent voting is not just something unaffiliated voters do, it's something all Americans would like to be able to do and that is allowed in a top two, nonpartisan election system.



[Click here to see her remarks.](#)

NYC Attorney Challenges Closed Primaries in Court

Report by Juliana Francisco

Attorney and independent Mark Moody put the notorious "lock box" and closed primaries on trial Tuesday, December 6th in New York State Supreme Court. Over 60 independents packed the tiny courtroom in Lower Manhattan in support of Moody's challenge. After finding himself locked out of the April 19 New York Presidential Primary, along with 3.2 million independents statewide, Mark filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of New York's closed primary system.

Mark specifically targeted the archaic "lock box" provision which requires independents to re-register up to 11 months in advance of the primaries.

"Voting is the most fundamental right we have," opened Mark.



"Article 1, Section 1 of the New York State Constitution begins 'no member of this state shall be disfranchised'." Mark argued that any system of election that prohibits voters from voting for their preferred candidate violates our state constitution. He noted that New York has some of the most restrictive voting laws in the country, as well as the longest waiting period for voters to re-register.

Judge Engoron granted the State's motion to dismiss the case. It was a disappointing, but not entirely unexpected outcome. The argument that voters from one party can negatively influence the outcome of another party's election seems to have made a lasting impression on him. Commented Harry Kresky, Counsel for IndependentVoting.org: " *I thought the hearing exposed how embedded the major parties are in New York's political system and the extent to which government agencies like the Board of Elections work to protect their interests.*"

After the Moody hearing, a group of independents from Independentvoting.org and Openprimaries.org attended a Voter Assistance Advisory Committee/NYC Votes hearing where the main concern was whether the voting system impacts voter turnout. Voters told horror stories of hour-long lines, broken voting machines, poorly trained poll workers, and even being given two ballots. Alvaader Frazier, June Hirsh and I testified on behalf of the New York City Independence Clubs and Jessie Shayne for Open Primaries.



Juliana Francisco

In my comments, I said that as an independent I was one of the 21% of voters in my Congressional district who was barred from voting, not just in the presidential primary, but also in my local Congressional and State Legislative primaries. After spending several days campaigning for Bernie Sanders, I was unable to vote for him in the primary. Our closed system makes me question why I even make the effort to vote at all because I have no voice. Jesse Shayne pointed out that New York spent up to 75 million dollars on closed primaries that locked out 3.2 million New York independents. Alvaader Frazier noted that for the first time in 45 years, there was an open race for Congress in her Harlem district, one that was decided in the closed primary with a turnout of 13% of Democrats. June Hirsh commented that there are more than double the number of independents in New York City than registered Republicans. Our testimonies ensured that the issue of open primaries was raised.

On a positive note, in 2017 New Yorkers will have the opportunity to vote on whether to convene a constitutional convention. If convened, many of these problems can be addressed. We shall continue to build coalitions, fight the status quo and challenge the system in effort to improve our democracy.

Frank Fear in the LA Progressive: Create A Special Presidential Commission on Election Reform

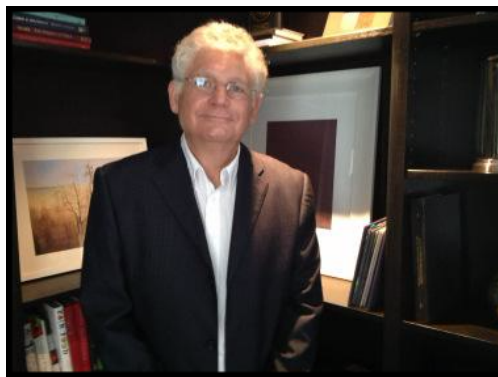
"A few weeks ago I joined over 350 Independents from 40 states in signing a letter to President-elect Trump and his Presidential Transition Team. Co-authored by Jacqueline Salit (president, IndependentVoting.org) and Richard Robol (president, [Independent Ohio](http://IndependentOhio.org)) the **letter** asks Mr. Trump to create a Special Presidential Commission on Election Reform."

"Without question, it's time to reform America's election system. As Salit and Robol write in the letter: "From the persistence of closed primaries, which lock out millions of younger and other non-aligned voters, to systems of partisan redistricting, to the Electoral College itself, the barriers to popular self-governance are deeply entrenched." Add "big money in politics" to that list."

"I signed the letter because I believe the two-party system is **flawed** and **dysfunctional**. But, despite deficiencies, that system is the most distinguishing feature in American politics - a circumstance that doesn't make sense, not when **nearly 45% of America's voters aren't affiliated with either of the primary political parties**."

"It's not so much that America needs more political parties as much as America needs to transform its current two-party system-from party-centered to voter-centered."

[Read Frank's complete OpEd here](#)



Profiles in Independence:

Bill Bryan, Esq., Baton Rouge, LA

From reporter, to political consultant to election law attorney, Bill Bryan, has now formed the Alliance for Louisiana Independent Voters. Here's how he describes his political journey:

As a journalism graduate in 1981 working at Louisiana Public Broadcasting as a photographer, I soon found myself captivated by politics, and began covering the state capitol and state government.

After spending four years shooting and producing a nightly feature program, I handled the media for Edwin Edwards in the infamous campaign in which Edwards defeated David Duke. I later became Press Secretary for Louisiana Lt. Governor Melinda Schwegmann, and in early 1996 I served as Press Secretary for the Clinton/Gore '96 campaign in the state.



After the campaign, I entered law school. My wife, who had been diagnosed with breast cancer, passed away in November 1997, leaving me to raise my 8- and 11-year-old daughters. We all ending up graduating from our respective schools and they have grown into 27- and 30-year-old wonderful women. Now my oldest daughter has given me the most beautiful granddaughter and life is full of excitement.

After law school, I started a private practice where I handled campaign and election law. Seeing this aspect of elections and voting, along with having two daughters and a granddaughter, has made me very concerned with protecting and promoting our most precious fundamental right.

The recent presidential campaign has caused me to get off the sideline and do my part to encourage qualified persons to run for, and get elected, to public office. Louisiana flipped from a blue state to a red state with the advent of our Open Primary in 1977. In 2014, the state passed a law allowing voters to register as independents and now NO PARTY is the fastest growing registration demographic.

As citizens grown-weary of the two-party system, the way to get them energized in the process and encourage them to go the polls is to provide them with viable options. I started the Alliance of Louisiana Independent Voters as a means to accomplish that goal. It's the least I can do for the good and decent voters of Louisiana.

In the News

- Jackie Salit and Thom Reilly, Director of the Morrison Institute, appeared on *KJZZ*-radio to talk about the research released at ASU's "State of Our State" conference and the role of independents. [Listen the show here.](#)
- Read ASU's coverage of the State of Our State event in "[Independents May Bridge Partisan Divisions, Say Experts at ASU Event.](#)"

- More coverage of the ASU event: "**Election Rejection: Independent Voters Don't Feel Respected, but Can't Be Ignored.**" (*Arizona Daily Sun*).
- *Albuquerque Journal* issued an editorial favoring open primaries: "**2016 Elections Prove NM Should Open its Primaries.**"
- Editorial by former Florida candidate and Chairman of "Progress for All" Tim Canova: "**Ending Closed Primaries Forever.**" (*JackPineRadicals*)
- *New York Post* article on Mark Moody's court challenge in New York, " **Petition for Open Primary Shot Down by Court.**"

Are you a member of IndependentVoting.org?

We are the grassroots-fueled movement that believes if we're going to get forward-looking policies and develop our country, then we have to change the way our political process functions. Your membership connects you to a national grassroots network working on these critical issues in every state of the country and strengthens our ability to force the process open.

Membership is a one-time \$10 fee (or you can become a sponsor for \$100 which includes membership and a \$90 donation).

Click here to join today!

And help expand additional outreach on social media by making a donation to our advertising campaign. Every \$100 you give allows us to engage 4,500 people with our message on Facebook. **Please Donate here.** Thanks for your generous support!

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