



March 3, 2016

Independents Shine Spotlight on Exclusion of 1.2 Million Arizonan's from Presidential Preference Election

Independent Voters for Arizona and **Open Primaries Arizona** held a joint press conference on Monday, February 22nd, the final day in which independents could re-register into a party in order to vote in the Presidential preference election.

The two organizations have been vigorously campaigning to open the Presidential primaries to Arizona's 1.2 million independents. Over the last 5 months, 30,848 Arizonans sent emails or letters to the Democratic and Republican Party chairs, urging them to open the primaries. Before the press conference, the last of these signatures were delivered to the Democratic and Republican Parties' state headquarters.

Tim Castro, State Campaign Director for Independent Voters for Arizona kicked off the conference with a forceful statement about the shortcomings of the solution offered by the state of Arizona to the 1.2 million voters who can't vote in the Presidential preference election because they are independents.

" Number one, why should independents be required to RE-register in order to vote? Number two, only a few thousand HAVE re-registered, a drop in the bucket of the 1.2 million independents in the state. Number three, why should the Presidential primary be the occasion for the parties to capture independents -- which everyone wants and everyone needs to win elections -- as opposed to respecting independents for who they are and granting independents full access to the political process without having to join a

the party to achieve that?"

At the press conference, Tim also announced the release of **a statewide commercial** by the **Open & Honest Elections Coalition** featuring Kim Ames-Wright, a state co-chair of Independent Voters for Arizona.



Amanda Melcher, Outreach Coordinator for Independent Voters for Arizona, spoke passionately about the need for millennial voters to be included in the political process as who they are -- a fiercely independent sector of the electorate. *"In Arizona, 50.5% of all voters under the age of 30 are registered independent,"* stated Melcher. *"That's 276,935 voters. Typically,*

what you hear about millennial voters is that our turnout is low, and were it higher, we would be more impactful. Remove the barriers so that independents can vote without having to change their registration - then we can talk turnout. "

Armida Lopez of Open Primaries Arizona, spoke about the independence of Arizona's Latino community in her remarks at our joint press conference Monday.

" Nowhere in our election system in Arizona is the discrimination against independents more blatant than in the Presidential preference elections, which are closed to independents. That means that close to 41% of Latino voters in our state cannot participate. That must change. We need all of our citizens to have equal access to voting. My community wants a fair opportunity to participate in shaping who our next President will be without being coerced into joining a political party."



Patrick McWhortor , campaign director of Open Primaries Arizona, underscored how the current solution *"undermine(s) their commitment to being independent by requiring them to change their voter registration to a political party. This is the most sweeping voter suppression effort we have seen in recent history in America - the deliberate exclusion of independent voters."*

Rep. Ken Clark also spoke at the press conference and expressed his support for independents' inclusion in the Presidential primaries. Two weeks ago, when a bill initiated by Secretary of State Michele Reagan to defund the Presidential preference elections came before the state legislature, Rep. Clark offered an amendment that would have allowed independents to participate.

Cathy Stewart, who was on hand representing **IndependentVoting.org**, said to the press in an interview before the conference:

" They don't want to join a political party in order to be able to exercise their fundamental democratic right to vote," Stewart said . *"Independents view that as a form of coercion."*

Check out **"In the News"** below for a survey of some of the key press coverage.



We're in a Bind: An Open Letter from Jacqueline Salit, President of IndependentVoting.org to Bernie Sanders

"I write to you today because you and I are both in a bind. Maybe together we can find a way out of it. At least I hope so. You need the support of independents to succeed. We are giving it freely. We need your support for a true democratization of American politics. Can you play that role? Can we find a way out of this bind?"



[Read the full column here.](#)

Statement by Nevada Independent, Catana Barnes:

"I Can't Caucus for Bernie Because I'm an Independent"

Catana Barnes, president of Independent Voters of Nevada released a statement on the eve of the Nevada primary. The statement was published in the *Elko Daily Free Press* and the *Coyote TV High Desert Advocate*.

"Call me an electoral conscientious objector," she said. "I believe partisan warfare is wrong. Forcing unaffiliated voters to join a political organization in order to be able to vote is wrong. As much as I would like to caucus for Bernie, I can't do what I am required to do."

Barnes and her son then took to the streets near Dillbrook Middle School in Reno, where voters were attending the Democratic caucus, to talk to them about her decision and why she recommended that they switch their party affiliation back after voting for Sanders and *"join the movement to change the partisan election system which treats independents like second class citizens, even though we are 43% of the country."*



[Read the full statement here](#)

Profiles in Independence:

Vicente Garza, Edcouch Texas

Greetings my fellow Independent Voters,

My name is Vicente Garza but my friends call me Vinny. I am an Educational Consultant from Texas and I come to IndependentVoting.org with curiosity and excitement, along with the hopes of educating and aligning myself with like-minded individuals unwilling to conform to a specific political moniker.



Vinny Garza

After attempting to vote in this year's primary elections, a volunteer stationed at my designated polling place asked me a peculiar question during the identification process, "What party are you signing with today?" When I casted aspersions regarding the validity of said question and the authority that allows them, "That is the way it has always been..." was the retort. Much to my dismay, I left the polling area and preceded home to research how primaries work and what rights I possess as a voter that does not associate with any particular party.

My research brought me to IndependentVoting.org, and I am elated it did. IndependentVoting.org afforded the opportunity to educate myself with the primary process and the rights I have as an independent voter. More importantly, I realized that I am not alone in my philosophy. I hope to continue to educate myself about the electoral process and through that education foster a support for the independent voter movement and IndependentVoting.org

Have you taken the Hub Reader Survey?

It's not too late. The Hub, IndependentVoting.org's online newsletter, is aimed at covering activities that independents are leading and participating across the country. As editor of the newsletter, I'm interested in your feedback and participation. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions.

[Take the survey](#)

In the News

- *NPR* interviewed independent voters in Florida, Colorado and Arizona for "**Sick of Political Parties: Unaffiliated Voters are Changing Politics.**" Deb Gain-Braley and Tim Castro of Independent Voters for Arizona are featured in the Arizona segment.

Here is a sampling of coverage from the Arizona press conference described above:

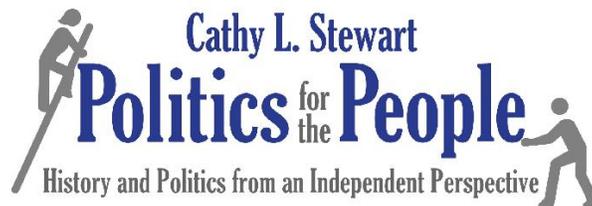
- "**Independents Seek Voice in Arizona Presidential Primary,**" *Arizona Capitol Times*
- "**Arizona's Independent Voters Claim They're Treated Like Second Class Citizens**," *NPR*
- "**Independents: Let us vote in Presidential Primaries,**" *Arizona Republic.*
- "**Independents: Keep Primary, Just Open Voting to Everyone,**" *The Daily Courier*
- "**Stewart: Keep the primary, let independents participate,**" *Sierra Vista Herald*



Please join
IndependentVoting.org's President Jackie Salit
for the next national conference call

Tuesday, March 29
8pm ET
(7pm CT, 6pm MT, 5pm PT)

[Register here for the call](#)

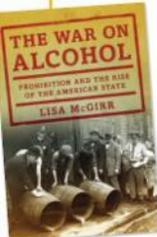


BOOK ★ CLUB

A GROUNDBREAKING HISTORY OF PROHIBITION,
ITS DISCRIMINATORY ENFORCEMENT, AND LASTING LEGACY....

The War on Alcohol
*Prohibition and the Rise of
the American State*
by Lisa McGirr

Conference Call with the Author
Sunday, April 3rd
7 pm EST
(641) 715-3605
Code 767775#



Check out the new reading selection for the Politics for the People Book Club, founded and hosted by Cathy Stewart, IndependentVoting.org's Vice President of National Development. Follow the discussion on the **Politics for the People blog** and then join the conference call April 3, where Cathy and author Lisa McGirr will discuss the book, "**The War on Alcohol: Prohibition and the Rise of the American State.**"

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Give us a call today!

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