



September 3, 2015

INDIES TO PREZ CANDIDATES: WHAT'S YOUR AGENDA ON POLITICAL REFORM? **Newsweek.**

With the presidential season comes the empty promises and partisan maneuvering which have become so characteristic of the candidate showdown. It also raises the question of whether any of the presidential hopefuls will address the dysfunction of the political process itself -- something which millions of Americans are deeply concerned about. Independents have begun asking the candidates about it point blank.

- In an oped for *Newsweek.com*, titled "**Bernie Sanders Should Embrace Political Reform," Open Primaries'** John Opdycke and Dr. Jessie Fields had this to say about insurgent candidate Bernie Sanders: *"You would think that Sanders's position as an anti-establishment lightning rod would make him more, not less, radical when it comes to freeing our democratic process from partisan control. Paradoxically, he has staked out a rather tame position on issues of political process and remaking our political culture. When it comes to democracy reform, independents across the country are asking him, Why are you protecting the establishment?"*
- Jackie Salit, President of IndependentVoting.org, posed a challenge in her *Huffington Post* piece "**Trump's Non-Loyalty Oath: The Question of Independents**": *What does he have to say to the 44 percent of Americans who have refused to join a political party? Does he have or is he seeking support from any leaders in the independent movement? Can he point to a successful history in third party politics? Is he willing to support the political reform agenda that binds independents together, in spite of our ideological differences?*

- The *Arizona Republic* solicited the hard-hitting "**Are Voting Rights for All Voters? Let's Ask Hillary**," also from Jackie Salit in which she drew attention to the conspicuous absence of independents in Clinton's voting rights platform.

Massachusetts Activists Take the Open Our Democracy Campaign to the Streets

Evelyn Dougherty, Lowell Ward and Diane Whitehouse found people eager to express their support for opening the political process by supporting the **Open Our Democracy Act**, which calls for nonpartisan elections at the Federal level, standards for redistricting reform and making Election Day a Federal Holiday. 25 voters signed postcards asking their Congressmembers to become sponsors of the **Open Our Democracy Act**.

According to Evelyn, Chair of MCOIV, getting support was easy. " *We asked passersby if they wanted to help Open Our Democracy and almost everyone responded positively. This is a bill that expresses the way most of the public feels, that our system is broken. People are glad we were out on the streets and doing something about it.* "



(L to R) Evelyn Dougherty, Lowell Ward, Diane Whitehouse

The publisher at the *Boston City Paper* took time to express his support for the effort after receiving a letter to the editor from Dougherty. In his note informing Dougherty that he would be publishing her letter, Paul Feeney said: "*Our only real power as citizens is the exercise of our right to vote...It is near impossible to have an elected official vote to change the status quo. You are trying. Good Luck.*"

More Open Our Democracy News

Independents around the country continue to submit letters to the editor introducing the Open our Democracy Act and branding it as the anti-corruption legislation independents are backing. To date 18 letters have been published, the latest written by Catana Barnes of Nevada ("**Independent Voters Seek Election Reforms**") in the *Elko Daily Free Press* and *The Spectrum*, and by Barbara Patrizzi ("**Towards More Open Elections**") in the *Philadelphia Tribune*.

Send a letter to your Congressman, asking him or her to sponsor the bill. Then share it with others on social media. Send everyone you know a personal message about why you think they should support this bill.

To join the Open Our Democracy campaign, [click here](#) or email national@independentvoting.org. If you are interested in writing your own letter to the editor, contact Sarah Lyons at slyons@cuip.org.

On the Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act

Dr. Jessie Fields addresses National Action Network Conference

Dr. Jessie Fields, IndependentVoting.org Board member and a leader of the New York City Independence Clubs, spoke at a forum on the Voting Rights Act sponsored by the Rev. Al Sharpton and the National Action Network to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the passage of the Voting Rights Act.

Fields, a Harlem physician, remarked:

" I believe that the essence of voting rights and the core value of the fight for voting rights -- not only for Black people but for all people -- is that we must have the right to vote in all phases of the election process, at all times and with no limit, no matter our race, our creed, color or party affiliation or no party affiliation. No American should be required to join a political party! No American should be required to sign a loyalty oath! No American should be barred from casting a ballot and voting!"



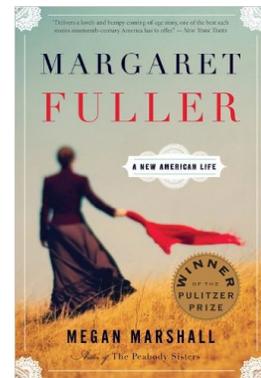
Jessie Fields: center

CABLE TV SHOW FEATURES CHANGE AGENTS

Interview with Cathy Stewart about Politics For the People Book Club



Cathy Stewart, Coordinator of the New York City Independence Clubs and founder of the **Politics For the People Book Club**, taped an interview earlier this year for *None of the Above*, a popular cable TV program hosted by Steven Nemerovski airing on The Grassroots Community Network in Colorado. [Watch the interview here.](#)



The **Politics For the People Book Club** is currently reading the book, "Margaret Fuller," the 2014 Pulitzer Prize winning biography by Megan Marshall about the 19th century author, journalist and pioneer of women's rights who died tragically at age 40. On Sunday, September 20, 7pm ET, Stewart will be interviewing Marshall about the book. [Check out the Politics For the People Blog for more info.](#)

A Profile in Independence:

Harun Knowles, Lilburn, GA

Harun Knowles is a graduate of Morehouse and the owner of Atlanta Buyer Services. Knowles came on IndependentVoting.org's spokesperson training call to learn about how he could use his voice to speak out on behalf of independents in Georgia and has decided to reach out to his community and elected officials and lobby support for the Open Our Democracy bill.



In a letter to Rep. Hank Johnson from the 4th Congressional District, Harun said, "I've joined independent voters. Of the issues that have influenced this direction in my political perspective is the lack of openness in the voting process for those not affiliated with a particular political party."

"As an independent voter, I'd appreciate the opportunity to eliminate the party barriers that often result in disillusioned and misled voters. We want to eliminate the barriers that cause so many voters to be dismissive of the process and rights to vote."

In the News

- A *Baltimore Sun* article, "**Independents Grow Despite Competitive Primary Contests**" featured IndependentVoting.org activists Dona Sauerberger of Gabrillis and Steve Weiss of Boonsboro. Hassan Giordano in Baltimore added his voice to the discussion in his **letter to the editor** in response to the article.
- The *Daily Commercial* of Florida published a persuasive oped entitled "**Support Top Two Open Primaries and Put Fairness Back into the Elections**" by Choice Edwards, Central Florida's spokesperson for Florida Fair and Open Primaries. Edwards backs the All Voters Vote Amendment which would allow Top Two Primary Elections for Congress, State Legislature, Governor and Cabinet and for the Open Our Democracy Act.
- The *Philadelphia Free Press* ran an article on independents, "**Independent Parties are Gaining Momentum in Pennsylvania**," that featured an interview with Independent Pennsylvanians Jennifer Bullock and Norma Van Dyke.
- *Ebony Magazine's* June issue contained "**Independents' Day**" by Dr. Omar Ali.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS



Sunday, September 20, 7pm ET :
Cathy Stewart, founder of Politics for the People Book Club, interviews Megan Marshall, the author of "Margaret Fuller." **Register for the call here.**

Tuesday, September 29, 8pm ET: IndependentVoting.org's national conference call, hosted by Jackie Salit. Learn more about the latest developments in our movement. **Click here to register for the call .**



Sunday, October 18, 7pm ET
Spokesperson Training Call with Director of Communications Sarah Lyons. Advance your skills as a spokesperson for the concerns of independents. Whether it's composing a letter to the editor, speaking to an organization, or appearing on radio or TV, join a conference call and get tips and support from Sarah. **Register here .**

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Give us a call today!

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