



February 9, 2017

Post-Election; Post-Inauguration: Now Let's Bring Independents Together

240 independents from 40 states participated in Independent Voting's recent national conference call. Jackie Salit responded to questions sent in by independents from around the country. They included queries about: Donald Trump's administration, tactics for organizing, political reform campaigns, the role of candidates in our movement, and how independents talk about who we are. Salit also spoke about what to expect at our upcoming [national conference](#).



"Our conference is taking place in the context of a larger and somewhat fluid conversation that's happening in which many different approaches on political reform, on independent voters and on building coalitions are coming to the table," Salit said. "And that is so important, because this hasn't happened for a long time. That's a testament and a response to what's going on in the country, but also a recognition that issues we've been working on, the potential power and the question of what is the proper role of the political parties in American politics, has been forced on to the table by actions of the American people and the growth of our work."

[Listen to the complete conference call here](#) or choose one of the following segments:

- [Perspectives on Donald Trump's election.](#)
- [Getting beyond Trump / anti-Trump. The challenge of organizing.](#)
- [What's going to happen at the national conference on March 18?](#)
- [What's the state of our movement?](#)
- [How do we push for political reform?](#)
- [Perspectives on supporting/endorsing independent candidates](#)
- [How to build the independent-to-independent connection?](#)

National Conference of Independents: Why I'm Coming to the Conference

Hundreds of Independents head to New York City on March 18th. Here is why two indies are coming:

Steve Hough, Florida Fair and Open Elections: Having been tangentially involved in an effort to place an initiative on the 2012 Florida ballot to end closed primaries, I was taken aback upon learning how difficult it was to get an initiative on our ballot. My experience had shown that the majority of people I spoke with (whether Democrat, Republican, or independent) supported the concept of open primaries, yet our efforts failed. Since then, others have tried and failed again, but there is always hope for the future.



From experience, and through information disseminated on the IndependentVoting.org web site, I learned to what lengths the two major parties would go in order to block attempts to open up the primaries. Over the last couple of years, other states have had greater success than we have had here in Florida, and I look forward to meeting others from across the country dedicated to exposing the tactics employed by partisans in order to dampen the influence of independents and to promoting electoral reform.



Dmonique Edwards, student and activist, UNC-Greensboro and North Carolina Independents:

"I am coming to the conference to participate in conversations around reforming the current political structure, specifically to challenge the power of the two main parties. I want to know more about the role that I can play in changing the distribution of power in this nation."

[Register for the conference today](#)

Virginia Independents Stop GOP effort to Close State's Primaries.

A bill that would have installed partisan registration and closed Virginia primaries has been stopped in its tracks thanks to the efforts of Virginia Independent Voters Association (VIVA), part of the Independent Voting network, and Open Primaries.



Last week the VA Senate Privileges and Elections Committee passed SB821. The bill would have changed the state from its current system of nonpartisan registration and open primaries, to partisan registration. As Steve Richardson of VIVA said in a letter to fellow independents, the bill would have paved the way to closed primaries.

The campaign to defeat the antidemocratic, anti-independent bill, sponsored by John Cosgrove (R-Chesapeake) and Mark Obenshain (R-Harrisonburg), ran radio ads and urged voters to sign a petition to Save Virginia's Primary.

"Independent voters are becoming a force, both in Virginia and around the country," said Richardson. "All registered voters should be free to choose among candidates for public office. Political party insiders should not be making those choices for us. We were dead set against these bills and we made our voices heard."

This is not the first time that legislators have attempted to introduce a bill to initiate partisan registration and closed primaries, and it probably won't be the last.

Contact Steve at stevenrichardson@verizon.net to become active in VIVA so that independents have an ongoing and strong voice in the fight to keep the primaries open and make sure that every voter can vote in every round of elections.



Reaching out to Neighbors

Carrie Sackett, a leader of the NYC Independence Clubs, took the insights from the recent Independent Voting national conference call and went doorknocking in her New York City apartment building to invite neighbors to an open discussion at her home on "Where do we go from here?" The result: A meeting in her home with 12 of her neighbors, all who expressed a desire to continue the conversation.

"I feel passionately that no matter whom anyone voted for, it is up to us – the American people – to move our country forward," Carrie shared. *"The political parties are not going to do it."*



The gathering included: neighbors Carrie had known for years but had never talked politics with; a young man in his 30's who had just been to a protest rally; a woman who was independent, but joined the Democratic Party so she could vote in primaries; a man who was an independent and discovered he couldn't vote for Bernie Sanders on primary day because he lives in New York, a closed primary state. Many of the attendees were eager to participate in the efforts underway to open the primaries.

"With all the uncertainty and divisiveness in our political culture," said Sackett, *"it feels good to be organizing and talking to folks. I'm so glad we were able to create a new kind of conversation and I'm looking forward to continuing."*

Independent Women March in PA

Jennifer Bullock and Barbara Patrizzi marched in one of the many women's marches held throughout the country - and they did it their way - proudly, as independents. The signs they carried say it all!

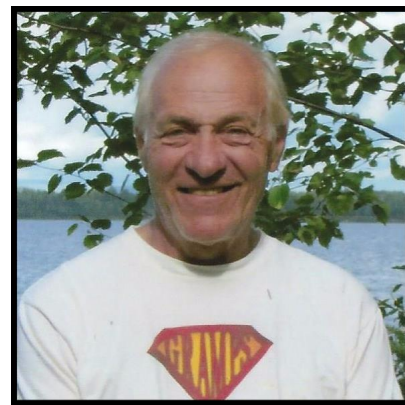


Profiles in Independence:

Bob Croce, Holden, ME

I have been an independent voter since my college years and I am now 73. For the first time ever, last March, resentfully, I enrolled in one of Maine's political parties in order to vote in the Democratic caucuses. I had been re-energized by Bernie Sanders' campaign after being disillusioned by the antics and gridlock of our politicians in recent years. I dis-enrolled and become an independent voter again after the elections were over.

I have recently been active in Maine's public referendum concerning ranked choice voting that passed into law after November's elections. I've written to state organizations, registering a complaint when Maine's legislature decided to suspend a legal requirement mandating public notices of all public hearings. I found out about this action while attempting to track a bill proposed by Sen Alford (D), the majority leader to make Maine a closed primary state in 2018. It is presently a caucus state.

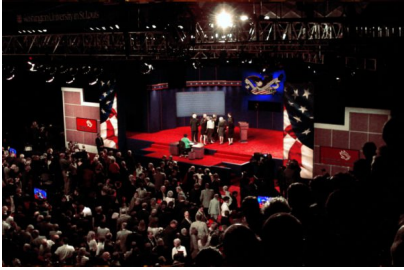


Ranked Choice Voting, Open Primaries, and Independent Voting.org all have the common goals of increasing public participation in our political process. In order for our democracy to work, it is important to get all eligible voters involved, not just party members. I am presently working on forming Mainers for Open Elections to support a bill submitted this year by three Legislators to allow unenrolled voters to cast ballots in primary elections. This bill (L78) would amend the Alford's closed primaries bill passed last year. Maine has close to 38% of eligible voters (365,000+) who are unenrolled.

I believe we are on the verge of a political revolution of which I want to be a part. I believe if we can get more independent voters involved, we can do a lot to overcome the current gridlock and bickering in politics in addition to helping to make our political processes more open and reflective of the majority of voters.

This week, Bob and Joe Pickering testified on behalf of independents at a hearing in support of L78.

In the News

- **Federal Judge Rules Against Presidential Debate Commission.** For decades, independents have pushed against the doors that have kept independent presidential candidates from the televised debates. Level the Playing Field (LPF), an organization that challenged the 501(c)(3) nonprofit status of the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) won an important ruling last week when the Court found fault in the FEC's quick dismissal of a mountain of evidence provided in the initial complaint and ordered the agency to reconsider the allegations against the CPD within 30 days. Read about the Judge's decision in *IVN News'* **Breaking: Federal Judge Rules Against Presidential Debate Commission.** 
- Read Independent Kentucky activist and Retired Lt. Colonel Mark Ritter's Letter to the Editor, "**What Do We Do Now,**" in the *Frankfort State Journal*.
- Bob Perls of New Mexico Open Primaries is interviewed in "**Open Primaries Might Boost Voter Turnout, Bill Sponsors Say,**" on the eve of hearings on HB 206 and HJR 6, bills in support of open primaries and to move to a nonpartisan system, respectively. (*Santa Fe New Mexican*).
- Walter Rubel of *La Cruces Sun News* chimes in with his editorial, "**Legislation Would Allow Independents to Be Heard.**"
- In the wake of Maine's hearing on L78, the bill to open primaries, read "**Closed Primaries are Taxation Without Representation for the Unenrolled.**"

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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