



May 11, 2017

Florida Independents Making Waves

The campaign to lobby Florida's Constitutional Revision Commission -- which convenes every 20 years -- to put a top two nonpartisan primary before the voters has been grabbing public interest. Public hearings have been drawing outspoken crowds, and independent activists have been using the opportunity in their testimony, as well as in newspaper editorials, to amplify the call for elections in which all voters can participate.

At the most recent hearings, held in Jacksonville, Gainesville, Panama City and Ft. Myers, independents and supporters of open primaries delivered passionate testimony before the Commission. **Steve Hough**, the lead spokesperson for Florida Fair and Open Primaries, has been working feverishly to reach hundreds of independents and supporters of open primaries around the state and invite them to participate.



Kristen Kiernan (L), Leigh Ann Gustavus

In Panama City, where Hough resides, he prefaced his remarks by saying *"We've had members speak at every hearing thus far because we simply want to be allowed to vote in primaries without being forced to join a political party."*

Steve will be giving an update on the campaign to shine a light on the over 3.1 million voters in Florida who are registered "No Party Affiliation" at the upcoming National



Conference Call hosted by Jackie Salit.

Kristen Kiernan and Leigh Ann Gustavus, who recently attended Independent

Voting.org's national conference of independents in New York City, brought a group of friends to testify in Jacksonville. *"Florida could be the trailblazers for more free and open elections to ensure that our elections work for the voters and not the parties,"* said Kiernan. Gustavus added, *"Partisan primaries are designed to advance the interests of the political parties but do nothing to advance the quality of our democracy."*



Highlights from Jacksonville and Gainesville

Columnist and friend of the independent movement, Frank Fear wrote two excellent pieces that were printed in the [Ft. Myers News Press](#), and in [LA Progressive](#) which brings national attention to the campaign.

As I've written earlier on these pages, I'm not a fan of political parties because I believe they are self-serving enterprises. That's why I'm less inclined to favor a third party as a solution to America's political malaise. The alternative I prefer is for America's Independents to become 'A Third Force.' For that to happen we need to shift elections from its current party-centered structure to a new-and much more democratically reinforcing-voter-centered expression. The move to open up primaries in Florida is a big step in that direction.



Monitoring the DNC Rules Making Process - An Independent Account

Tiani Coleman, President of New Hampshire Independent Voters, represented independents at the first DNC Unity Reform Commission in DC. Here's her first person account:

I was able to represent [Independent Voting](#) in attending the Democratic National Committee's first meeting of the Unity Reform Commission (URC), held May 5, 2017, in Washington, D.C. The URC was formed by a resolution at the Democratic National Convention as a compromise between the Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton campaigns, with the purpose of reviewing the party's nominating process, to try to ensure the process is accessible, transparent and inclusive. Clinton appointed the Chair and nine members; Sanders appointed the Vice Chair and seven members; and three additional members were appointed by DNC Chair Tom Perez. A series of meetings will be held throughout the year, with a mandate to submit their recommendations to the Rules & Bylaws Committee of the DNC by January 1, 2018. This first meeting focused on the DNC's legal authority, the history, and the party and voter's interest in the presidential nominating process.

On the positive side, it was good to see these process issues getting serious consideration, with Sanders' appointees who are calling for reform having a strong voice at the table. I was able to meet and talk to the various Commission members, including the Chair and Vice Chair. Everyone was respectful and seemed sincere in wanting to improve the process. But each has a different perspective on what that looks like. Most Commission members had the primary goal of defeating Trump and re-building and re-empowering the Democratic Party. Thus, talk of independent voters was primarily for



the purpose of bringing them into the Democratic Party, at least as loyal voters. The general consensus at the meeting was that parties have broad discretion in the nominating process, and that they have the legal authority to close primaries, have superdelegates, have early registration deadlines, etc. That's not to say they're not serious about making some changes to open the process, but the history was laid out as though our country has already moved from a party-controlled process to a democratically controlled process. They might believe the process needs a few minor tweaks, but they don't seem to comprehend that the current process is still heavily party-controlled and still has a way to go before the voters can truly claim it as our own. While the presenters at the meeting recognized that parties can't violate civil rights, they still fail to comprehend that the concerns of independent voters ARE civil rights concerns. As this was just the first meeting of many, they just scratched the surface on how they will handle delegate selection rules and timelines, the superdelegate issue, the open/closed primary issue, caucus and primary irregularities, voter registration deadlines, and more. We will continue to follow this, as it will be interesting, and perhaps important, to see unfold. Get more information and make your voice heard at <http://democrats.org/unity-commission>.

Independents Use National Conference as Springboard on Spokesperson Trainings Calls

"After the National Conference, many people reached out to express how enriching they'd found it," said Sarah Lyons, Independent Voting's Director of Communications, who held two spokesperson trainings for attendees of Crossroads for an Independent America. "My goal is to support independents to speak more about their personal experience and use it as a springboard to develop their voice as spokespeople for our movement."



Hugh Campbell - New Jersey. "I was impressed by the Sunday panels and the fact that the legal team was optimistic even though they were not successful the first time out. The concept of taxation without representation also struck me. I was appalled during the election at the super delegate process and the fact that, as a country, we can spend so much money on primaries and super delegates can essentially veto the results."

Hugh is preparing to write an oped for the *Star Ledger*. He'll include his experience of attending the National Conference of Independents, along with a description of what independents are currently doing in New Jersey to get organized.

Next Spokesperson Training: Tuesday, June 6th at 8:00 pm / EST. [Sign up here.](#)



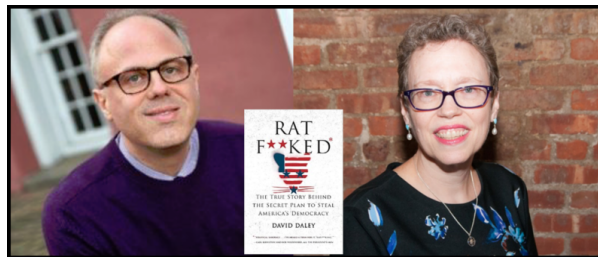
Join IndependentVoting.org President Jackie Salit
on our next national conference call.

Building Independent Community: How We Develop Our Power

SUNDAY, MAY 21
5:00 pm ET
(4:00 pm CT, 3:00 pm MT, 2:00 pm PT)

[Register for the call here](#)

Politics for the People Looks at Gerrymandering



Join the Politics for the People National Book Club as we read and discuss,

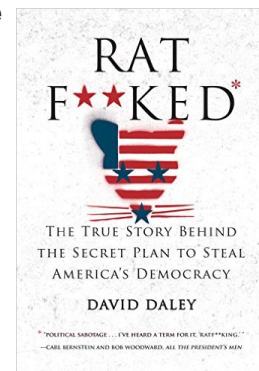
RAT FKED: THE TRUE STORY BEHIND THE SECRET PLAN TO STEAL AMERICA'S DEMOCRACY**

Check out the [blog](#) for a lively discussion of *RAT F**KED* and join Cathy Stewart on Sunday, **June 4th at 7 pm EST** for a conference call with author David Daley about his explosive expose of the Republican campaign (REDMAP) begun in 2010 to take control of redistricting processes across the country. Daley pulls back the curtain on how partisanship is eroding our democracy.

Here is a brief excerpt of a review of the book submitted by Dr. Jessie Fields:

"The gerrymander is yet another example of a political barrier that must be overcome. Voters are becoming more independent and less easily sorted by party identification. Independents say strongly 'do not put me in that box,' 43% of Americans now identify as independents, they are the hoped for bridge to a new and more inclusive American democracy."

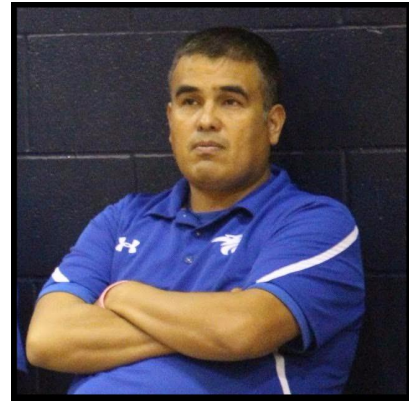
[Read her full review here.](#)



Profiles in Independence:
Jessie Rubio, Texas

I became a member of the Independent movement in 2016 after having followed the campaigning leading up the 2016 presidential election.

I have always been interested in history and politics and have been a Social Studies educator in Texas for over 10 years. I also served in my local community of Eldorado, Texas as a city council member and as mayor pro tem from 2014 to 2015. Currently, I work as an independent auto claims adjuster and have traveled the country the last three years and have grown to see the necessity of allowing "the people" to choose a candidate of their liking, regardless of their political affiliation.



John Adams said, " **There is nothing which I dread so much as a division of the republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader, and concerting measures in opposition to each other. This, in my humble apprehension, is to be dreaded as the greatest political evil under our Constitution .**"

Today, our political system is marred by political action committees, corporate businesses, and people with financial backing. I feel that the current political system does not encompass "We the People" and we need to enact change in our great country. I feel that this is only possible by enlightening the masses to exercise their rights. I am excited after being a part of the Independent Voting movement and seeing what the future holds.

In the News

- Florida Fair and Open Primaries' Steve Hough: "**OPINION: Florida Independents Want NonPartisan Elections**" (*Independent Voter Network*).
- Andrew Huston: "**Put Open Primaries Initiative Before the Voters**" (*Gainesville Sun*).
- Jordan Rosenfeld: "**The Disillusioned American Voter**" (*Dame*).
- Letter to the editor by Bob Croce of Mainers for Open Elections, "**Open Primaries to Independent Voters.**" (*Bangor Daily News*).
- Letter to the editor by Dory Parsons in Colorado, "**Lawmakers Try to Dilute What the People Passed**" (*Daily Camera*).

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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