



June 29, 2017

Independents at the People's Summit

Independent Voting organized a team to attend the 2017 People's Summit in Chicago to conduct one-on-one surveys with fellow conference goers.

"Senator Sanders put it bluntly last month when he said the Democratic Party will not succeed unless it attracts many, many millions of independents," said Gwen Mandell. "So we made it our business to speak to hundreds of grassroots activists about this and to see if they shared the concerns that independent voters have about the political process. They overwhelmingly do."



From L to R: Caitlyn Parsons (NY), Gwen Mandell (NY), Rick Robol (OH), Katie Connor (OH), Jeanette Morris (ID), Malcolm Hebb (NY), Jarell Corley (IL)

Read "[Rigged Elections Remain a Major Concern](#)" (*Independent Voter Network*).

Our team from New York, Illinois, Idaho and Ohio conducted a **20 question survey** among Summit attendees that probed whether concern over the process by which the 2016 presidential elections were conducted had faded, whether the American people could directly engage the issue of political power and if t he

Democratic Party could be a vehicle to effect empowerment for the American people, or if partisan interests would prevent it from doing so.

The survey yielded many great conversations about the pitfalls of the process and ways forward for empowerment and 155 activists who feel strongly that the Bernie movement has to connect with forces outside of the Democratic Party signed up to stay connected.



"The opportunity for Democrats to form a new majority coalition with independent voters has been on the table for many years," said Rick Robol, member of Independent Voting's National Election Reform Committee, Chair of Independent Ohio and leader of Ohio Veterans for Sanders. "Support from the grassroots and from independent voters for the Sanders campaign pushed this issue squarely on the table and we are excited to be engaged in conversation with the base

of the party about the bridge-building that needs to take place."

Here are some of the results of the survey:

- Over 60% of People's Summit survey takers identified as something other than Democrat or Republican.
- 88% were not satisfied with the choice of candidates in the general election.
- 89% thought the Democratic Party was "out of touch" with the concerns of most people in the U.S., only slightly less than the 95% who thought Donald Trump was similarly out of touch.
- When asked to react to the statement, "As a progressive, I see the Democratic Party as our only way forward," 69% of respondents disagreed.
- 97% agreed with the statement that the real struggle for America is not between Democrats and Republicans but between mainstream America and the ruling political elites.
- 95% felt that in order for the country to prosper and for new coalitions and a new culture of politics to be created, it was necessary to move beyond the traditional categories of "left, center, and right," divisions the political parties play off of.
- Over 75% wanted to see Sanders run for president in 2020 and 44% wanted to see him run as an independent. 74% of respondents said they wanted to see Sanders form a third party that would join forces with other independents from the left, center and right of the political spectrum.
- Over 60% of People's Summit survey takers identified as something other than Democrat or Republican, while a whopping 93% thought the Democratic Party should open its presidential primaries to independent voters in the 2020 election. In 2016, an estimated 26.3 million independents were excluded from voting in the presidential primaries because they lived in states with closed primaries.

"I found a shared sentiment around changing the way we elect our country's elected officials," said Jarell Corley. "Most participants were Bernie fans and are deeply disappointed with the DNC's rules and their blatant actions to ignore the will of their party's voters. There is defiantly room to come together and fight to change the political system despite ideological differences. The corporate media wants to distract us and

keep us separated. The American people are smarter than this and are ready for a new tone in the political arena."

New Jersey Independents Poll Voters on Primary Day

New Jersey was one of two states that held primaries for gubernatorial seats this political season. On June 6, Primary Day, a team from New Jersey Independent Voters took to the streets to conduct a statewide Independent Exit Poll to learn more about how primary voters feel about opening up the political process and whether they were aware their tax dollars are being used to pay for a primary that excludes 48% of New Jersey citizens.

Close to 740,000 New Jersey residents voted in the election, 13% of the total electorate. Believe it or not, the 13% turnout was touted as an "advance" over previous elections. Led by Sue Davies, founder of New Jersey Independent Voters, and joined by Mark Balsam, Ken Cerullo and Hugh Campbell, the team surveyed 61 voters in Jersey City, Union and Westwood.

Primary voters, who tend to be party regulars, are mostly loyal to their party, but despite this, 44% of those surveyed were not satisfied with how elections are run and 70% said that they were in favor of Open Primaries. Only 21% said they'd be disappointed if their candidate didn't win and only about half of the voters thought the Democratic Party was in touch with the concerns of the American people, even though the survey was conducted in largely Democratic Party strongholds.

Said Ken Cerullo, Esq. from Mahwah: *"At the polls I found a wonderful group of solid citizens exercising a very special right and duty to vote. I also found an overwhelming number of voters open to common sense political reforms to open primaries and limit gerrymandering. It makes you think we should simply circumvent the current two party political system and go directly to the people by referendum to get such proposals passed."*

Hugh Campbell, CPA, and a member of New Jersey Independent Voters, said in his Oped, "**Why New Jersey's Closed Primaries Led to Voter Apathy, Polarization and Gridlock**" (OpEd News): *"Closed primaries raise a 'Taxation without Representation' issue. Why do we, the taxpayers and voters, go on subsidizing the parties' closed primary elections? Why do we prop up partisan machines that so often give us unappetizing choices, leaving us with state and local governments prone to squelching of innovation, bad policy and gridlock?"*

"We have only just begun this conversation with the voters of New Jersey," said Sue Davies. "We are going to be continuing the conversation over the next several months on the way to election day."



Arizona Independent Fights for Direct Democracy



In March of this year, the Republican dominated Arizona state legislature passed HB2404. The bill, signed immediately by Governor Ducey, reshapes how citizen-initiative campaigns are conducted in Arizona. The bill bans paying petition circulators "per signature" and, therefore, greatly increases the costs of bringing an issue to the ballot.

"This law inadvertently impacts future efforts of independent voters to bring open primaries to Arizona voters," said Kim Wright, leader of Prescott Independent Voters and Independent Voters for Arizona, who is actively working with a nonpartisan group, Grassroots Citizens Concerned, circulating petitions to refer and repeal the law. She spent two days on the Prescott courthouse square gathering signatures during a

local music festival and will be outside the gates of "World's Oldest Rodeo" in Prescott over the 4th of July holiday weekend.

Utah Independents Lead Way Against Partisan School Boards

A coalition of public education advocates and independent voter activists filed suit in Utah's Third District State Court challenging a 2016 law passed by the state legislature that turned state school board elections from nonpartisan to partisan ones.

On Tuesday, Randy Miller of Utah League of Independent Voters and a plaintiff in the suit, spoke at the press conference announcing the suit at the State Capitol.

Reporters at a press conference asked if the lawsuit was an effort to keep partisan politics out of school administration and classrooms. Plaintiffs in the suit acknowledged it was. Miller added *"This is also about voters rights. Under a partisan election scheme for state school board offices, there are no nonpartisan races left in general election years. Unless a voter consents to join or align with one of the political parties, they will receive an abridged ballot which will now be entirely blank."*



Randy Miller speaks to reporters at the Utah State Capitol. Photo credit, Trent Nelson, Salt Lake Tribune

Check out coverage of the press conference in the [Salt Lake Tribune](#) and [Good4Utah.com](#).

Congressman Delaney Reintroduces Open Our Democracy Act

Good News! Congressman John K. Delaney (MD-6) has reintroduced the Open Our Democracy Act. The bill (now HR 2981) requires states to establish independent commissions for congressional redistricting; makes Election Day a holiday; and institutes open top-two primaries for House and Senate elections, allowing all voters to participate in primaries. The bill is co-sponsored by Rep. John Yarmuth, [D-KY], Rep. Derek Kilmer [D-WA], Rep. Jared Polis [D-CO] and Rep. Scott Peters [D-CA].

"The Open Our Democracy Act has a very simple goal - to make the House of Representatives truly representative," said Congressman Delaney. *"Gerrymandering, low voter turnout and a broken primary system have warped Congress and encouraged extreme partisanship that is hurting the country and blocking smart legislation. The American people are deeply frustrated because they can see that Congress just doesn't reflect the country's priorities. This is a comprehensive reform bill to ensure that the districts are fair and that all voters are heard."*



Since the bill was first introduced in 2015, thousands of independents and reform-minded Americans have signed on to a letter in support of the bill. **Please sign and share the letter today.**

Profiles in Independence

Caitlyn Parsons, Charlton, New York

I've lived in the small, rural community of Charlton, New York for 16 years. As a student, I've attended two SUNY colleges. After taking a break, I'll be working to obtain degrees in Political Science and Business. I currently work for a family-owned community bank here in upstate New York. Outside of work and school, I am focused on progressive political action, personal growth and development, and networking with/building connections to those who also feel passionate about social, political and economic reform.

My experience of being an independent started during a time when many others began to feel as though they were being misrepresented by the Democratic Party. I followed the Bernie Sanders campaign and felt shut out by mainstream media and my party. I used to feel that there were only two relevant political parties you could be affiliated with, and that one major party was intrinsically "better" than the other. I have been a registered Democrat for five years. I no longer feel that the Democratic Party represents me.

I am finding that there are a vast number of individuals who feel strongly about creating a better system of relating to one another, who want to talk openly about strategies for moving forward, and who want to actively participate in growing our movement by networking through inclusive events or social media platforms. Being a part of the independent movement has given me a newfound sense of belonging, passion, and inclusivity, and I look forward to continually learning how to spread our message to the masses.



In the News

- Read Dr. Jessie Fields' commentary, "[The Supreme Court and Voting Rights](#)" Chicago (*Chicago Defender*)
- "[New Survey: 6 in 10 Democrats Consider Third Party Option](#)," by Thomas Hawk (*Independent Voter Network*)
- "[New York Votes Act Doesn't Go Far Enough](#)," by Jeremy Kaplan (*Gotham Gazette*)

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

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