November 2, 2017

The Elephant and The Donkey in the Room: The Future of Political Parties

On October 16, Independent Voting President Jackie Salit participated in a panel discussion sponsored by the American Public Square on the future of political parties. The event was livestreamed by the *Kansas City Star* and National World War I Museum, and hosts took questions from both the overflow crowd of 500+ and the livestream audience. On the panel with Salit were former chair of the DNC Howard Dean, Republican Party Political Strategist Danny Diaz, University of Missouri at Kansas City (UMKC) Chair of Political Science Beth Vonnahme, and former independent candidate for U.S. Senate Greg Orman.

Watch the video (Note: panel intro starts at 4:30:00 into video)

The event was moderated by UMKC Professor and former U.S. Ambassador to Portugal A llan Katz.

During the discussion, Ho ward Dean expressed support for Top Two open primaries. Greg Orman called partisanship "the new prejudice" and Jackie Salit asked whether the creation of an "all independents" primary in the 2020 election was possible.

Watch the video

Prior to the event, Jackie Salit and Greg Orman had guest-opinion pieces published in *The Kansas City Star.*

Read " **Independent Voters are Rewriting the Political Playbook**" by Jackie Salit.

Read " **Americans are Tired of the Professional Wrestling in Politics**," by Greg Orman.

New Yorkers Say: It Must Be Constitutional

On November 7, voters in New York State have an opportunity to vote on whether there should be a state Constitutional Convention (a "Con Con"). This question automatically appears on the

ballot every 20 years. The vote for a Constitutional Convention would allow New Yorkers to make positive reforms to our democracy. **The New York City Independence Clubs**, New York affiliate of Independent Voting, is part of a coalition which includes the League of Women Voters; **The People's Convention** established by Bill Samuels; The **Committee for a Constitutional Convention** founded by Evan Davis; Forward March; The New Kings Democrats; The New York State Bar Association; and The Citizens Union.

Activists have been pounding the pavements, opening up dialogues on social media, writing letters to the editor and talking to independents across New York State on the phones about this unique opportunity. Campaign activists are faced with an uphill battle. For one thing, the measure is located on the back of the ballot in an underwhelming election year. The partisan opposition has spent seven figures on an anti-Con Con ad buy and is working overtime to scare the voters.

Cathy Stewart, Vice President for National Development at Independent Voting, and coordinator for the Yes Vote efforts for the New York City Independence Clubs, commented: " *The main rationale for voting yes for the Constitutional Convention is to enact reforms that our state legislature won't -- because it is so dysfunctional and infected with partisan corruption. New York State ranks 45th in the country in voter participation. Our voting laws are some of the worst in the country. Our constitution needs to guarantee full voting rights to all New Yorkers without having to join a political party. The Constitutional Convention is important in so many ways, not least of which is because it's a chance to remind the politicians that the people have the right to rule directly on their own behalf. Albany is so caught up in their own power plays, they forget who they work for."*

Said Michael Hardy, Esq., Civil Rights Attorney and counsel for the National Action Network, " *Creating a Constitutional Convention is no guarantee. It's an opportunity. A n opportunity to change the dynamics of how our state functions. We can't wait for the state legislature. It's time to exercise our right to come together and create some new solutions to old problems. Progress is made by those who seize the opportunity to make change.* "

In an editorial in *The Harlem News*, "**Don't Be Conned: Vote Yes for a Constitutional Convention**," Dr. Lenora Fulani urges voters: "*Don't be conned by the Anti-Con Con arguments. The issue is power. The issue is poverty. The issue is our people being able to self-govern. Vote yes on Prop #1."*

Check out what activists are saying in their Letters to the Editor.

Sarah Lyons in the *Staten Island Advance*
"With few competitive elections on the ballot, voters have little incentive to go to the polls. Politicians don't mind. Noncompetitive elections help maintain the status quo."

Caitlyn Parsons in the *Adirondack Daily Enterprise* .
"As an independent voter, I take the issue of closed primaries in New York very seriously. These are elections that are controlled by the parties yet paid for by the taxpayers."

Dr. Jessie Fields in *Black Star News*
"We the people must open up the political process and bring new meaning to our elections. ..... The politicians will never reform the closed process that maintains the status quo and their control."

Debbie Ross in the *Hudson Valley Journal News*
"I'll trust my fellow New Yorkers over professional politicians every day of the week."

Take a look at this popular video created by **Forward March NY**.

A number of newspaper editorial boards have endorsed a Yes vote, including **The Rochester Democrat and Chronicle**, ***The Syracuse Post Standard***, ***The Buffalo News*** and ***Albany Times Union*** . Here's what *The Buffalo News* had to say: "*The forces lined up against it are formidable. To be sure, there is room for mischief that could make matters worse in a state government marked by corruption, but the fact is that this is New Yorkers' best chance to make a better state. Let's not be timid. Call the convention, then work to ensure that our descendants will thank us for it*."

Small Bites at the Apple, Big Issues on the Table: A Post-Election Conference Call

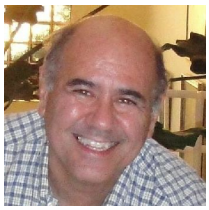
Activists are sending in their questions for Independent Voting's next national conference call, scheduled for **Sunday, November 12 at 5pm ET**. The call is titled "Small Bites at the Apple, Big Issues on the Table: A Post-Election Conference Call." Here's a sample of the questions:

Andrea Christelle, Sedona Arizona:

What is the best way for independents to focus on structural electoral reform?

Ashley Bruno, Hollywood, Florida:

How can we truly impact fair voting nationally when the system varies state by state?



Joe Ginorio Viscal, Frederick Maryland:

What other like-minded organizations are we actively collaborating with? How can we effectively team up with them to focus on our movement?

Steve Bouikidis, activist in Independent Pennsylvanians asks:
What do you think is the optimal effort to devote our time on as independents?

Sign up for the November 12 call here.

If you have a question, send it to national@independentvoting.org by Wednesday, November 8 or submit it when you register for the call.

MA Indies Hold House Party: Pilot New Organizing Tool

Independent Voting's Director of Communications, Sarah Lyons, has created a tool that can help you have new kinds of political conversations. **It's a survey your friends, family, neighbors, colleagues - any independent-thinker in your network - can take with your guidance at a meeting or house party** .

Just let them know the topic is politics and the 2020 election and that you are stepping out to field test a nonpartisan grassroots survey developed by an organization you are affiliated with -- Independent Voting, the country's largest strategy center and organizing hub for independent and independent-minded Americans.

"*Most of all*," said Sarah, "*Let your contacts know you want to help create new kinds of political conversations in this country and you want them to be a part of your efforts.*"

The Massachusetts Coalition of Independent Voters jumpstarted the effort by holding the first house party of the season. Evelyn Dougherty , Jill Klowden, Lowell Ward, Diane Whitehouse, Cheryl Broderick and Darby Smotherhal gathered at the home of Sarah Bayer in Cambridge.

Said Dougherty, one of the hosts of the party and founder of MCOIV: "*In this fast-paced world of sound bites, fake news and politicians pointing their fingers at each other, it was fun and refreshing to sit down with fellow citizens, neighbors, and friends and have political conversation over food. Our conversation was structured with a survey developed by Independent Voting, and my favorite part was the open-ended questions where 'ya just got to say what ya think'!"*

As the survey outlines in its introduction, the purpose of the survey is to help us gauge interest in a movement to: 1) c hange the culture of politics; 2) develop a perspective on what people might want to see develop for 2020; and 3) better understand what Americans are thinking about the current political reform movement and what kinds of reform strategies they favor. Results of the survey will be used to help develop the national conversation about 2020.

Dougherty added: "The survey is a great tool to help create a new kind of political conversation. Several people who participated want to hold their own house parties as a result."

If you are interested in holding a gathering or learning more about how to use the survey, contact Sarah Lyons at slyons@cuip.org.

News Flash - Late Breaking News in Florida

This just in from Steve Hough, director of Florida Fair and Open Primaries. Hough and activists around the state have been lobbying the Florida Constitution Revision Commission (CRC) to include nonpartisan primaries in their menu of amendment proposals for the 2018 ballot, testifying at hearings and waging a full-blown letter campaign.

Commissioner Schifino submitted **this proposal** , on the final day to file, which would allow independents - called NPAs in Florida (No Party Affiliation) to choose a partisan ballot in a primary election.

While Hough and proponents are advocating for Top Two nonpartisan primaries, a system which would allow for all candidates to be on the same ballot and all voters to vote regardless of party affiliation (as opposed to a partisan primary which allows independents entry), the introduction of the proposal is a victory for Floridians.

Said Hough: "*This is huge. This development far exceeds what we expected to achieve by this point. The CRC is feeling the heat, and we intend to turn it up. Due to the efforts of thousands of ordinary citizens, with virtually no funding, we are moving the needle*."

The proposal now needs to get nine additional votes from other commissioners in order to proceed.

Politics for the People Announces New Reading Selection

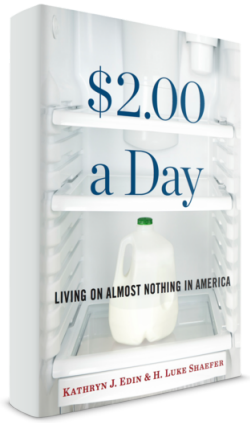
$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America is the next reading selection for the **Politics for the People Book club**, which will culminate with a discussion on December 3rd with one of the book's authors, Kathryn Edin. The selection was chosen by P4P members in a poll conducted by Cathy Stewart on the P4P blog.

From the book's website:

*After two decades of groundbreaking research on American poverty, Kathryn Edin noticed something she hadn't seen before - households surviving on virtually no cash income. Edin, whose deep examination of her subjects' lives has "turned sociology upside down" (*Mother Jones *), teamed with Luke Shaefer, an expert on surveys of the incomes of the poor. The two made a surprising discovery: the number of American families living on $2.00 per person per day, has skyrocketed to one and a half million American households, including about three million children.*

But the fuller story remained to be told. Where do these families live? How did they get so desperately poor? What do they do to survive? In search of answers, Edin and Shaefer traveled across the country to speak with families living in this extreme poverty. Through the book's many compelling profiles, moving and startling answers emerge: a low-wage labor market that

increasingly fails to deliver a living wage, and a growing but hidden landscape of survival strategies among America's extreme poor. Not just a powerful exposé, $2.00 a Day *delivers new evidence and new ideas to our national debate on income inequality.*



You can get your copy at Amazon, your local bookseller or the library.

The book is riveting and paints the disturbing picture of growing poverty in American post the "welfare reforms" that started in the Clinton era.

This past weekend, Gabrielle Kurlander, the President and CEO of the All Stars Project, hosted a President's Roundtable on " **New Conversations on Poverty**," featuring Kathryn Edin.

Join the conversation online. And join us when we welcome Kathryn Edin to our Politics for the People Conference Call Sunday, December 3rd at 7 pm EST.

Profiles in Independence

Anthony Johnson, Honolulu, Hawaii

From Anthony Johnson, new member of Independent Voting and founder of the brand new group for independents in Hawaii, Coalition for Hawaii Independent Voters (CHIV):

The path to becoming an independent was an easy one after this administration. For someone who grew up as a Republican, I became appalled at the fact that my former party could even support someone like Donald Trump. At one point I respected Mr. Trump, even reading books like *How to be a Champion* and modeling certain successful habits of business owners. I believe in small government and believe in a number of things that essentially would have labeled me a "Republican." But over time I realized how some of the thoughts and beliefs of my party aren't what is best for the majority of people. Saving old ideals and maintaining the status quo became priority instead of doing what's right. Bi-partisan disagreements and politicians with self-serving agendas are the new norm.

When asking friends and colleagues if they voted or if they feel like their vote matters, the conversation turns bleak. I eventually found myself agreeing with topics from both parties, understanding that to truly meet in the middle you need to separate party from agenda, which unfortunately has yet to happen in Washington. In my own opinion, our political system has been pumped full of so much money it makes it hard to determine if a party or even a candidate has a true agenda. I hope to simply be an agent of change bringing an independent non-partisan system to Hawaii.

If you are in Hawaii and would like to join CHIV, contact Anthony at **tonej20@gmail.com**.

In the News

Read Independent Voting Counsel Harry Kresky's opinion piece, " **Political Party Control is Protected By Courts, Funded By Your Taxes**." (*IVN*)

Dr. Jessie Fields penned: " **Open Primaries and Overcoming the Racial Divide the Parties Prop Up**." (*Gotham Gazette*)

" **Gary Johnson: Allowing GOP and Dems to Control Presidential Debates is Un-American**." (*IVN*)

Attorney and Independent Voter Project's Chad Peace discusses Level the Playing Field's Challenge to the FEC regarding the 15% rule for candidates to qualify for the Presidential Debates on "**Politically Speaking**." (*NBC-San Diego*)

Steve Hough writes in " **Florida Voters Demand Open Primaries**": "The 2016 primary elections in Florida were a watershed moment for our state. Despite spending some $13 million of their hard earned tax dollars to fund primaries, 3.4 million independent voters were shut out of one of the most important elections in a generation. Millions more voters of all stripes were justifiably appalled by their exclusion." (*Tallahassee Democrat)*

Also in Florida, this letter by activist Jacqueline Bowen, " **Closed Primaries: Taxation without Representation**." (*The St. Augustine Record*)

Are you a member of Independent Voting?

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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