



November 30, 2017

Small Bites At the Apple, Big Issues on the Table: A Post Election Call

Following an Election Day where Democrats and Republicans engaged in their usual one-upmanship over which party emerged triumphant, Independent Voting President Jackie Salit responded to questions sent in by independents around the country. Salit offered some new ways to view the Election Day results and addressed how independents could wage a campaign to clarify and challenge the rules of engagement for our participation in upcoming elections. The call was co-hosted by Independents for Arizona activist Al Bell and Director of National Outreach Gwen Mandell.



"The independent movement is the movement of outsiders in American politics. Our legal status places us outside, our resistance to the authoritarianism of the establishment places us outside. The fact that we're looking to create alternatives to what currently exists places us outside. We are the outsiders. Of course, it's such a strange moment in the country's history and development that the largest group of Americans in terms of political identity are outsiders, and yet the inside has such a hold on the way the political process operates." - Jackie Salit on November 12 conference call

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

Election results and their significance.

Proposed "Rules of Engagement" campaign for independents in upcoming elections.

Arizona: seeking voting rights for independents.

2020: The debates, independent candidates and creating coalitions.

New tools to measure growth of the independent movement.

The State of American Democracy

A broad array of educators, writers and leading thinkers about democracy and its challenges kicked off a series of five conferences starting at Oberlin College in Ohio last week. The conference will be held in different cities "to diagnose and fix what is broken."

Independent Voting's President Jackie Salit and Vice President for National Development Cathy Stewart participated in the Oberlin event, entitled "**The State of American Democracy: A National Conversation.**"

"The reason for this Conference and those to follow in Denver, Los Angeles, and Atlanta is the rising danger that we are coming unmoored from our history, the Constitution, the better angels of our nature, our highest values, and our collective solidarity as Humans and Americans," -- David Orr, Paul Sears Distinguished Professor of Environmental Studies at Oberlin College and an organizer of the event.



In a session led by Diane Ravitch, an advocate of public education, Salit raised the need for the progressive movement to do more than defend institutions that are failing. She said "*We need to take risks in building new coalitions.*"

Spokesperson Training: Developing Chops for the "Rules of Engagement" Campaign

Independent Voting's free upcoming Spokesperson Training will focus on the "Rules of Engagement" campaign which seeks to press major party leaders and elected officials in every state for the full inclusion of independents in the 2018 and 2020 elections.

Led by Sarah Lyons, Director of Communications, **the call takes place tonight @ 8:30pm ET Thursday, November 30.**

"Independent voters are going to engage party leaders and elected officials nationally on the question of what rules will apply to our participation in the upcoming elections," said Lyons. "We're going to probe, pry and push for clear public statements on this critical issue. We're going to be the burr under the saddle for all those who want to pretend independents don't exist and control the election process for their own self-interest."

To join the call, call 641-715-3605, pass code 767775#.

And mark your calendar - Monday, January 15 - to join a Q & A call on "The Nuts and Bolts of Independent Organizing." Stay tuned!



Three Indisputable Reasons the Two-Party System is Failing America

In the November edition of her column for the *Independent Voter Network*, Jackie Salit takes on three failing institutions in American political life:

"In a nutshell, here's how I would describe the state of American politics. The regulators are unqualified to regulate. The parties are unqualified to govern. The political scientists are unqualified to call themselves scientists. A sorry state of affairs."



[Read the column here.](#)

New Jersey Independents Election Day Poll

Amid a highly expected victory by Democrat Phil Murphy in one of the two gubernatorial contests held around the country, activists in **New Jersey Independent Voters** (NJIV) took to the streets of Jersey City and Ridgewood to poll New Jersey voters and get their thoughts about the election process. Geoff Daly, Tonia Hobbs, and Mark Balsam joined NJIV founder Sue Davies in Jersey City and Ridgewood (Bergen County), where they polled 80 people in the pouring rain.



Balsam, Davies and Hobbs



Geoff Daly

Said Davies: " *While the media is touting a Blue Wave, it's more clear that there is a strong wave of dissatisfaction with the electoral process. 43% of New Jersey voters are independents. Our recent polling prior to and on Election Day shows that 92% want open primaries in NJ and 42% are unhappy with the choice of candidates. 76% of our citizens want an end to gerrymandering and more competitive elections.*"

Daley commented: " *This was the first time that I did this kind of polling with a questionnaire. It was an eye-opening experience, learning how it works to speak with people and finding out what they thought. Ultimately, it was a very positive experience and got me excited about continuing to do this as one way to build the independent movement.*"

Florida Update

Led by Steve Hough of Florida Fair and Open Primaries, independents in Florida have been waging a year-long campaign testifying, petitioning, writing letters and lobbying the Florida Constitution Revision Commission (a commission mandated to convene every 20 years) to consider a proposal to allow Florida voters to vote on top two non-partisan elections. The effort resulted in one of the commissioners introducing a proposal which would allow NPAs (independents in Florida) to vote in partisan primaries. "Many of us have been emailing and sending postcards to committee members and members of the full commission in support of our top-two proposal," said Hough, "but we have shifted our short-term strategy to support Commissioner Schifino's proposal for a partisan primary open to NPAs. Closing the write-in loophole (an arcane measure



Steve Hough testifying before the Ethics and Elections Committee

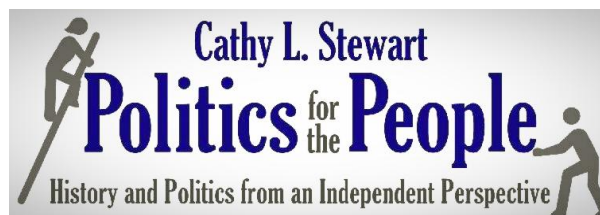
which allowed parties to close primaries by adding a write-in candidate to a ballot where there was no candidate running from the opposition party) was the easy way out for this commission, but Commissioner Schifino has gone above and beyond what any of us expected. This is a huge development."

Andrew Huston (an activist in the campaign) was able to arrange a conference call with Commissioner Schifino attended by Andrew, Tim Canova (Progress for All), Jeremy Gruber of Open Primaries, and Hough with Commissioner Schifino who also had Commissioner Coxe, Chair of the Ethics and Elections Committee, join the call. Coxe invited Hough and Gruber to present to other members of the Ethics and Elections Committee at their November 29 meeting in Tallahassee.

In his presentation to the committee, Hough said that although his organization still believes a top-two open primary is the superior method, he supports Commissioner Schifino's proposal.

Said Hough: "Even though polling indicates Floridians would support a top-two primary, if given the chance, the Commission does not appear ready to go to bat for it. They remain uncomfortable going up against the partisan elements that control state politics. However, through our efforts to push for a top-two primary, we have moved the needle, and we will continue applying pressure on the committee with hopes that they will forward Schifino's proposal to the full commission for consideration."

Politics for the People Reader's Forum: What Members Have to Say about "\$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America," by Kathryn Edin and H. Luke Schaefer



Rakeen Dow (*Rakeen Dow is an activist with the All Stars Project's Committee for Independent Community Action, founded by Dr. Lenora Fulani. Rakeen is also a co-founder of The Live Poet's Society NYC performance ensemble.*) *\$2.00 a Day* is a journey, a dive of a thousand leagues into the abyss of poverty, a candid look at being poor in America. In addition to giving a graphic illustration of what it is to be at the bottom of the barrel of poverty, it shines an intense light on our political system and how it facilitates the opportunities for the powers that be to be able to implement policies that are oppressive and create further damage to the members of society who are most in need of the government's assistance.



Steve Hough (*Steve Hough is a lifelong independent and became an activist for political reform after retiring as an accountant. He is the Director of Florida Fair and Open Primaries.*) The notion of equal opportunity is a myth. It leads many to believe that people in dire financial circumstances find themselves in such situations as the result of personal failings. In some cases, that may be true but, in most, it is far from the truth. While the impact of my personal experiences ... shades my opinions to this day, if today's income gaps are not due to individuals' personal failings or unmitigated greed, what else could it be?

Lou Hinman (*Lou Hinman lives in New York City and is an activist with Independent Voting and the New York City Independence Clubs.*) I love Kathryn Edin's book *\$2.00 a Day* ... It shows how the work of academics are used by politicians. It also gives us a vivid,



unforgettable narrative that exposes the human consequences of these reforms. Poverty has long been hidden in America. But *\$2.00 a Day* shows us how poverty has become deeper and even more hidden.

Cindy Alvarez, Student, Bronx Community College (Cindy is a student of Dr. Rafael Mendez, Associate Professor and Coordinator of Psychology at Bronx Community College. Dr. Mendez invited his students to share their thoughts about the book and join the conversation on December 3.) The title of the

book is very catchy and makes you wonder who can live with just 2 dollars a day, but after reading chapter 3, I was informed that people in America live on that amount. Housing instability is unjust and unfair but still seems not to get attention from our government, which is disheartening and sheds light on the greedy 1% of people who are millionaires in America.

This makes me think about how gentrification is affecting New York City right now in 2017, how people of color are getting kicked out of their homes because of the raising of rent and landlords doing things purposely to get people out.



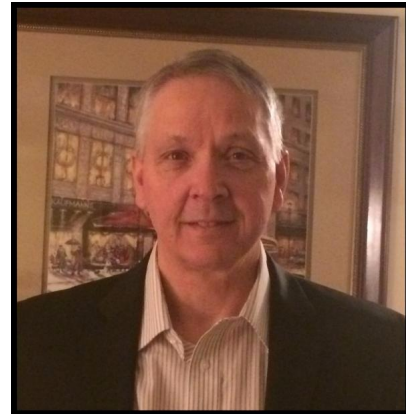
Call in and Join the Conversation with author Kathryn Edin, Sunday, December 3 at 7pm EST and check out the *Politics For the People* blog. Call: 641-715-3605 and passcode 767775#.

Profiles in Independence

William Albert, Pittsburgh, PA

Growing up in a small multicultural city in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, I feel blessed to have lived and grown up in such a diverse community. I witnessed both the oppression and division caused by prejudice and hurtful stereotyping as well as the hope and inspiration that came from many of my fellow Pittsburghers who unconditionally accepted and befriended each other as brothers and sisters of the same human race.

As an independent thinker, through the years I've naturally voted independently. Like so many independents I realize there was some truth on both sides of the political spectrum, but the full truth and answers can only be found somewhere in the middle. Through the stubborn and self-serving partisanship of those in power we see proof that they care more about keeping their own jobs than doing what's best for the people.



I'm convinced the answer can only come through the collective power of the people themselves. We have to stop blaming leadership and start putting the responsibility where it truly belongs, on ourselves. We can put our best and brightest sons and daughters into seats of power and leadership, and they could do a perfect job, but if we the people are not willing to humble ourselves and make the sacrifices needed to bring about social change, all the other changes will be impossible. There is a saying that has offered us thousands of years of wisdom. "Greater is he who can conquer himself than who can conquer the city." We can't and don't have to do it alone.

If you are in the Pittsburgh area, you can contact William at wilalb31@verizon.net.

In the News

Christopher Shays and Martin Meehan, former members of Congress who cosponsored the House version of the McCain/Feingold Act, wrote in " **Two Former Congressmen Explain Why the Federal Elections Commission Can't be Trusted**," "Don't count on the FEC to abide by its legal obligations. It's a highly partisan political institution, with commissioners beholden to their parties and disrespectful of the courts." (*Daily Beast*)

Read "**Why Would Anyone Be a Member of Either Political Party?**" , by Bradley Tusk, political strategist and campaign manager for Mike Bloomberg's 2009 mayoral re-election bid. (*The Observer*)

Jonah Goldberg, in "**Could it Be that Both Parties Are Doomed**," says: "This much is certain. Neither of them is in Good Health."(National Review)

Independent Voting Vice President for National Development Cathy Stewart appeared on "**Effective Radio**" advocating for the voters of New York to support Proposition #1 on the Election Day ballot which would have allowed the voters to hold a Constitutional Convention. Pictured below, Stewart stands on the steps of City Hall with some of the women leading the campaign for a Constitutional Convention (along with Evan Davis, the founder of the Committee for a Constitutional Convention).



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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Give us a call today!