



independentvoting.org

The Hub

January 22, 2018

Academics and Activists Probe Open Primaries Together

Fresh from the publication of their report on the independent voter phenomenon and its crucial impact on the American political landscape ("**Gamechangers**"), Independent Voting, Arizona State University's Morrison Institute for Public Policy, and University of Southern California's Schwarzenegger Institute for State and Global Policy, teamed up last month to co-host a national policy forum on open primaries.

The **Open Primaries National Forum and Research Roundtable** took place on December 15, 2017 and brought together leading academic researchers and political front-liners to review current research, scholarship and on-the-ground experience through an interdisciplinary day of analysis and discussion.



The Consortium (L to R): Mebus Behrle, Conyers Davis, Cathy Stewart, Christian Grose, Jackie Salit, Andrea Whitsett, Tom Reilly, Joe Garcia.

The forum took place in Phoenix on the campus of ASU and was underwritten by the Open Primaries Education Fund which asked the consortium (pictured above) to produce the unique day-long gathering.

"Typically academics and activists don't have an opportunity to sit in a room together and impact on each other's work and perspectives," said Jackie Salit, President of Independent Voting. "But with so much public concern about how dysfunctional and partisan the political system has become, this was a meeting of relevance and urgency. Credit goes to the underwriters who asked our Consortium to create this event. And to the participants for opening their hearts and minds to one another to tackle these issues in new ways."

The PowerPoint slides of a number of the presentations can be viewed [here](#).



Conference participants included (back row L to R): Thad Kousser, Jason Altmire, Antoine Yoshinaka, Michael Hardy, Harry Kresky, Conyers Davis, Jessie Fields, Jeremy Gruber, Eric McGhee, Tom Reilly, Sara Sadhwani. (middle row L to R): Art Babbott, Sarah Lyons, Mebus Behrle, Jackie Salit, Carl Roell, Nancy Shank, Julie Knutson, John Opdycke, Christian Grose, Cathy Stewart, Charles Bullock, Jonathan Nagler. (seated L to R): Patrick Christmas, Omar Ali, John Andrew Sinclair, Andrea Whitsett, Betsy Sinclair, Joe Garcia. Not pictured: Jonathan Koppell, Danny Ortega. Bios of participants available [here](#).

The high level of engagement between academics and practitioners, along with the spirit of collaboration rather than competition or reluctance to share information and the rigor of discussions, proved energizing to the participants who came away interested in taking the next steps.

The consortium of Morrison Institute (ASU), Schwarzenegger Institute (USC) and Independent Voting will continue to foster expanded conversations on the growing independent voter sector, its impact on the political culture and the overall state of American democracy as well as developing further research questions on the open

primaries issue.

New Gallup Poll Released: Numbers of Independents on the Rise

The **latest Gallup poll**, released January 8, 2018, revealed that the percentage of voters who identify as independent is 42%, up from 39% in 2016. The three-point rise is the largest for any year after a presidential election.

As usual, when it comes to independent voters, the declaration is not without controversy.



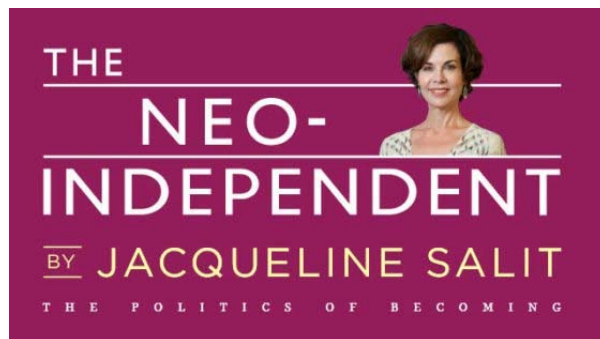
Within hours of the Gallup press release, Prof. Larry Sabato, the Director of the University of Virginia Center for Politics slammed Gallup in a tweet, "*Sorry Gallup, 42% of Americans are NOT independents. Most of the 42% are party leaners or hidden partisans and they vote for the party at the same rate as open partisans do.*"

"How is it that Sabato and the political pundits and political scientists get to tell Americans who we are and aren't?" asked Cathy Stewart, Independent Voting's Vice President for National Development on a call on the "Nuts and Bolts of Independent Grassroots Organizing" with 35 independent leaders from 23 states. "The whole leaner notion is completely dishonest, since what else would we vote for other than a Democrat or a Republican, since that is pretty much the only choices we are offered. What is staggering is that, except for Independent Voting (and we spend every day asking this question) and the Morrison Institute at ASU, no one ever asks independents WHY we are independents, what do we mean by that label. ...This issue is the elephant in the room in American politics today. The parties want our votes, but they do not want to respect us as a genuine new force in politics that is raising fundamental issues about how our democracy is structured and on whose behalf it works."

Dear Oprah: If You Run for President, Run as an Independent!

Jackie's Salit's December column for the *Independent Voter Network* capitalizes on the "Oprah for President" hoopla by urging as a first step a series of outreach calls to movers and shakers in the independent movement.

"Given how corrupt and self-serving the parties have become, and given how much power you have to move people to self-reflection and developmental action, I hope you are considering an independent option if you are at all serious about a run," writes Salit. "Along these lines, here is a list of calls I would urge you to make, to give you a more rounded and nonpartisan view of the possibilities."



[Read the column here.](#)

Gerrymandering: Two Bullies vs. the Voters

Independent Voting's Counsel Harry Kresky takes an independent look at gerrymandering in his latest op-ed for the *Independent Voter Network* writing, "We can't allow the parties to make us think as though their rights are the same as ours."

Read his op-ed "[Gerrymandering: Two Bullies vs. the Voters.](#)"



Political Reform Efforts Focus on Legislature in New England - Indies and Reformers to Mobilize

Tiani Coleman, President of New Hampshire Independent Voters (NHIV), has recently taken the lead in getting independent voters in the region and throughout the country engaged with the **Committee for Ranked Choice Voting in Maine**. The Committee aims to pass a "**People's Veto**," allowing a recent referendum by the voters of Maine to take effect, overriding a delay and repeal attempt by the Maine legislature. Coleman and Independent Voting President Jackie Salit reached out to independents in a series of emails, and Independents in Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, New York, and other states have jumped on board to make calls for the campaign. The February 5th deadline for petition gathering is fast approaching, but the drive is making good progress in reaching its goal. A victory in Maine will be a victory for democracy throughout the country.



Coleman has also been instrumental in getting a bill for ranked-choice voting introduced in the New Hampshire legislature, working closely with Representative Ellen Read, the sponsor of **HB 1540** and one of the founding members of NHIV. This bill has given independent voters in New Hampshire a reform they can support and get excited about, one which coincides with NHIV's mission of giving a greater, more meaningful voice to all voters in the electoral process. "This is generating momentum among independents, third parties, thoughtful mainstream party members and long-time ranked-choice voting supporters in a coalition movement that symbolizes the heart of what NHIV is about," says Tiani Coleman, who is currently leading that coalition. "We've had independent voters who have for a long time been supportive of our reforms and our movement, but who have not been actively engaged, as well as new independent voters coming out of the woodwork, to start writing letters, contacting their legislators, coming to meetings and taking an active role. Good things are yet to come in New Hampshire." There will be a hearing on the bill before the New Hampshire House Election Law Committee on January 23 at 1:00 p.m. in Concord.

Towards an Independent Citizen Redistricting Commission in Michigan

Voters Not Politicians is a ballot-question committee working to bring the power back to the people of Michigan through a citizen-led ballot initiative. Voters Not Politician's vision is to establish an Independent Citizen Redistricting Commission through a state constitutional amendment that would transfer the authority to draw congressional and state legislative district lines from the Legislature to an



independent commission.

Here's a report from Phil Leech, Spring Lake, Michigan activist with Voters Not Politicians and Chair of Michigan Independent Voters:

"The Voters not Politicians petition drive was successful beyond our wildest expectations. An all-VOLUNTEER group of dedicated and enthusiastic citizens collected over 440,000 signatures in just 110 days. (The State requires 315,654 VALID signatures and 180 days to submit.) This is a great giant first step, and given the current disenchantment with both major political parties, I believe we have an opportunity to succeed, even though we know there will be a strong opposition force funded by serious \$\$\$\$. The campaign is entering the next phases, which will include building up volunteer teams of canvassers, phone bankers, data assistants, field team captains, and regional directors. There are thousands of volunteers already signed up and the campaign has received national attention, including a mention by Rachel Maddow.

"I believe we independents can play an important role in determining the success of this effort for the citizen-voters of Michigan and hope you'll become actively involved in this most important effort. **Please contact me at info@michiganindependentvoters.org** "

Utah Victory: Court Rules Against Partisanship in School Board Elections

Randy Miller of the Utah League of Independent Voters is a plaintiff in a case to stop the state of Utah from creating partisan state school board elections. Here's his account on their recent victory:

"The group of plaintiffs prevailed against the state of Utah in December over a case challenging partisan primary voting laws for state school board elections. In fact, the District Court didn't just rule in our favor, they rejected both of the defendants' arguments.

Argument #1

Partisan school board elections do not impose a partisan test which should be prohibited by the state constitution since independents and members of any political party may run.

"There is perhaps no more partisan a test than a contested, partisan election" wrote Judge Andrew Stone.

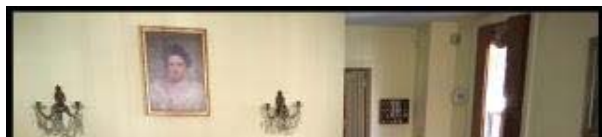
Argument #2

Because school board members are elected, they don't meet the definition of state employees. "The court said employment means what it commonly means; that they are in fact employees of the state" said David Irvine, attorney for the plaintiffs.

Due to the timing of the ruling and the injunction imposed by the court, 2018 state school board elections will likely be non-partisan this year. But never fear, the state has indicated they will appeal and the legislature is in session soon. So the fight continues."

Pennsylvania Roundup

Independent Pennsylvanians were invited to speak about independent voters at the **Arlen Spector Roxboro House Roundtable**, an interdisciplinary discussion that takes place



at Philadelphia University and provides an opportunity for students, faculty and staff to explore and consider a variety of themes in the cozy, historical Roxboro House living room. Nichele Richardson, Jenn Bullock and Steve Bouikidis represented Independent Pennsylvanians and spoke about their work to gain recognition for independents and to bring the voice of Pennsylvania independents into the mainstream. Commented Jenn Bullock, Director of Independent Pennsylvanians, "*Having an election system that is fair to all people, is not a spectator sport. We have to find ways to participate in our political system where everyone can have a voice.*" [Listen to the full roundtable discussion here.](#)

Meanwhile, here is a [letter to the editor](#) that Independent Pennsylvanian leader Jim Lundberg got published in *The Intelligencer*, a local newspaper.

Independent Pennsylvanians has been conducting **statewide conference calls** to discuss plans and next steps for shaping their Rules of Engagement Campaign in Pennsylvania to pressure party officials and elected leaders to clarify how they're going to relate to independent voters in the 2020 presidential election. Pennsylvania is a closed primary state that bars close to a million independents from participating in the primaries.

For more information about the Rules of Engagement or Independent Pennsylvanians, contact Jenn Bullock at Independentpa@gmail.com.

Update on Fight for Open Primaries in Florida

A Timely Update from Steve Hough, Director of Florida Fair and Open Elections:

On January 12 the Florida Constitution Revision Commission's Ethics and Elections Committee debated Commissioner Bill Schifino's open primaries proposal. After his presentation to the committee, several people spoke in support. Jason Olson, of Open Primaries, Andrew Huston, a volunteer for Florida Fair and Open Primaries and Progress for All, and I represented our core group of supporters. There were also speakers from the League of Women Voters, Common Cause, and the law firm Stearns, Weaver, Miller.



We all made our cases the best we could, within the time allowed, before the committee began debate. The first two members to speak informed us they intended to vote no. From the previous Q&A during Commissioner Schifino's presentation, we knew two others would also be voting no. We were about to go down in flames when Commissioner Newsome threw us a life line. He suggested the committee "temporarily pass" the proposal. That is simply the Commission's terminology for postponing a vote. His motion was approved unanimously.

[You can watch the video here.](#)

At this point, we are unsure what will happen next, but our engagement over the past ten months has been productive and has certainly had a positive impact. It is interesting to note that our original proposal was for a top-two open primary (the Schifino proposal is for an open partisan primary), and there was considerable unsolicited discussion about top-two during the meeting. As Commissioner Schifino weighs his options, Jason Olson has offered his assistance in crafting an amended proposal. It is going to be interesting to see what happens next, and regardless of the outcome when the committee votes, we remain in the fight.

We continue to pick up new supporters and expand our network. A brand new supporter was able to have Andrew Gillum, Mayor of Tallahassee and candidate for Governor of Florida, post his support on Facebook and Twitter the morning of the meeting. Supporters sponsored a table

at an event in Jacksonville yesterday, and will be at another in Orlando this Sunday. As our work continues, the momentum continues to build as well. Whether we win or lose this round, the idea of open primaries now has a foothold in Florida, and there's no turning back.

Read Steve's latest opinion piece, "[End the Lockout of Florida's 3.4 Million Independent Voters](#)," in the *Orlando Sentinel*.

Profiles in Independence

Jarratt Applewhite, Lamy, New Mexico

It is a coincidence that I un-enrolled as a partisan voter and became what New Mexico calls a "Decline to State" at about the same time that our Democratically controlled state legislature shamefully redrew the boundaries of my district to make it forever blue. It had been a cohesive, center-of-the-state farm/ranch district. It is now over 100 miles in length, includes approximately 5,000 people separated from the rest of the district by a roadless mountain range and excludes most of the small towns that were previously its core. Its most populous precincts are in a suburb of Santa Fe, a fine place, but one that is culturally and socially very different from the rest of the district.



The intersection of me becoming a nonpartisan and the gerrymander of my district turns out to be a stroke of luck. I couldn't have picked a better jurisdiction to highlight one of the central inequities of our democracy. I've been involved in local efforts to take political mapmaking away from politicians for years. Now that I am a candidate for the state House of Representatives, I have a new and amplified platform. Running for office as an independent also gives me a megaphone to talk about ballot access inequity. My partisan (incumbent) opponent needs to secure less than 20% of the nominating petition signatures I will need to secure. Moreover, he's already circulating his. Because I am not involved in a primary, my nominating petitions will not even be published until March. Being shut out of that process gives me a wonderful occasion to explain why opening up primaries is so important. These three issues are the motivating forces behind our campaign's central thrust: Fixing our Democracy. (Our slogan is, "sick of politics, SO ARE WE").

The race we're undertaking is an outsider initiative if there ever was one. If I were elected, I would be the first person in history to serve in our Legislature who was not a member of a party and the first since 1914 who was neither a Democrat or a Republican! However, in this season of political alienation we think our message is resonant. We are giving disgusted and disenfranchised voters a new voice. We are going to work especially hard to reach younger voters who disproportionately aren't attracted to the major parties. We're pleased, even startled, by the steam we've picked up since we launched this effort just a month ago.

We have been reading **The Hub** for years and have listened in on quite a few calls. Independent Voting's leadership is vital. We appreciate your interest in our challenge.

In the News

Kim Wright of Independent Voters for Arizona wrote this [Letter to the Editor](#), "Time for Political Action" (*The Daily Courier*).

Read Independent Voters for Arizona, Al Bell's response to "[Readers' Hopes for 2018: What Would You Like Us to Cover this Year?](#)" (*The Guardian*).

Read "[It's Time to Once Again Give All Idahoans a Voice in Elections](#)," by Deborah Gold (*Idaho Statesman*).

Charles Witt of Winchester, Kentucky is urging his local City Commission to introduce a resolution calling on state leaders to open Kentucky's primaries. Read his editorial, "[Open Primaries Good for the Country](#)" (*Winchester Sun*).

An Invitation to Hub Readers

John Opdycke, the President of Open Primaries, will interview Katherine Gehl, a business leader and co-author (with Harvard Professor Michael Porter) of a recent Harvard Business School report titled "[Why Competition in the Politics Industry is Failing America](#)."



Gehl and Porter's report challenges conventional wisdom about what's wrong in politics.

"The starting point for understanding the problem is to recognize that our political system isn't broken. Washington is delivering exactly what it is currently designed to deliver. The real problem is that our political system is no longer designed to serve the public interest, and has been slowly reconfigured to benefit the private interests of gain-seeking organizations: our major political parties and their industry allies." - Katherine Gehl and Michael Porter, "Why Competition in the Politics Industry is Failing America."

Katherine Gehl and Michael Porter, "Why Competition in the Politics Industry is Failing America."

Katherine Gehl is a passionate advocate for structural political reform and has much to say about how the partisan system -- including closed primaries -- disempowers the American people.

[Read the report here.](#)



H A R V A R D
B U S I N E S S
S C H O O L

Monday, January 29th at 7:00 PM EST.

[Register for the call here](#)

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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