



February 14, 2018

## Turning Tides at the New Orleans Summit

In her column this month for the *Independent Voter Network* (IVN.US), Jackie Salit reports on the **Unrig the System Summit** held last week in New Orleans.

*"The New Orleans event helped to crystallize the centrality of structural reform of the system. But it left open the question of how different reformers view the guardians of the system: the political parties. Do we fix them? Or do we work to remove their corrosive control over America's political process? For many*

*independents, the rule-by-party paradigm is the source of our powerlessness. In my experience, challenging that paradigm is what brings left and right together."*



**Read the column.**

## Hearing for Ranked Choice Voting Held in New Hampshire

**Tiani Coleman**, President of **New Hampshire Independent Voters** (NHIV) brought members of her network out to a hearing held by the New Hampshire House Election Law Committee on **HB 1540**, a bill for ranked choice voting (RCV) introduced by Representative Ellen Read, who is also a founding member of NHIV. Attendees included members of NHIV, the Manadnock Progressive Alliance, Voter Choice MA and Fair Vote.

*"The Committee was not well informed about ranked choice voting, and seemed pretty closed to the idea starting out," said Tiani. "Through the course of the hearing, as a result of informative and persuasive testimony, you could see that they were opening their minds and starting to take it more seriously."*

Rep. Read asked supporters who attended the hearing to form a study committee to gain a thorough understanding of RCV, since most people who are well informed support it. The Committee still hasn't voted on a recommendation, but will do so by March.

Coleman, along with several other activists, made use of the State House visit to conduct a mock RCV election in the cafeteria using everyday objects instead of candidates to convey the basics of how such an election works. The first question posed was "What is Your Favorite Cookie?" Chocolate chip cookies tied double chocolate cookies in the first round, but when vanilla sugar cookies (which received the lowest number of votes) was eliminated in the second round, chocolate chip cookies won the day! The group plans to hold more mock RCV elections to help members of the legislature and the general public better understand how simple and effective RCV can be by allowing voters to vote their conscience without "wasting their votes" so that winners more accurately reflect the will of the people.



## Introductory Meeting for Independents in Prescott, Arizona

**Kim Wright of Independent Voters for Arizona** invited fellow Prescott indies to meet up on Saturday, January 27. Kim hosted twenty-two local residents, many attending their first meeting. Kim's recent editorial in a local newspaper motivated some to come out; others came through their connection to another local reform group "Indivisible" that encouraged their members to attend the gathering to learn more about independent voters. Wright is working on the *Stop Political Dirty Money Amendment* that would require full disclosure of donors who give \$2,500 or more to political campaigns. This is another way that she is connecting with local activists and independents. *"I am energized by the interest of local organizations and independent voters in Prescott."* said Kim. *"It seems everyone is looking for an opportunity to be involved."*



The group discussed the upcoming primary election and ways to increase independent voter engagement. Attendees were eager to reach out to independents and a voter registration effort is underway. Prescott independents will also be joining others to circulate petitions to put the *Stop Political Dirty Money Amendment* on the November ballot. The next meeting is March 3, 2018.

## Maryland - Polls and Primaries; One Independent Makes Her Voice Heard

**Dona Sauerberger**, independent activist in Maryland, was invited to participate in a focus group watching President Trump's State of the Union address at WJLA-TV, a local ABC affiliate for Maryland, DC and Virginia. Dona describes her experience below:

"I was fascinated with the polling results of 14 Democrats, Republicans and Independents. I was astounded when I watched **the polling graph**.

"We could rate what was being said anywhere from 0 (disapprove) to 100 (approve), but regardless of what the President said, the party-affiliated folks all seemed to stay mostly within a range of about 20 points (around 70-90 for the Republicans and 30-50 for the Democrats). They almost never crossed over the 50 mark to change their approval to disapproval or vice versa.

"But the independents (both of us!) were reacting to what was said, sometimes joining the Republicans or even going above them in approval, and sometimes joining the Dems (or going below them) in disapproval. That's a really amazing demonstration of why our government can't

get anything done, why it's so hard to find common ground or compromise. Folks are entrenched in supporting/disapproving their party. Party leaders make decisions, but then nothing gets done because they can't work together, can't approve anything that comes from the other party."

Dona has been working closely with the League of Women Voters in Maryland on a study of the primary process and the prospects of having open primaries in Maryland. Said Dona in a submission to the LWV newsletter, "I had joined the LWV because I desperately want to do something about our dysfunctional, partisan government, and thought that one thing that might affect bi-partisanship is the election system. What better place to look into election systems than the League of Women Voters?! I was just getting my feet wet when I found out that there was a committee to study the primary election system, so I took a big breath and asked if I could join. I was surprised (and a little scared!) that they accepted someone as new as I was." Sauerberger said that they are going through the process of getting consensus now, and it's looking hopeful.



## Steve Richardson: Virginia Should Not Have to Choose a Party to Vote

*The Virginian-Pilot* published **an op-ed** by Virginia Independent Voters Association leader Steve Richardson in support of a bill (**HB 1129**) introduced by Delegate Sam Rasoul (D) which would have established a top-two nonpartisan primary system in Virginia. The bill was voted down for now, but both Rasoul and Richardson intend to carry on the fight to bring nonpartisan primaries to Virginia.

Richardson testified on behalf of Delegate Rasoul's open primaries bill in front of Virginia's Privileges and Elections subcommittee. Here's Richardson's firsthand account:



"I've followed the Virginia General Assembly Privileges and Elections committee action for several years and I've written members asking them to support bills that open the process for Independents. But reading their newsletters and carefully worded responses to letters is one thing; hearing them speak to their loyal supporters is another. In a Town Hall earlier this month, I learned that my senator loves gerrymandering as long as his party gets to do it. My delegate opposes top-two open primaries because he believes having a two-thirds majority means his party's votes will be split more ways and the minority party will get the two slots in November. A week later, I attended a hearing in Richmond to speak in support of Delegate Sam Rasoul's open primaries bill, which was soundly rejected by the subcommittee along with almost all other proposals for changes that included campaign finance, lowering the barrier for major party ballot-status, eliminating split precincts, and repealing the voter ID photo requirement. The bright spot was that one of just two bills they recommended to the full committee was to permit Ranked Choice Voting in local jurisdictions. While it was clear that they let that go mainly because it did not affect their seats, it did not hurt that there were more voters in the room to support that bill than any other item on the agenda. There were only half a dozen of them and most just stated their names, but in a room with just 30-40 people observing and most of them speaking alone, it may have made a difference. If we want our voices heard, we have to show up and speak up! "

Said Richardson in his *Virginian-Pilot* piece, "The time has come to tell lawmakers that voters want representation, not manipulation. They should know already that nationally more than 40 percent of all eligible voters identify themselves as independents and our numbers have been increasing steadily as party memberships decline."

## Independent Gubernatorial Candidate Terry Hayes Takes Her Campaign on the Road



Terry Hayes, an independent candidate for Governor of Maine, traveled to NYC to introduce her candidacy and raise money under the Maine Clean Election Act (passed by voter referendum in 1996). To qualify for campaign financing under the MCEA, she must collect 3,200 \$5.00 contributions by March 31, 2018. In addition to \$5.00 donations, the campaign can raise seed money through March of up to \$100 from citizens everywhere.

Independent Voting activist **Lou Hinman** and **Cathy Stewart, Independent Voting Vice-President for National Development**, were among 30 attendees at a reception held at a Chelsea art gallery that included members of Unite America (formerly the Centrist Project), like Rachel Honig, who ran for New York City Council from the 4th council district last November.

Terry is currently serving her second term as Maine's first independent State Treasurer and has a distinguished record of public service as a public school teacher, a school board member, and an elected member of the Maine House of Representatives.

Her independent credentials are impressive as well. She supports open primaries and ranked-choice voting. Hayes spoke about her experience with bipartisan electoral politics, the corrosive impact of partisanship on governance her vision for what is needed in Maine and the road she traveled in becoming an independent.



Cathy Stewart commented, *"I was very glad to meet Terry. She spoke passionately about how partisan rivalry has prevented Maine from implementing common sense solutions in the opioid epidemic. She laid out for us the four major areas that need attention and literally how the state political players won't act. If you talk about the need to improve enforcement, then the Democrats block it because this is the Governor's domain. If you are talking about expanding treatment, that bill is from a Democrat, so the Republicans block it. On and on, resulting in tragic inaction in a state where so many lives are being lost. I am glad that Terry is running for Governor and bringing independent leadership to the race."*

## Profiles in Independence

Alex Dunn, Knoxville, TN

Having missed being labeled a "Baby Boomer" by just one year, I found myself growing up in East Tennessee during some of the most divisive two decades (i.e. 1960's - 1970's), followed by the decade of excess (1980's), the decade of "war for oil" (1990's), the decade of change (2000's) and now, the decade of populism, inequality and borderline fascism. I have lived on both coasts and overseas during my time in the United States Marine Corps.

In every decade, I found myself listening and learning from every election. I have voted Republican, Democrat and Third Party. I was not voting "Red" or "Blue." I was not voting for the "lesser of two evils". I was voting for "right" versus "wrong" from my perspective as a voter, American and overall good human being. In every instance, I was not voting for a Party. I was voting for the person, their mind, their values and well, their soul. This is how I came to identify as an "independent" voter.



Then, 2015 happened and I was introduced to Bernie Sanders, who truly opened my eyes to what it means to be an "independent" voter, thinker and advocate for the majority in the United States. For context, the state of Tennessee has alternated between majority voting for both major political parties over the past few decades, settling into being a primarily "red" state in the last few elections. People are fed up with being ignored by establishment politicians from both parties.

During these elections, several political incumbents, primarily Republicans, were unopposed. In addition, the overall number of folks actually voting were below the average numbers seen in other Democratic countries. Why is that? In most states, independent voters who make up roughly 42% of all voters, cannot vote! I would like to advocate and work on behalf of

independent voters and to change the process in my home state of Tennessee. I am starting a chapter called **Tennessee Independent Voters** to mobilize others who think and feel the same way.

## In the News

The Committee for Ranked Choice Voting submitted more than 80,000 signatures for a People's Veto to be voted on in June. Read "**Maine Voters Block Politicians From Denying Them Better Elections.**" (*Independent Voter Network*).

Op-ed by Nevadans for Election Reform founder Doug Goodman, "**How Deep Will the Partisan Divide Become Before We Say Enough?**" (*Nevada Independent*)

The latest on the fight for open primaries in Florida. Read "**Open Primaries Probably Won't Be On the Ballot After All and People are Pissed.**" (*Tampa Bay Creative Loafing*).

Read "**Independent Greg Orman Officially Running for Governor**" (*Kansas City Star*).

Read "**Washington Infighting Breeds New Independent Candidates**" (*Weatherford Democrat*).

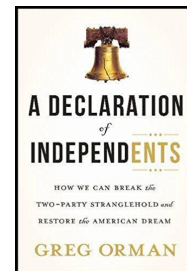
## Mark Your Calendars

Join **Independent Voting** President Jackie Salit on a **National Conference Call Monday, March 12, 8pm ET. Sign up today and invite others to attend.** If you have a question you'd like Jackie to address, send it to [national@independentvoting.org](mailto:national@independentvoting.org).



Independent Gubernatorial Candidate for Governor of Kansas Greg Orman will be Cathy Stewart's guest on the next Politics For the People conference call, **Sunday, April 15, 7pm ET.** He will be discussing his book, *A Declaration of Independents*.

**Join P4P at the Politics For the People Blog.**



## 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!

Gwen Mandell  
Director of National Outreach  
IndependentVoting.org  
800-288-3201

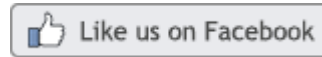
*Give us a call today!*

[gmandell@independentvoting.org](mailto:gmandell@independentvoting.org)

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IndependentVoting.org, 417 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10016

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