



March 19, 2018

## Diary of an Independent Voter: What They Say About Us and Why They are Afraid of us

On Monday, March 12, 175 activists joined Jackie Salit on Independent Voting's national conference call where she responded to questions sent in by participants and shared her views about the growth of the movement. The call was co-moderated by **Steve Hough**, Director of **Florida Fair and Open Primaries**, and **Gwen Mandell**, Director of National Outreach for **Independent Voting**.

[Click here to listen to the entire call](#) or choose a segment below:

1. [What are they saying about us and why are they afraid of us ?](#)
2. [Are independents gaining recognition and how can we make independents visible?](#)
3. [Democrats and the Democratic Party - Is there a coalition to be built?](#)
4. [Where will the independent movement be in 2020? Is this a movement capable of producing a real leader in 2020?](#)
5. [Partisan stalemate on issues like gun control. Can independents play a positive role in advancing these kinds of discussions?](#)



6. **Elections - Do local political offices affect quality of life more than what is coming out of DC? Can independent candidates have an impact on the upcoming midterm election? Should independents run for office. What about building a third party?**

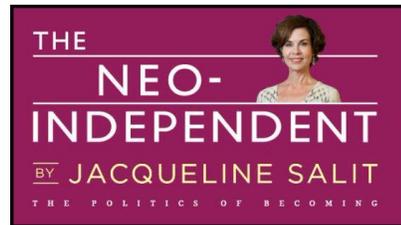
7. **Independents joining forces with other groups. Are we working together across the movement?**

8. **Where is the national fight for Open Primaries at?**

## Independent Voters: We're Not a Myth! And We Care!

In her latest column for *Independent Voter News* Jackie Salit writes: "...the state of our politics...can distort and disfigure who we are, as caring human beings. We have to put an end to that. That's what motivates and inspires so many independents. We do exist. We are not a myth. And we care."

[Read the complete column here.](#)



## Independents Hope to Make a Difference in Maryland!

By Dona Sauerburger

I thought I'd never see open primaries here in Maryland in my lifetime because citizens in our state are not able to put initiatives on the ballot, and I figured that legislators trapped in the partisan network would never consider it. So you can imagine my delight and surprise to discover that SEVERAL bills have been introduced into Maryland's legislature which would enable us independents to have a voice in the primary election!

As you can imagine, we are scrambling to make it happen. Last week, several of us testified before the Maryland House Ways and Means Committee in support of one of a trio of open primary bills introduced in the House and Senate this session. (Pictured below from right to left are myself, **Harrison Demchick** and **Peter Taillie** from Independent Voting, and **Susan Ogden** from **Get Money Out-Maryland**.) Additional testimony and emails were submitted in response to our email outreach to the Independent Voting and Open Primaries networks.

In his testimony, Harrison Demchick spoke eloquently of the plight independents face in Maryland, "*I do not choose to be an independent. I am an independent. And I shouldn't have to lie -- to pretend to be something I'm not -- in order to participate in the democratic process, which is meant to be the same for all Americans of all views. In other words, you shouldn't have to compromise your principles to vote. You vote to fight for your principles.*"



Peter Taillie and I painted a picture for the Ways and Means Committee of the growing numbers of voters in Maryland who are choosing to be independents. 17.9% of voters across our state are independent and that number is growing as 26.7% of people who registered in the last six months of 2017 are indies. Peter pointed out that close to 50% of millennials do not align with either party.

It was no surprise that **Cathy Stewart** from Independent Voting, as well as **John Opdycke** from Open Primaries, were a HUGE help. What a difference it made, knowing that we're not fighting this alone, as they made their extensive resources and expertise available to help us!

As I write this, Maryland's independents are being galvanized, and we are very hopeful. The legislative session ends on April 9 and we are going to do all we can to keep the open primaries momentum growing. Wish us luck, and stay tuned to see how it turns out!

## For the People, Not for the Parties: Open Primaries Empower African Americans

Dr. Jessie Fields, a board member of both Independent Voting and Open Primaries, penned an important piece that appeared in *The Washington Examiner*. "**For the People, Not the Parties: Open Primaries Empower African Americans.**"

Eric Fettman of the *New York Post* featured the piece in his news summary giving Fields' message a second boost **and summarizing it below:**

*"Jessie Fields, a Harlem physician and political reformer, laments in the Washington Examiner the fact that 'there is immense pressure on black voters to protect the Democratic Party.' But with 42 percent of Americans calling themselves independents, 'blind loyalty to the Democratic Party is not an option.' Especially since 'in New York City, black elected officials and Democratic Party leaders fought an effort to open the primaries to its one million independent voters, half of whom are young and of color.' Indeed, during the 2016 election 'young people of all races demanded that the Democratic Party change its rules to allow independents to vote. The establishment opposed it. Even the Congressional Black Caucus went on record in opposition.' Says Fields: 'No American should be required to join a political party in order to exercise the franchise.'"*



## Unite America Launches Effort to Promote Independent Candidates



Charles Wheelan, Co-Chair Unite America



Jackie Salit with Gov. Bill Walker (AK)



John Opdycke, President of Open Primaries, Nick Troiano (Executive Director of Unite America) and Sabre Kaszynski



Independent Candidate for Governor of Kansas Greg Orman answering a question about independent voters posed by Frosty Montgomery (I)

**Unite America** (formerly The Centrist Project) held a reception in New York City on February 27 hosted by its founder **Charles Wheelan** and Executive Director **Nick Troiano**. The event featured some of the independent candidates that Unite America is supporting, including incumbent independent Governor of Alaska **Bill Walker**; State Treasurer of Maine, **Terry Hayes** (now an independent candidate for Governor of Maine); **Greg Orman** (independent candidate for Governor of Kansas); and independent candidates for U.S. Senate **Craig O'Dear** (Missouri) and **Neal Simon** (Maryland). Leaders of Independent Voting were at the event. (Photo credit: Cathy Stewart, Vice President for National Development).

In his remarks at the gathering, standing in front of a banner that read "Country Over Party," Alaska Governor **Bill Walker** said:

*"I got to tell you how rewarding it is to be an independent, because you can be yourself. Every day when you look in the mirror, you can recognize that person. And sometimes in politics, you don't recognize that person. I am sentenced to a life sentence of every decision I make, and I want to make sure that I can live with that decision, not that I'm trying to please one particular group or not ... I love doing this as an independent, I can't imagine doing it any other way."*

## Independents Weigh In on the "Gun Issue"

The current discussion on gun and safety rights is a prime example of the partisan stalemate that occurs when citizens push for solutions to urgent problems. Can independents help foster a new discussion? **Tiani Coleman**, leader of **New Hampshire Independent Voters**, and **Steve Hough**, Director of **Florida Fair and Open Primaries**, have contributed two important pieces that were published by the *Independent Voter Network* on the topic.

In "**We Won't Solve Our Gun-Safety Crisis Until We Restore Power to the Powerless**," Tiani Coleman recounted a conversation with her husband as she reflected about the "super-intense polarized feelings I've been witnessing from both sides":

*"He said that for many people, their guns are their way to feel powerful in a powerless society. They have an intense distrust of institutions, a real sense of powerlessness about the economy, about their ability to right wrongs, about so many other threatening aspects of life in our society."*



Tiani Coleman

*"For me, that thought took away some of the despair. It helped me not give-in to the all-too-common powerless shrug of "we are facing a horrible crisis, but we can't really do anything to try to solve it" - knowing that the independent movement is all about empowering people in positive ways."*

In "**Closed Primaries Mean Harsh Reality for Parkland Students**," Hough says: "It is reported that 50% of millennials are not aligned with a major political party. New voter registrations with no party affiliation outpace those of Democrats and Republicans, and the trend is expected to continue."

*"As such, many of these young people will soon come to recognize that they have no meaningful vote. Those who do not align with a party are not allowed to participate in primaries, where 84% of Florida races are decided.*

*"When one has no voice at the polls, it's not possible to vote anyone out."*



Steve Hough

## Amicus Brief Filed in Support of Birmingham Civil and Voting Rights

Attorneys for Independent Voting and the National Action Network filed an amicus brief last week in support of an important civil and voting rights case involving the Birmingham Alabama Water Works. The case was brought to Independent Voting's attention by **Bob Friedman**, leader of **Independent Alabama**. **Harry Kresky** (Independent Voting) and **Michael Hardy** (National Action Network) filed the amicus as the case awaits the Court's decision to grant or deny a review of a lower court's ruling on the issue.



Michael Hardy



Harry Kresky

The lawsuit challenges a state takeover of this vital municipal asset, in effect replacing a Board chosen by the City Council with one in which representatives of the mostly white surrounding counties predominate.

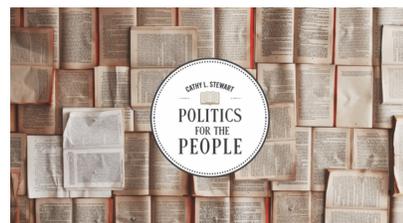
*"It was stated to me in 2016 by Richard Arrington, the first black mayor of Birmingham (1979-99), that State Senator Jabo Waggoner, Jr. had tried a dozen times to craft legislation to remove ownership of the Birmingham Water Works from the City of Birmingham," commented Bob Friedman. "Mayor Arrington was able to repel those efforts because of his influence with Birmingham legislators -- both black and white -- whose re-election campaigns could be adversely affected by Arrington's local organization. No such organization exists today and legislators from Birmingham -- both black and white -- have been complicit in the effort to remove Birmingham's control of this, the most valuable public asset in the state. The legal and organizing work of the Committee to Save Jefferson County has been their only obstacle. We're so thankful for our allies at Independent Voting and the National Action Network who have filed this amicus on our behalf!"*

[Read the Amicus Brief here.](#)

## Politics For the People Unveils New Selection and New Column

**The Politics for the People Book Club**, founded and hosted by **Cathy Stewart**, is expanding with a new monthly column published in the *Independent Voter Network* (IVN).

The current selection -- ***A Declaration of Independents*** -- is by **Greg Orman**. Greg is currently running as an independent for Governor of Kansas and caused a stir last week by selecting his running mate, John Doll, a State Senator who is changing his party affiliation from Republican to independent to join Greg's ticket. *A Declaration of Independents* chronicles Greg's journey to becoming an independent and his experiences in this historic campaign.



The article in IVN, "**Politics for the People: A Book Club for the Curious Independent**," shares with readers how this unique book club came about and what some of the authors who

have joined the conference calls say about the experience. Said Stewart in the article, " *I wanted to provide a national forum for independents to build a community of curiosity that was exploring politics and history together from a nonpartisan, independent point of view.*"

\* \* \*

## Join the Politics for the People Conference Call with author Greg Orman.

Sunday, April 15th at 7 pm EST  
(4:00 pm PT, 5:00 pm MT, 6:00 pm CT)

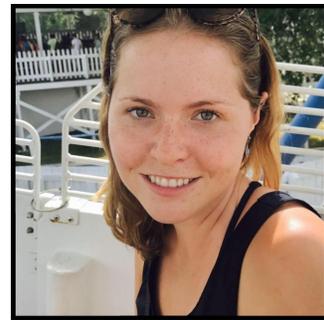
Call in and Join the Conversation  
641-715-3605 and passcode 767775#

## Profiles in Independence

Audrye Tucker, Silver Spring, MD

Being raised in an extremely conservative family, it wasn't until college that I was exposed to more liberal thought. I found it incredibly liberating from the rule-based ideology of ultra-conservatism that I was raised in. At a young age, the concept of keeping the government out of our guns but not women's reproductive rights seemed off and I was disillusioned with the war in Afghanistan, which was largely created by conservatives.

Becoming a Democrat offered an alternative to the conservative legalism I had been used to. For many years I identified as a Democrat and was proud to be one. Though I certainly didn't agree with all of the Democratic Party's policies, I appreciated what I believed to be an openness to other ways of living and thinking. It was about four years ago that I started to see the same judgment of extreme conservatism creep into the Democratic Party. People who didn't completely agree with the Democratic agenda were often labeled as being anti-progress. I became wary of expressing my concerns to fellow liberals for fear of receiving one of these harsh labels. I wasn't able to have reasonable disagreements on policy with my liberal peers anymore.



Audrye Tucker

When Donald Trump won the presidency and I didn't see any real change in the Democratic approach, I knew it was time to become an independent. I want to be able to have conversations with people I don't agree with and not assume they are bad people.

I truly believe independents will be the movement that sparks real political change in America. Independents are willing to listen because we don't all have the same perspective on every single issue. We are willing to take the good we see in the conservative agenda and mix it with certain policies we like from the Democrats. We are willing to have conversations that make us uncomfortable because we understand the world is a complex place. I hope that one day soon we will see strong independent candidates leading the way toward a stronger America where difference of opinion is encouraged instead of feared.

## In the News

**Randy Fricke** in Colorado is working on setting up a process for independents in Colorado to "come out and caucus." Said Fricke: "We need everyone to contribute their opinions to this discussion. We need to hear from the left, the right and the middle. We need to discuss where do we go from here." Read " **New Castle Man Rallying Garfield County Independent Voters to 'Caucus'.**" ( *Post-Independent Citizen Telegram*)

**Steve Hough** spoke at a town hall meeting cosponsored by Open Primaries and *Spectrum* in Orlando Florida. **Check out the video here.** ( *Spectrum*)

**John Opdycke**, President of Open Primaries, launched a new podcast called The Pickle. **The**

**first episode** is a recording of a recent public interview Opdycke conducted with Katherine Gehl, co-author (with Harvard Professor Michael Porter) of a recent Harvard Business School report titled, "Why Competition in the Politics Industry is Failing America." (*Independent Voter News*)

A perfect example of the lack of recognition and respect for independent voters and the reforms that we want. Read "**Why the Rise of the Independent Voter is a Myth**" (*Los Angeles Times*)

Read "**How Voters Not Politicians Aims to End Gerrymandering in Michigan**" (*Rapid Growth*)

Read "**Primary System is Polarizing Virginia Politics**," an editorial by **Steve Richardson**, leader of **Virginia Independent Voters Association** (*The Daily Progress*).

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

*Give us a call today!*

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

*Share the Hub with friends and ask them to subscribe*

**STAY CONNECTED**

