

independentvoting.org The Hub

April 9, 2018

Independent Outreach at March for Our Lives



New York City: (L to R) Nancy Hanks, Ed Brady, Marian Rich, Dr. Jessie Fields, Lauren Ross



Utah: Randy Miller, **Utah League of Independent Voters**, polling in Salt Lake City.



Pennsylvania: **Independent Pennsylvanians** say: "We Won't Give Up Our Rights to Any Party."



Pennsylvania: Jenn Bullock, **Independent Pennsylvanians**, polls in Philadelphia

Independent activists conducted a survey at seven March for Our Lives rallies to address gun violence. **The survey** was developed by **Independent Voting** at the

request of **Peter Taillie**, a founder of **Independent Voters of Maryland**, who attended the Washington, DC march. Thirteen activists polled 154 people at marches in Washington, DC; Philadelphia; New York City; Salt Lake City and Ogden, Utah; San Francisco; and Newark, New Jersey. With the survey, we began an up-from-the bottom conversation with Americans about how they view the political dynamics that surround gun violence issues.

Asked why it was difficult to enact gun safety laws, 70% cited the power of the National Rifle Association, the lack of will by both parties, and a political system that rewards partisanship. In other words, they held the entire political establishment responsible.

74% said we need more restrictive gun laws; 67% said that the day-to-day gun violence in inner-city communities that does not make headlines also needs to be addressed; 67% said we need to bring more young people into the governing process; and 62% said we need to create a new environment where ordinary people -- not lobbyists and elected officials -- can talk to one another about our different views on gun ownership laws.

March for Our Lives was led by young people across America, most of whom are independent. The survey pointed out that in many states like Florida, where the Parkland shooting occurred, there are laws making it illegal for independents to vote in primary elections and asked whether the laws should be changed to give young people a greater voice. While 70% of the respondents identified themselves as Democrats (26% as independents), an overwhelming number (82%) said they supported opening the primaries.

In the aftermath of the Parkland mass shooting, two Independent Voting leaders, Tiani Coleman (from New Hampshire) and Steve Hough (from Florida) wrote very poignant and thought-provoking opinion pieces that ran in the *Independent Voter Network*.

Read **Tiani Coleman's** piece, "**We Won't Solve Our Gun-Safety Crisis Until We Restore Power to the Powerless.**"

Read **Steve Hough's** piece, "**Closed Primaries Mean Harsh Reality for Parkland Students.**"

Independents Convene First Independent Town Hall/Caucus in Colorado

More than 30 people from all over Garfield County attended the first meeting of the **Glenwood Springs Independent Caucus** to help form an organizing committee, develop an outreach strategy and identify key issues.

"We had remarkable input and opinions from a variety of Independents which is what we wanted," said **Randy Fricke**, the local activist who organized the meeting through a series of press releases and community posts. "Our discussion covered analyzing the platforms and campaign financing of the Democratic and Republican Parties. It was agreed that some of our group



Randy Fricke

confront candidates from the Democratic and Republican Parties on issues that concern Independents."

Gwen Ballard, founder of CIVIC (Coalition of Independent Voters in Colorado) added, "*In our meeting, independents were -- well, independent. Some people were interested in organizing a third party, and some people, like me, don't want to be a part of any party. It was a gathering to figure out where do independents want to go in Garfield County, Colorado. It was a fascinating gathering and we will be continuing. We discussed going to candidate forums and saying 'Here I am, an unaffiliated voter and I get to vote in a primary this year. Why should I vote in your primary and why should I vote for you?' This proposal was well received.*"

Independent Voting President **Jackie Salit** sent a message to the kick-off meeting, which Fricke read to the group. "*This gathering, a next step on what will be a long road to the empowerment of independents, comes at a crucial time. Now that nonaligned voters can vote in party primaries, the parties will be 'in the hunt' for our support. That's a good thing! However, the parties will woo us without giving anything to the independent movement. That's why today's gathering is such an important step, because it means that independents-- in numbers large and small-- are beginning the dialogue on how to leverage our demands for nonpartisan systemic change and to produce independent leaders who can make our movement more visible and more powerful.*"

Several media outlets covered the event. Here's one account, "**Independent Voters Seek to Have Their Voices Heard**," from the *Post-Independent*.

Talkin' Independence with Issue One

Jackie Salit launched a new speaker series called **Talkin' Independence** that will give participants a close-up view of the partnerships, controversies and challenges now shaping the independent political movement. To kick off the series, Jackie hosted a dialogue with **Zach Wamp** and **Nick Penniman**.

Zach, a former Tennessee Congressman, is an outspoken advocate for "country over party" and co-chairs the **Reformer Caucus**, a bipartisan group of 200 former electeds who are pursuing ethics and process reforms.

Nick Penniman is the President and CEO of **Issue One**, a nonpartisan organization based in Washington, DC, committed to fixing our democracy. Formerly the founder and Executive Director of the Huffington Post Investigative Fund, Penniman is a force in holding Washington accountable for its partisan dysfunction.

Tiani Coleman, Chair of **New Hampshire Independent Voters** travelled to New York to attend the event, offer welcoming remarks and introduce Jackie Salit.

Wamp spoke about the current political environment where elected leaders are required by the parties to "Dial for Dollars" -- raise hundreds of thousands of dollars -- before they can join committees. It "*leads to shakedowns and corruption,*" said Wamp "*and it leads to complete cynicism by the American people that all politicians are the same.*"



But times are changing. "The ground is shaking," added Wamp. "How many candidates are going to emerge who are going to say to their party leaders 'I'm not going to drink your Kool Aid?'"

And how big a factor is the rise of the independent voter? asked Salit

Penniman responded: "We have to remember why we're all in the room. Our current government is failing to solve our problems. The basic promise of a democracy of the consent of the governed is that we all come together, we pool our best wisdom, we debate the hell out of it and theoretically the best ideas get enacted. That hasn't been occurring for a long time... There could be an incredibly powerful coalition if Democrats, Republicans and independents come together around a 'Fix Politics' agenda. We've got to fix the system so we can fix other things."

Attended by 60 independent activists and leaders, the evening was a rich and a thought-provoking look both practical and philosophical at the crisis in our democracy.

Wamp and Penniman appeared the following day in Philadelphia to unveil a "Declaration to Renew the Founders' Promise" signed by 200 Republicans and Democrats, current and former members of Congress, governors and Cabinet members. The "Declaration to Renew the Founders' Promise" calls on candidates for office and citizens to sign the 'Fix Politics Now' declaration, and be champions of solutions to restore accountability, transparency and integrity in Washington."

Stay tuned for the next Talkin' Independence!

Politics For the People Readers Forum: Responding to A Declaration of Independents by Greg Orman

The **Politics for the People Book Club** is reading *A Declaration of Independents: How We Can Break the Two-Party Stranglehold and Restore the American Dream*, by Greg Orman. Greg almost won a race for the US Senate in 2014 and is currently an independent candidate for Governor of Kansas. Cathy Stewart will be interviewing Orman about his book on the club's conference call April 15. An important feature of the **Politics for the People Book Club** is the Reader's Forum where members from across the country write about the book and create a pre-conference call dialogue. *A Declaration of Independents* is stimulating a wide range of responses.

In her new monthly column, now appearing on the *Independent Voter Network*, Stewart says: "I hope you will join me on the *Politics for the People Book Club* talk with Greg Orman on April 15 at 7 pm EST. As you can see [below], the P4P readers are thoughtfully engaging with Greg's book. I can guarantee our conversation will be thoughtful and give us an inside look at the Kansas gubernatorial race and explore the critical issues and controversies raised in Greg's book. Visit the blog for call-in details and pick up a copy of *A Declaration of Independents* today."

Here's just a few of the observations contributed by P4P members in the Reader's Forum:



Michelle McCleary, independent activist and President of the Metro New York Chapter of the National Black MBA Association: "In his chapter 'It's Not Rocket Science' I loved what Mr. Orman had to say about the commonality of the concerns and beliefs of the American people. I agree with the author that there is a tremendous need for us to figure out how to move past the ways in which we have been pitted against each other. America's partisan political system creates and thrives on this divisiveness. I was deeply moved by Mr.

Orman's thoughtfulness in reminding the people he met on the campaign trail that they had much in common and agreed on some very important issues."

Steve Richardson, leader of **Virginia Independent Voters Association**: "There is a lot to like in this book, which makes a valuable contribution to the Independent movement in America. It demonstrates that Greg Orman is the real deal, an authentic independent who can win a high-stakes campaign; we also learn that he understands how we have lost control of our country and is committed to helping us recover it. Despite broad awareness that the system is broken and recognition by a plurality of voters that political parties are to blame, few candidates possess any of these qualities. We all know why. True independents are highly unlikely to be successful, and those with successful experience are highly unlikely to be truly independent. While we welcome 'recovering' Democrats and Republicans, we also need leaders who have never been comfortable with party politics, especially since that's where most young voters are coming from."



Frank Fear, professor emeritus, Michigan State University and columnist, turned to a friend to help write his review. Here's a tidbit of their conversation: "For sure," my friend said. "In the conventional paradigm, there's the independent option vis-à-vis the Republican and Democrat options. But when you think about politics that way, danger lurks. The Independent option can end up looking and acting like a political party, especially if the primary goal is getting more and more independents elected."



"Gosh, that's business as usual," I responded. "Yes, it is," she said. "What America really needs is a radical political movement, a radical movement to change the status quo of America's politics."

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**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#**

Please RSVP to P4P host, Cathy Stewart at Cathy.Stewart5@gmail.com

Profiles in Independence

Diane Matchett, Homer, Alaska

My name is Diane Matchett. I live in Homer, Alaska, which is situated at the farthest end of the Kenai Peninsula in southcentral Alaska. It's a beautiful place. I moved from Oregon to Alaska in 1995 and moved to Homer in 2006. My personal beliefs and perspectives have for the most part centered around progressive/liberal ideas and as such, mostly my political affiliation was with the Democratic Party until I became an independent.

Being an independent became a necessity for me because it is very



important to me that I feel a sense of freedom in my right to choose those representatives whom I believe will listen to WE, the American people and serve in OUR best interests and the nation's interests as a whole. One doesn't have to look or listen very hard these days to realize that a vast majority of the American people have no voice in their government anymore. We are being locked down into closed primaries and a two-party system that works very hard to dictate to us who we will vote for whether we want them to represent us or not. For me, this is unacceptable as well as undemocratic and will not be tolerated. From my perspective, being an independent and part of the independent solidarity movement is doing my part in helping to break the chains of this lock-down while also putting the voice of the people back in our government where it belongs.

In the News

Episode Two of "The Pickle," a podcast hosted by **Open Primaries' John Opdycke** and sponsored by the *Independent Voter Network* is entitled "**Voters Not Politicians: The Fight to End Partisan Gerrymandering Rages on,**" and features an interview with Katie Fahey, President and Treasurer of **Voters Not Politicians**, which is leading an effort to establish a citizen's redistricting commission in Michigan (IVN).

Read Dr. Jessie Fields' latest columns in IVN, "**A History Lesson From Dr. King for Reformers**" (March 21) and "**We the People from the Past to a New American Revolution.**" (April 4)(IVN)

A defiant Tim Canova of **Progress for All** said he's changing tactics in his quest to defeat U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz. He's leaving the Democratic Party, re-registering as an unaffiliated voter and abandoning his primary challenge of Wasserman Schultz. He plans to appear on the November ballot as a no-party affiliation candidate against her. Read "**Tim Canova Quitting Democratic Party, Still Plans Wasserman Schultz Challenge**" (*Sun-Sentinel*)

The state of Alaska wants to persuade its Supreme Court to reverse a lower court ruling that cleared the way for independents to run in Democratic party primaries - an issue with implications for this year's elections. Read "**Alaska Supreme Court Weighs Case with Election-Year Impacts.**" (*The News and Observer*)

The San Diego-based **Independent Voter Project** is drafting a lawsuit aimed at making the California presidential primary conform to the state constitution, which provides for a Top Two system allowing independents to vote. Read "**A Different California Election System Would Have Boosted Bernie Sanders.**" (*San Diego Union-Tribune*)

Read **Steve Hough's** latest Letter to the Editor, "**Open Primaries a Hot Topic at CRC**" about the fight to open the primaries in Florida (*Panama News-Herald*).

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Give us a call today!

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