



# independentvoting.org The Hub

*May 8, 2018*

## **Man vs. Monopoly: *Talkin' Independence* with Peter Ackerman**

**Jackie Salit**, President of **Independent Voting**, hosted a ***Talkin' Independence*** conference call, live from Washington, DC with **Peter Ackerman**, founder of Level the Playing Field.

Peter spoke in detail about his decade-long effort to pry open the political monopoly the major parties hold over the presidential election process including: his efforts to develop an alternative nominating process for presidential candidates, his groundbreaking lawsuit against the Federal Elections Commission, and his involvement in Maine's **People's Veto** to establish Ranked Choice Voting in the state.



Salit and Ackerman

If successful, Ackerman's lawsuit against the FEC will profoundly expand the independent options for 2020. Noting that a judgment in the FEC case was imminent, Peter commented: " *We're going to get a ruling of whether the FEC acted capriciously and contrary to law. If she [the Judge] says yes, the way we elect presidents could change forever.*"

Salit added: " *If the court process yields an opportunity to set up an all independents primary (as we have spoken about), one of the things I really like about that is that it incentivizes all the different forces in the independent movement to come together and go through a process together that could create a unified independent ticket.*"

On the matter of Maine's People's Veto -- where, on June 12, voters have an opportunity to break through the legislature's refusal to enact Ranked Choice Voting which passed via initiative last year -- Ackerman remarked:

*" This People's Veto must be won. Because if we go to any other referendum state, people will say 'What's the point of getting a referendum, because the legislature, always dominated by Democrats and Republicans will repeal it.' By winning the People's Veto, we show we will punish people who behave this way. "*

Salit concluded:

*"It is such an important test case, because the June 12 vote is a vote on who has the power. Does the sovereignty lie with the people or does it lie with the power of the legislature?"*

## Independent Voting and Michigan Independent Voters Endorse "Voters Not Politicians" Campaign for Redistricting in Michigan

Independent Voting and its Michigan affiliate **Michigan Independent Voters** announced their endorsement of the redistricting reform effort led by **Voters Not Politicians** in a press release last week. The ballot initiative seeks to create an independent citizens redistricting commission to end the practice of partisan gerrymandering in the state.

"Everyone knows it's time for reforming Michigan's broken and contaminated political system," said Jackie Salit , President of Independent Voting . "We also know that real change is not going to come from the top down, but from the bottom up. The Town Hall meetings that generated the proposal and the 425,000 Michiganders who signed the petition to put it on the ballot show the country that voters can create solutions without waiting for the do-nothing politicians. We're inspired by the work of Voters Not Politicians, which is giving people a chance to shake things up. We've got your back!"



Katie Fahey (R) and  
Voters Not Politicians activists



Phil Leech

Founder of **Michigan Independent Voters** **Phil Leech** stated "This is a grassroots, citizen-led, volunteer initiative, and we welcome the support of Michigan voters of all political persuasions who want to return the power to choose our legislators and members of Congress to the good people of our great State."

Leech, who volunteered to collect petition signatures last fall, added: "Politicians of both major political parties only listen to what their party dictates and not the citizen voters who they supposedly represent. The time to let the citizen voters of Michigan choose the politicians instead of the politicians choosing the voters is long

overdue."

**Katie Fahey**, Executive Director of Voters Not Politicians, expressed excitement over the endorsement. "When we began drafting our solution, we wanted to make sure people across the political spectrum had a voice, including independent voters," Fahey said. Voters Not Politicians held 33 town hall meetings in 33 days, all across Michigan, to get feedback from real Michigan voters. "We are proud that our solution doesn't benefit one political party or special interest -- just the voters of Michigan who want to be heard and are ready for positive change."

The initiative awaits certification by the Secretary of State for the November ballot. If approved, Michigan voters will have the opportunity to vote to amend Michigan's Constitution to create an independent citizens redistricting commission made up of 14 Michigan voters who will be charged with drawing the next set of election maps as required following each Census.

Visit [www.votersnotpoliticians.com](http://www.votersnotpoliticians.com) to learn more.

## Wayne Griffin and Harry Kresky in the *Post & Courier*: Voters Beware of South Carolina GOP's Renewed Effort to Close Primaries

In an op-ed published by the *Post & Courier* newspaper, **Wayne Griffin**, chair of the **South Carolina Independence Party**, and **Harry Kresky**, general counsel to Independent Voting, forewarned readers on the latest efforts by the South Carolina GOP to close the state's primaries to independents. Griffin and Kresky have been fighting to keep the state's primaries open for over a decade.

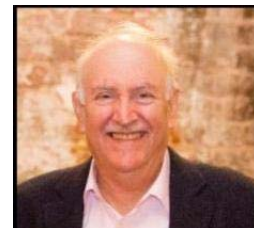
This June, the GOP has placed a non-binding "Advisory Question" on its primary ballot asking if voters believe they should have the option to choose to affiliate with a political party when they register to vote.

"This 'advisory' vote seems innocent enough. Until you take a closer look," wrote the co-authors.

"P artisan registration and a closed primary system would intensify the state's racial polarization as African Americans would join the Democratic Party and whites the Republican Party. Given how the Republican Party dominates in South Carolina, this would mean that the African American community would have no say in the outcome of most elections, since the winners are almost always the winners of the Republican



Wayne Griffin



Harry Kresky

primary. It would also mean that South Carolina citizens who are independents and not registered in a party would be paying taxes for a primary system in which they were barred from voting."

Since South Carolina has an open primary, all voters (regardless of party affiliation or non-affiliation) can vote in the June 12 primary. Griffin and Kresky urge voters to vote "NO" on GOP Advisory Question No. 1 and "...prevent South Carolina from taking a step back to the time of Jim Crow, and from allocating much needed tax dollars to the private activity of party building."

[Read Griffin and Kresky's op-ed here.](#)

## Salit at the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics in Kansas with Jim Jonas

Jackie Salit was the featured guest at the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics in Lawrence, Kansas last week. Salit was invited by Dole Fellow Jim Jonas to be the final speaker in his seven-part series *The Rise of the Independents: Candidates and Reform in 2018 and Beyond*. The series included seminars with Patrick Caddell, Kyle Bailey, Chad Peace, and Matthew Dowd, among others.

Jonas interviewed Jackie and then opened the discussion up to the audience. They spoke about a wide range of issues exploring who elections are designed to serve, the people or the parties; why more independent candidates have not been elected; whether there was a coherence of leadership from independents; the range of reforms being pursued across the country and Salit's litmus test for any political reform being whether or not it empowers independent voters. Jim asked Jackie what advice she had for young people who might want to pursue a career in independent politics. She encouraged them to pursue internships with independent organizations, and to gain field experience. She also encouraged young people to cross ideological barriers, even in their own personal lives, to find people who aren't like themselves, and to have conversations, to blog, and to write about those experiences, because that will change the political culture.

Peter Hancock, statehouse reporter for the Lawrence Journal-World [spoke to Salit before the trip](#) and wrote: "People who do not affiliate with any major political party now make up the single largest block of voters in the United States, and if the country's electoral system doesn't adapt to that reality, political parties run the risk of making themselves irrelevant. That's the message of an author and political activist in the independent voter movement who will speak Wednesday afternoon at the Dole Institute of Politics on the University of Kansas campus."



Jim Jonas and Jackie Salit



In studio with "KPR Presents" host Kaye McIntyre at Kansas Public Radio in Lawrence.

[Read Peter Hancock's full article previewing Salit's appearance here.](#)

[The entire conversation between Jonas and Salit can be viewed here.](#)

## Reports from the Field: Updates in Florida and Colorado

### Steve Hough, Florida Fair and Open Primaries:

The Florida Constitution Revision Commission (CRC) recently wrapped up a year-long process of considering proposed state constitutional amendments to put before voters in November. Florida Fair and Open Primaries was fully engaged in the process; asking the CRC to put a top-two open primaries amendment on the November ballot. We were disappointed when the CRC ultimately failed to act, but we are not giving up the fight. In fact, we are moving on to Plan B.



Steve Hough

We have been laying the groundwork for a citizens' initiative to put a top-two amendment on the 2020 ballot. We are continuously generating interest, expanding our base of supporters, and networking with other reform-minded organizations throughout the state. Additionally, we are surveying state legislators, members of Congress, and opponents where applicable. We are asking them whether they support allowing independents to vote in our primaries and, if not, why?

### Randy Fricke, Colorado:

It's official! We are now the **Western Colorado Independent Voters**. Around 20 independents attending our April 12 meeting in Glenwood Springs voted on the new name. All agreed that we should leave room to grow. It was agreed that our outreach will include most of Western Colorado or essentially the Third Congressional District. We reach out to Independents as far west as Grand Junction,

as well as areas surrounding it. **Andrew Short** with **Unite Colorado** and **Drisana Hughes** with **Serve America Movement** gave excellent presentations about their organizations. Western Colorado Independent Voters are now meeting monthly.

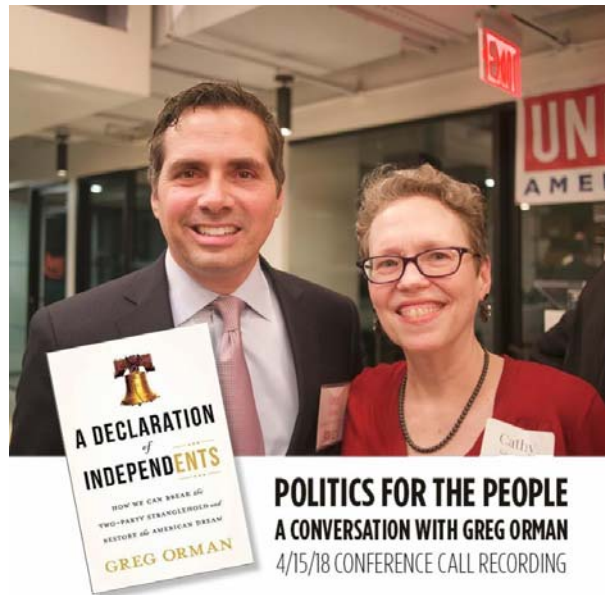


Randy Fricke

## Politics For the People Discussion with Greg Orman

On Sunday, April 15, members of the **Politics for the People Book Club** had the pleasure of spending an hour with independent candidate for Governor of Kansas **Greg Orman**.

Greg is a successful businessman and entrepreneur who ran as an independent for the US Senate in 2014 and made national headlines by almost unseating the incumbent Republican **Pat Roberts**. In 2016 Greg wrote *A Declaration of Independents: How We Can Break the Two-Party Stranglehold and Restore the American Dream*. The book offers a powerful look at independents and our potential role in moving our country beyond what Greg so aptly calls "weaponized partisanship." It is a scathing indictment of the two-party system -- the duopoly.



Greg Orman and Cathy Stewart

Check out the [full recording of the call here](#) or visit the **Politics for the People Book Club** blog to listen to individual segments.

And check out **Cathy Stewart's** latest column on *IVN*. It's a review written by **Caroline Donnola** about the club's next reading selection, "**The Secrets of Mary Bowser**."

## Profiles in Independence

Jason Armentrout, Keyser, West Virginia

My name is Jason Armentrout. I live in Fort Ashby, West Virginia which is located near the Potomac River Valley on the eastern end of the state. I teach high school social studies and English and coach wrestling at nearby Frankfort High School. I am an active member of my county's chapter of **American Federation of Teachers**, and I have been involved in political activities for quite a few years. I recently became a non-affiliated (independent) voter because of the unfathomable level of dysfunction that I have seen at both the national and state levels of government. I have concluded

that the two-party system is broken. It may have had a purpose in the past, but today it is more of a hindrance than a help. Nowhere was this more evident than with how our state leaders have dealt with the issue of education. The recent teacher strike in West Virginia was the result of the inability of the state legislature to take on and fix serious problems. Rather than effectively fix the problems in education, they pushed quick fix after quick fix, and they only kicked the can down the road regarding the problems our state faced.

Major party leaders have proven time and time again that they are not serious about fixing the major problems our state and nation are facing. I cannot stand to see things done this way, so I recently threw my hat in the ring as a candidate for State Senate in the 15th district of West Virginia. Like most independents, I plan to focus on fixing the real problems that voters deal with each and every day. For years and years, leaders from both parties have referred to West Virginia as a "poor" state. As they do this, they allow billions upon billions of dollars of natural resources to leave this state as out of state corporations and entities, along with the states where they are headquartered, reap the benefits. This has been the case with timber, coal, and now natural gas. Our leaders have always been hesitant to seek revenue from these enterprises through measures such as impact fees and severance taxes. This is partly because their election and re-election campaigns have been financed by these companies for a long time. I plan to prevent what happened to this state with timber and coal from repeating itself with natural gas. It is time that leaders in West Virginia do the right thing -- make sure that the people of West Virginia benefit from resource extraction being done from right beneath our feet.



Jason Armentrout  
and wife, Dee

In addition to running for State Senate, I am also planning to start a group for independent voters in West Virginia (**West Virginia Independents**). I am looking forward to the challenges of the upcoming campaign as well as the experience of organizing and establishing a group to galvanize and mobilize the many independent voters in my state.

## In the News

Read New Hampshire Independent Voter Chair **Tiani Coleman's** latest column on the *Independent Voter Network*: "**An Insult to Voters: The Legislatures in Maine and Utah are Out of Line**" ( *IVN*).

Read independent activist **Barbara Patrizzi's** **Letter to the editor** to the *Cherry Hill Gazette* on election reform ( *Cherry Hill Gazette*)

Read "**American Voters Are Turning to Direct Democracy**," which highlights the importance of ballot initiatives to increase the power of the voters. Katie Fahey of Voters Not Politicians is quoted on the redistricting initiative underway in Michigan. ( *The Atlantic* ) .

Read "**Bernie Supporters Push for Registration Overhaul to Vote in State Primary**," which talks of a resolution being introduced to force the New York State Democratic Committee to pass a rule allowing independent or "nonaligned" registered voters to vote in the 2018 Democratic primary for governor, on Sept. 13. (*New York Post*)

**Spencer Levy**, national head of research at CBRE, the world's largest commercial real estate servicing firm, writes "**Maryland Should Open Its Primaries to Independent Voters**"( *Baltimore Sun*)

*Capital Gazette* community editorial board member **Miya Hunter-Willis** penned "**Independent Voters aren't Indifferent and Shouldn't be Ignored**" (*Capital Gazette*)

Read " **View from Away: Are we Watching the Decline of our Big Political Parties?** (*Newsday*)

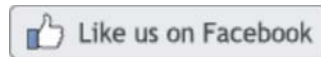
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