



June 5, 2018

## 9 Questions for the 44%: Independent Voting Launches National Survey

Greetings independents!

We have some exciting news!

After months of discussion and refinement, we have rolled out a **nationwide opinion poll** exclusively for independent voters. (With a weekend in the bag, over 500 surveys have already been collected). We originally dreamed up the idea when it was pointed out that the major polling organizations keep asking the wrong questions when they interview independent voters.



**Randy Miller, Chair,  
Utah League of  
Independent Voters**



**Tiani Coleman, Chair,  
New Hampshire  
Independent Voters**

So naturally, we thought, if the pollsters aren't going to ask the right questions, we should.

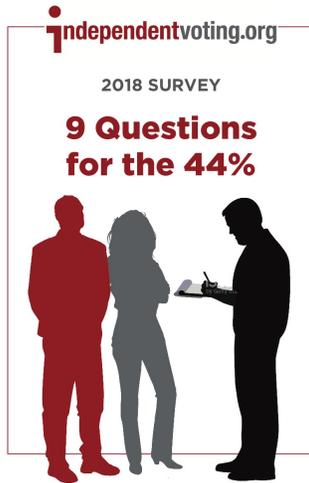
Consequently, we have developed **9 Questions for the 44%** - a poll that explores why voters identify as independent, and whether we feel respected as a community of voters.

We have big plans. We want to have conversations with and poll 5,000 independents from all 50 states by Labor Day. We expect half of those surveys will be done in person

by our excellent crowd of volunteers in the Independent Voting network and we expect the other 2,500 responses will come from online responses.

Please take a minute and take the survey right now.

## TAKE THE SURVEY HERE!



Thanks to everyone who made this survey a reality. And thanks to all of you in advance for your assistance in reaching our goal of at least 5,000 responses. Whether you can just **take the poll yourself**, or **share it online** with your friends and family, or work the parades and farmer's markets with a clipboard in your communities this summer, your efforts to help us reach this goal are deeply appreciated! If you'd like to join the **9 Questions for the 44%** Committee and survey independents in your area, [email us](#).

I ndependently Yours,

Randy Miller ( [randy@uliv.org](mailto:randy@uliv.org)) and Tiani Coleman ( [txc@tianix.com](mailto:txc@tianix.com)), Co-Chairs

### A New Kind of Politics in Maine

Below is a letter to Maine independents penned by Independent Voting President **Jackie Salit** urging independents to vote YES on **Maine's Question #1** - The People's Veto. Salit's endorsement is being distributed to independent voters in Maine by **Maine Independents**.

## MAINE INDEPENDENTS PEOPLE, NOT PARTIES

My name is Jackie Salit and over the last 20 years I built a national network of thousands of independent voters across the USA. Together we represent the 44%, the huge number of Americans who, like you, decided to reject a party affiliation. We independents don't want to be dictated to by a party line or a party boss. We want to be free to create and to make our own choices about government and policy. And, we believe deeply that the will of the voters is sovereign, meaning that there is no higher authority than the people.

This season, Maine became "ground zero" for a test of that sovereignty, a test of whether the clear will of the voters who created a statewide election system of Ranked Choice Voting will be allowed to stand. Politicians of both major parties joined forces to repeal the results of that democratic election! Amazing arrogance!

Fortunately, the Maine constitution gives voters the chance to veto this kind of abuse of power. You can exercise the People's Veto by voting YES on Question 1 in the June 12th election.

You may ask, why does an independent who doesn't live in Maine care about this situation? And why should independents - the 36% who live and vote in Maine - care, too?

Here's why. Those of us who have taken the step to be independents feel that the parties have become too controlling of our politics. With the Maine Legislature taking it upon themselves to stomp on the will of the voters, it becomes urgent for independents to step out to reverse them and to protect the people no matter their affiliation from manipulation by the parties and the elected officials who bow down to them.

It's that simple. And it's simple to do. All it takes is a YES vote on Question 1 before or on June 12

The bottom line is this. Independents aren't just voters. We're trying to carve out a path for a new kind of politics in which freedom, fairness, and democracy are the norm. Maine can help to lead the whole country in this direction. I hope you'll be a part of that!

Independently yours,

Jackie Salit  
President, IndependentVoting.org

Paid for by Maine Independents PAC. 510 Main Street, Gorham, ME 04038.



\* \* \* \* \*

If you'd like to join our phone outreach squad that's calling Maine voters to let them know about this important vote, email [national@independentvoting.org](mailto:national@independentvoting.org).

## Independent Gubernatorial Slate Launches Campaign in Connecticut

**Cathy Stewart**, Independent Voting's Vice President for National Development was a featured speaker at the recent "**No Politics, No Parties, Just Solutions**" convention for the independent slate for Connecticut, Governor and Lt. Governor, **Oz Greibel** and **Monte Frank**, in Hartford Connecticut.



(L to R) Monte Frank, Cathy Stewart, Oz Greibel

"Some candidates run as independents solely as a tactic to win. They come, they go," said Stewart. "Others see being an independent as a way to serve and they see their candidacies strengthening an independent third force. Oz and Monte are in that category."



"No Politics, No Parties, Just Solutions"  
Video Message from Oz Greibel

Greibel and Frank released a video message (left) aimed at independent voters (now 41% of Connecticut voters), a message they were eager to share with the Independent Voting network.

In it, Oz says: "As an independent ticket, we believe in cultivating the passions, the creativity, and the ideas of voters like all of you who are leading the way in calling for the systemic change that will open up the political process and give all voters a choice."

## NYPAN Takes Fight for Independent Voting Rights to the New York Democratic Party Convention

The New York Progressive Action Network (NYPAN) and their allies brought a resolution to the New York Democratic Party State Convention to open the party's state primaries and the 2020 Democratic presidential primaries to New York's 3.8 million independent voters.

NYPAN, the New York affiliate of Our Revolution, invited Independent Voting to speak at a press conference in support of this resolution. Cathy Stewart, Independent Voting's Vice President for National Development joined NYPAN co-chairs **George Albro** and **Nomiki Kunst**, and former Ohio State Senator **Nina Turner**, the President of **Our Revolution** in calling on the New York Democratic Party to open its state and presidential primaries to independent voters.



Cathy Stewart speaking. Former Ohio State Senator Nina Turner to her left and George Albro (second from right)

Senator Turner spoke passionately on the need to open the primaries to independents and the significance of the Unity Reform Commission on which she served. She described the Commission as "...a recognition that something was wrong. I believe that you only get unity when you get reform. Because people were aggrieved in 2016 and it's not a figment of the progressives' imagination." In talking about New York, she said "How is it that a state controlled by Democrats would have the worst voting rules in the country? There are millions of people across the country who are united with you."

In her comments, Stewart said: "Across the country, independent voters are asking leaders of both major parties what they intend to do to invite our participation as independents. We want our independence respected and we want our voting rights fulfilled. And so we are watching with great interest to see how the State Committee responds to your call. We thank you for your actions and we remain, as ever, committed to any and all partnerships that strengthen the political process and put the voters first."

Not surprisingly the New York Democratic Party Convention tabled the issue NYPAN has vowed to continue to fight inside the party. Stewart shared, "I was very glad to stand with NYPAN and heartened to hear Senator Turner's strong support. At the press conference, she said that opening the primaries to independents was both a moral issue and a practical issue for the Democratic Party and likened this fight to the fight for voting rights for African Americans and for women."

[Read Stewart's full testimony here.](#)

## New York Activists Testify for Open Primaries Report from Nancy Hanks

*" This Commission has a mandate from the mayor in terms of its focus needing to be how democracy works. I think we all know the answer to that - not well. "*

- Jackie Salit, President, Independent Voting

The fight for nonpartisan elections in New York City has a long history. In 2003, hundreds of independent activists took to the podiums and the streets when then Mayor Mike Bloomberg appointed a Charter Revision Commission that put

Nonpartisan Municipal Elections on the ballot, a measure that received 30% of the vote in the face of venomous opposition from the ruling Democratic Party.

Fast forward to 2016, when 3.2 million independents were barred from voting in the primary election in New York, and the demand for open primaries gained national attention.



**Jackie Salit testifying before the CRC.**

[Click here to read Salit's statement](#)

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio convened a Charter Revision Commission this spring, which can put proposed changes to the New York City Charter on the ballot for the voters' approval. As Cesar Perales, Chair of the Charter Revision Commission, said "the mayor's interest in convening a Charter Revision Commission this year is in making our election system more democratic." However, Mayor de Blasio opposed nonpartisan municipal elections in 2003, and holds fast to that position today.

In May, New Yorkers for full voting rights for independent voters testified all over the city at public hearings. Here are some highlights:

**Jeremy Gruber, Senior Vice-President of Open Primaries :** "New York City is experiencing the same voter flight from party identification that is gripping the rest of the country. And the reality is that independent voters are now the second largest body of voters in this city. Our election system has simply not kept up with this reality."

**Bryan Solomon-Puertas, long-time NYC independent activist :** "I've been a political activist and organizer since I was 19. And I can tell you, through over ten years of conversation on the streets with New Yorkers, that the number one barrier to their participating is that voters know most of the time their vote doesn't matter in getting a candidate elected. When only ten percent of voters are effectively picking our elected officials, the elected officials only have to talk to ten percent of the voters."

**Rachel Bloom of Citizens Union,** the premier good government organization in New York City, pushed for a top-two election system (the form of open primaries used in California), instant runoff voting and independent redistricting for City Council seats.

At the Manhattan hearing (held at the main branch of the New York Public Library), Commissioner John Siegal, a partner in BakerHostetler, a national business law firm, stated : "The trends are abysmal in this city; the plunge in voter participation since 1969 is more than half the people who voted 40 years ago. Half don't vote."

In her comments, Independent Voting President Jackie Salit called for three things - the right for voters to recall elected officials, Initiative and Referendum and open primaries to include all voters. She said: "I don't understand how the Mayor and the City Council can ignore the fact that there are over one million independents in New York City and yet are not prepared to do something to empower those voters."

In advocating that the Commission consider the right of New York City voters to directly recall elected officials, Salit said, "I think that the level of frustration that the public feels with how elected officials are allowed to operate and the difficulty in calling them to account makes the issue of recall a very important and front-line issue for people concerned with democracy to consider."

**Alvaader Frazier, activist with the New York City Independence Clubs :** "Closed party primaries are a severe expression of voter suppression. No less dangerous to our open democracy than poll taxes, purging voter rolls and exclusionary voter ID laws."

**Nancy Hanks, coordinator of the Queens Independence Club :** "No one should be forced to join a party just to be able to vote. Every American believes in our founding principle of 'no taxation without representation,' and we need to enforce that principle today."

**John Opdycke, President of Open Primaries:** "In most cities, the word 'primary' has a very different meaning than how we use the word 'presidential primary.' Primaries are not nominating contests. They are preliminary elections and all voters get to participate in those. New York, to be very clear, is an outlier in how it conducts its municipal primaries."

The Charter Revision Commission is now deliberating. Stay turned.

Read Nancy Hanks's Letter to the Editor in the *Queens Gazette* [here](#).



Bryan Puertas testifying in Brooklyn



From Right to left: [Nancy Hanks](#), [John Opdycke](#), [Alvaader Frazier](#). Click on their name to read their testimony.

## Bob Perls and New Mexico Open Primaries Launch UNITE New Mexico

**Bob Perls** of **New Mexico Open Primaries** (NMOP), Independent Voting's affiliate in New Mexico launched a new initiative, establishing **UNITE New Mexico** to serve as an independent candidate resource center in New Mexico. At a meeting last week, Perls discussed the unique challenges and opportunities independent candidates face. Independent Voting sent a statement of support which Bob read at the meeting:

### Message from Jacqueline Salit, President of Independent Voting:

May 24, 2018

Best wishes and hopes for success to Bob Perls and New Mexico Open Primaries on the founding of UNITE New Mexico. As a former legislator, a spokesperson for independent voters, and a champion of open primaries, Bob has been nothing less than dogged in searching for new tools that give independent voters and candidates the ability to transform the electoral mainstream. The establishment of UNITE New Mexico to serve as an independent candidate resource center is an important addition to this work.

In New Mexico, more than 240,000 people (19%) are not affiliated with a party, yet New Mexico's primaries are closed to those independents. Nearly 60 percent of legislative, county-level and judicial races are decided in these closed primaries because there were no general election contests for those offices. To make matters worse, these exclusionary elections are funded by the taxpayers, including taxpayers who are barred from participating.



Jackie Salit



Bob Perls

Bob Perls was among the first to look at these circumstances and to call them by their true name: a spectacular injustice and an affront to the democratic process. And so he set out to drive public

awareness, to find allies and to walk the corridors of power to change the rules of the game. He has set the stage inside and outside of government for an independent movement to grow. And the founding of UNITE New Mexico is an important next step on this road.

At Independent Voting, we are proud to have been one of Bob's earliest allies, and to have played our part in helping him to lead this movement. We look forward to continuing to work together to bring fairness and justice to the people of New Mexico.

Jacqueline Salit  
President, Independent Voting

Said Perls: "The UNITE NM steering committee really appreciated the kind endorsement from Jackie Salit. There are two groups that birthed our new organization-IndependentVoting.org, for connecting me to the greater independent community and UNITE America for providing a grant to help us with start-up and infrastructure expenses. Though advocacy and lawsuits are an important part of our strategy to achieve electoral reform in New Mexico, it has become clear that running credible independent candidates to challenge the status quo is equally important. We endorsed two independent candidates for the NM State House last week and expect to recruit and endorse several more in June."

## Profiles in Independence

Tom Cullen, Atlantic Beach, Florida

I grew up in upstate New York in a mostly non-political family. Like my father, I was a liberal Republican, liberal on social issues but leaning conservative on fiscal and personal responsibility. I moved to Atlantic Beach, Florida 22 years ago with a change of jobs. During my 31 years of a very challenging IT career, I was often too busy to pay a lot of attention to politics. With my retirement four years ago I began to thoroughly investigate problems facing the country. Why are we not solving these issues and how did our government get so dysfunctional?



Tom Cullen

It became clear that over the last 40 years wealthy special interests have taken over our government and our politicians no longer serve the public interest. The two major political parties have conspired to control elections using gerrymandering and closed primaries. We end up with 90 percent of Congressional districts being safe Republican or safe Democratic districts. With closed primaries independents cannot vote. Typically only the 15 percent most partisan voters participate. Therefore 90 percent of the seats in Congress are decided by 15 percent of the voters. The greatest fear of members of Congress is that they will be defeated in their primary by a candidate more extreme, to the right for Republicans and to the left for Democrats.

I joined Florida Fair and Open Primaries (FFAOP) at the beginning of this year as an organizer. FFAOP is a non-partisan grassroots organization working to change Florida primary elections from the current closed primary system to a top-two nonpartisan open primary for state and federal offices. We started a citizen initiative to get an amendment on the ballot for the 2020 election. We need a system that rewards our representatives for working together to craft bipartisan solutions to our country's complex problems instead of being punished by their party by being primaried in the next election if they don't adhere to a partisan agenda. Getting a top-two nonpartisan open primary in Florida would be a big step in that direction.

## In the News

" **Empowerment for the Poor is a Political Reform Issue**" says **Dr. Jessie Fields** in her monthly column for the *Independent Voter Network* ( *IVN*).

**Open Primaries' Jeremy Gruber** responds to a political reform oped by New York City mayoral contender Cynthia Nixon in " **Open up primary elections to all the voters in New York**" ( *Albany Times-Union*)

Read "**Electoral Reform Needed in State**," a Letter to the Editor by **Jennifer Bullock**, Director of **Independent Pennsylvanians** (*Citizen's Voice*)

Read "**Fewer Voters Eligible for New Mexico Primary**" (*Santa Fe New American*)

Read "**Independent Voters Now Outnumber Republicans in California**" (*Sacramento Bee*)

Read "**Democrats Go All-Out to Avoid Disaster in CA House Races**" about California's top-two primary. The article is all about the havoc of top-two, but does not have one interview with a voter (*New York Times*)

Unlike the *New York Times*, "**California's Free-for-All Primaries have Left Things Unsettled, but Voters Don't Want to Go Back to the Old Ways**" talks about voters' sense of the system. (*Los Angeles Times*)

And in *The Atlantic*, Open Primaries' President John Opdycke says: "One of the most positive features of the California system is that both political parties hate it. Honestly, I'm not just saying that to be flip. That is an accurate measure of its value as a political reform." Read "**This is Not A Reform, It's Terrible**" (*The Atlantic*)

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