



November 19, 2018

INDEPENDENTS IN THE MIDTERMS

The Post-Election Story the Media Won't Cover

Independent voters turned out in record numbers and left their mark on this year's midterm elections, not only changing the make-up of the federal government, but breaking new ground with political reform initiatives that passed with big margins and broad levels of support.

It was widely acknowledged in the run-up to the election that independents were the "swing voters" who would determine the outcome, but the media were silent after the ballots were counted, and failed to report the specifics of how independents had rocked the boat.

For a post-election analysis of the ways independents exerted their influence, and the multiple opportunities that have opened up for independent voters to exert even stronger leadership in the political arena, 200 independent leaders from 40 states turned to **Independent Voting's** President **Jackie Salit** on her national conference call .



"Independent voters just turned to the Democratic Party and said, 'Hey, we just gave you some power on the Hill. Now, how are you going to respond to the

fact that we did this? How are you going to change the caliber of how independents are related to in this country?" said Salit.

Independent Voting's **Eyes on 2020** campaign will focus on this issue relative to the presidential election, mobilizing our national network of independent leaders to demand transparency from both parties, on both a national and state-by-state basis. Will independents be able to participate in the 2020 presidential primaries? On the call, Salit invited participants to join her in this effort.

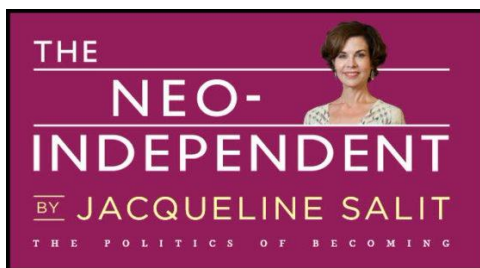
Salit is presently drafting a letter to Tom Perez, chair of the Democratic National Committee, asking him to meet with a group of independents and pledge that he will see to it that the Democratic Party primaries and caucuses are open to independent voters. If you are interested in signing on to this letter, [click here](#).

If you would like to sign on to this letter, [click here](#).

Listen to the [complete conference call here](#) or click on one of the links below:

- [The Big Picture: What Happened on Election Day?](#)
- [How Independent Candidates Performed](#)
- [Eight Statewide Initiatives for Political Reform - All Passed](#)
- [Overturning the Myths about Independent Voters](#)
- [Now that a Movement Exists, What Holds us Together?](#)
- [Can We End Closed Primaries?](#)

Election Analysis Continued (The Uses of Independent Power)...



"Suffice it to say," writes Salit in her monthly column for the *Independent Voter Network*, "that independents are swinging between cycles of disruption and cycles of stabilization, all the while searching for systemic changes that will take us to new ground. Independent rather than partisan ground."

[Read her column here.](#)

Open Primaries Education Fund Files Suit on Behalf of Indies in New Mexico

The national organization **Open Primaries** took the fight to open up the election process to the New Mexico courts by filing a lawsuit challenging the state's closed primary elections. The lawsuit hinges on the state constitution's ban on contributions.

"New Mexico's closed primary elections are exclusionary and held for the benefit of

major political parties, which are purely private entities," the lawsuit states. "Even though primary elections are closed and exclusionary, primary elections are paid for by public funds and New Mexico taxpayers, while the major political parties reap the benefits."

"Politicians, not surprisingly, are reluctant to change a system that they're comfortable with," said **John Opdycke**, president of Open Primaries. "By raising the basic premise that publicly funded elections should be open to everybody, I think [that] can really help both in the courts, but also in legislatures, to create more momentum."



John Opdycke, Open Primaries at rally to open the primaries in New York City

Independent Voting's General Counsel, **Harry Kresky** is of counsel on the lawsuit, as is **Jeremy Gruber**, the Senior Vice President of Open Primaries. As Kresky told **The Hub**, "Independents will be rooting for the success of this lawsuit. Americans, after all, fought a revolution over "no taxation without representation. "

Check out the national and local coverage of the lawsuit:

" **Activist Group Sues to Force Open Primaries** " (*Politico*)

" **Former AG Asks New Mexico Supreme Court to Nix Closed Primary**" (*Santa Fe American*)

" **Court Urged to Halt Closed Primaries**" (*Albuquerque Journal*)

Newly Elected Congresswoman-Elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York's 14th District Speaks Out for Independent Voters



Marian Rich and Congresswoman-Elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

At a rally in late October for New York City Housing Authority residents and Western Queens Congresswoman-Elect **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez** spoke out not only against displacement of NYCHA residents and privatization, but in support of the voting rights of independents. During the Q&A longtime independent political activist **Ed Brady** asked the congresswoman-elect what her thoughts were on non-partisan elections. "Not only am I open to that dialogue," Ocasio-Cortez said, "I'm supportive of open primaries in New York State."

Ocasio-Cortez took her response one step further by addressing New York State's particular election

issues. "In fact, a lot of people don't know that New York is actually among one of the worst states when it comes to voter turnout and voter laws in the entire country."

Congresswoman-Elect Ocasio-Cortez mentioned how independents are the largest political grouping in America now with 43% of the populace. "It's the largest," Ocasio-Cortez said. "That is more than is registered as either Democrat or Republican. So, I think that democracy works best when we are all represented, when we can all participate in our outcomes, and so I am absolutely open to that. I know there's a lot of diversity of thought in the Democratic Party, whether that's a good thing or a bad thing. I personally think open primaries are a good thing, and I am personally supportive of it."

Independent **Marian Rich**, pictured above with the congresswoman-elect, asked Ocasio-Cortez after the event if she would be willing to meet with independent leaders in New York in the new year. Ocasio-Cortez responded in the affirmative. Stay tuned.

Politics for the People Discusses the Healthcare Industry

The **Politics for the People** book club is currently reading *An American Sickness: How Healthcare Became Big Business and How You Can Take It Back* by Elisabeth Rosenthal.

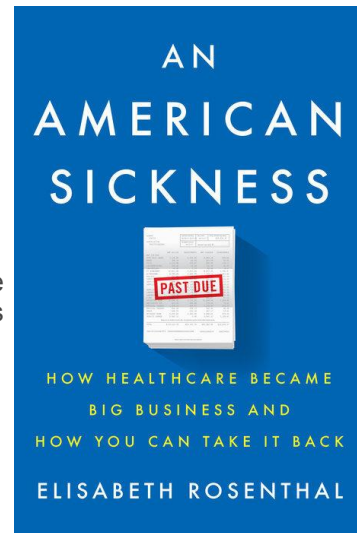
Cathy Stewart, the founder of **Politics for the People**, will be hosting a conference call with author Elisabeth Rosenthal on **Sunday, December 2 at 7 pm ET**. Cathy had this to say, "In many ways, the dysfunction in our healthcare system mirrors the dysfunction in our political system. Elisabeth paints a vivid picture of how the healthcare system operates, and I hope you will join us as we explore her book."

From the **New York Times Book Review** on *An American Sickness*:

Consider the epicenter of America's cost crisis: the once humble hospital. Thanks in part to hit TV shows, we think of hospitals as public-spirited pillars of local communities. Yet while most are legally classified as nonprofits, they are also very big businesses, maximizing surpluses that can be plowed into rising salaries and relentless expansion even when they are not earning profits or remunerating shareholders. And they have grown much bigger and more businesslike over time.

Kayla Shifter, a staff member at Independent Voting, penned **this review of the book**, which appeared in this month's Politics for the People column on the *Independent Voter Network*.

Check out the **Politics For the People blog** for ongoing discussion of the book and call in on December 2 to add your voice to the conversation.



Profiles in Independence

Shawn McDowell, Charlotte, North Carolina

Following the results of the 2008 financial crash and the election of Barack Obama I expected big, positive changes for America. But by 2011 I continued to see the same games being played in Washington. I watched as austerity took hold in my state and across the country, along with deepening wealth inequality, rising gentrification, persistent underemployment, the steady erosion of our civil liberties and a seemingly endless state of war which seemed to grind on no matter which party was in power. No matter which party was in office, the nation's basic policies never shifted. I began to re-educate myself to understand why politics and economics functioned as they did.

I came to realize that neither party can act in the public's best interests and that our best chance is to rebuild our own political institutions from the ground up. I believe independent journalism, independent candidates and political parties are the way to go. Additionally, we need non-partisan community action organizations to advocate for people's needs as well as spaces for thought real debate on the issues that affect the 99%. I have worked to support progressive independents in North Carolina since 2013, including Charlotte's first independent city council candidate.



Shawn McDowell

I was glad to connect with Independent Voting to find out and discover just how many other Americans are ready to move on from the political status quo. I've been impressed how Independent Voting has provided a platform to bring together people across the political spectrum and build common ground across America. Recent studies have confirmed there are now more of us than there are of either Democrats or Republicans. It's time we independents organized nationally and flexed our collective muscle to revitalize our democracy.

Independent Voting Blockbuster Survey in the News

In speaking about Independent Voting's blockbuster survey, "**9 Questions for the 44%**" which polled 5,000 independents this summer:

- **Frank Fear** writes in the *LA Progressive*, "**Independents Speak Out in National Poll**": "What we do know about independents is that they're a diverse lot -- from ultra-conservative to progressive. And while independents don't agree on all things, a recent national survey revealed that they do agree on some things -- important things. That means ties do bind this diverse collection of Americans."
- **Tiani Coleman**, co-chair of the **9 Questions for the 44%** survey committee, challenged the bias of academics and authors of a recent *New York Times* op-ed who state there are only two kinds of independent voters -- "pure independents" and "leaners" -- in her piece for the *Independent Voter Network*, "**Independent Voters Can't be Pegged; Summer Survey Results Show We're Not Just Leaners**." Coleman writes: "While it's true that many independents are turned off by our current political discourse and the corruption of our democracy, it can't be assumed that independents who cast a vote for candidates who belong to a major party are simply leaners for that party."
- On a segment of *Fox & Friends*, Independent Voting's Vice-President for National Development **Cathy Stewart** spoke about the survey and the "How do you lean?" question independents are often asked. The panel of independents also included **Michael Willner** of SAM (**Serve America Movement**); **John Opdycke**, President of **Open Primaries**; and **Aaron Commey**, Chair of the **Manhattan Libertarian Party**.



Fox & Friends - Independent Voters on Midterm Elections

In the News

Independent Voting President Jackie Salit was interviewed for a piece in the *Nevada Independent*, "**The Color Purple: why more voters are becoming nonpartisans**."

Lexi Mealey makes some solid points while discussing issues independent voters and candidates confront in our two-party system, "**Can an Independent Movement Happen?**" (*Harvard Political Review*)

Two articles by **Dr. Jessie Fields**:

- "**Beyond the Midterms, Independents in History, Dr. Jessie Fields**" (*Independent Voter Network*)

- **"Political Empowerment Starts with Open Primaries"** (*The Philadelphia Enquirer*)

Oprah Winfrey spoke at a campaign event on November 1, 2018, in support of Stacey Abrams, the Democratic candidate for Governor of Georgia. She began her remarks by explaining to the audience, why she was an independent voter.

Click to watch.

"This is what I came to tell you," said Winfrey after joking she had been sitting in at home in California with "Georgia on my mind" when she decided to reach out to Abrams. "I have earned the right to do exactly what I want to do. ...I've earned the right to think for myself and to vote



for myself and that's why I am a registered independent. Because I don't want any party and I don't want any kind of partisan influence telling me what decisions I get to make for myself. ...The reason I'm a registered independent is I believe everybody should have the right to vote their values and to vote your conscience regardless of the party."



Monte Frank ran for lieutenant governor on an independent ticket with gubernatorial candidate Oz Griebel in Connecticut. Read his editorial, **"Oz and I Lost, Nonpartisan Unity Still Vital."** (*Hartford Courant*)

Read **"As Polarized as Americans Are, they agree on this: Gerrymandering is wrong."** (*Los Angeles Times*)

Read **"Anti-Gerrymandering Reforms Sweep the Nation in 2018."** (*Independent Voter Network*)

Read **"In Arizona, courting the Independent vote requires a new playbook."** (*PBS NewsHour*)

The New York Times editorial "Let the People Vote" begins: " America finally has a pro-democracy movement - and it did very well at the polls last week." **Read more here.** (*New York Times*)

In an interview with Trevor Noah, Ohio Governor John Kasich shared thoughts on partisanship, the independent option, and what he calls "negative populism" vs "positive populism."

Click to watch "Seeking Nonpartisan Solutions to America's Problems."

Read **"9 States Where Independents Outnumber Both Major Political Parties"** (*Independent Voter Network*)

In **"Coveted Independent Voters May Choose Next South Dakota Governor,"** *South Dakota News Watch* quoted **Cathy Stewart:**

"In some ways we're a restless engine, wanting to open up the system in order to put more power in the hands of American voters and less in the hands of political parties," said Cathy Stewart, Vice-President for National Development at the group Independent Voting. "As you're seeing in your governor's race, and as we might see play out all over the country, increasingly independents are key constituencies that will decide outcomes of elections."