



January 22, 2018

Independent Leaders on Why the Parties Need to Open the Presidential Primaries in 2020
[IT'S NOT TOO LATE to add your voice to DNC Chairman Tom Perez!](#)

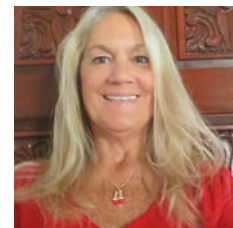
The Presidential Primaries need to be open to independent voters in all 50 states.

Following the midterm elections, in which 34 million independent voters cast ballots, **Independent Voting** President **Jackie Salit** penned a letter to DNC Chairman Tom Perez stating "...While we make no pledge or commitment with regard to supporting any particular 2020 presidential candidate -- Democratic, Republican, minor party or independent -- we believe the time has come for both governing parties, and for the Democratic Party in particular, to take the decisive step of opening the 2020 presidential primaries to independents." Over 800 independent leaders and activists have signed onto Jackie's letter. **If you have not signed yet, please add your voice today.**

Here is what independent leaders are saying about the importance of opening the presidential primaries. [Click here for more quotes.](#)

I have joined South Dakota and Arizona independent voters in statewide efforts to open primary elections. This continues to be a top priority for me, especially for the 2020 Presidential primaries. The Democratic and Republican parties can and must open their presidential primaries to independents in every state.

Kim Wright
Joplin, Missouri



If primaries and caucuses were open to the public, Democrats and your Republican colleagues could break free of the hold Big Money has on you and

institute REAL reform, consistent with the will of the people. That would be truly historic!

**Steve Knox,
Middle River, Maryland**



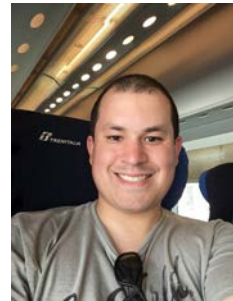
Closed primaries are a form of voter suppression aimed at voters who choose not to affiliate with a political party. We need more democracy, not less. Voters who want to vote should be able to fully participate in the electoral process, but many have been denied. That's a voter shutdown! Chairman Perez, open the 2020 presidential primaries so that all can participate!

**Kipp Lyle,
Bronx, New York**



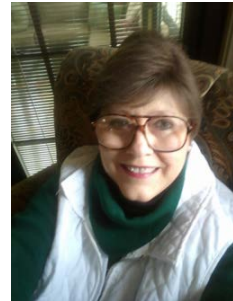
Closed primaries degrade the electorate; there's no constitutional authority for political parties to enforce electoral requirements and political parties didn't establish this country. Our right to vote shall not be infringed.

**Javier Luque,
Hasbrouck, New Jersey**



Being an Independent is fast becoming an ever-increasing option for voters concerned about gridlock and inappropriate manipulation of the will of the people occurring all too often at state and national levels. Opening the 2020 presidential primaries and caucuses to independents is an idea whose time has come.

**Donna Plunkett,
Canton, Ohio**



Closed primaries exclude tens of millions of independent voters nationwide. Whereas independents play a pivotal role in selecting the eventual winner, we should also have a voice in the nominating process in all 50 states.

**Steve Hough,
Director, Florida Fair and Open Primaries
Panama City, Florida**



For a party to truly know their candidate's viability in a general election, it must allow all who wish to participate in its primaries the opportunity to vote!

**Rick Tousley,
Former Independent Candidate
Lewiston, Idaho**



We need to hear all the voices of those aspiring to our nation's highest office, not just the chosen few. We, as independent voters, need to open the primaries to all voters, not just party members, to challenge those who want our vote and bring on debate of new ideas and to test outdated values.

**Barbara Franklin, Esq.,
Honokaa, Hawaii**



VOTER FREEDOM FROM THE PRIMARIES THROUGH THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS!

**Joe Pickering
Bangor, Maine**



The Neo-Independent: Baby It's Cold Inside



Jackie Salit writes about the scourge of political correctness in her "Neo-Independent" column this month for the *Independent Voter Network*.

"The repudiation game is a corruption," she says, "a way that power politics thrives on defining the boundaries of legitimacy."

In speaking of recent tensions mounting in this year's women's march, she remarks: "Shouldn't women be the ones to repudiate this kind of perverse scoring system where various forms of oppression are pitted against one another? I'd like to go to a Women's March about that!"

[Read the complete piece here.](#)

Democratic Reforms Don't Go Far Enough for African Americans

Dr. Jessie Fields, board member of **Open Primaries** and **Independent Voting**, talks about House Resolution 1, the recent reform bill and first initiative introduced by Nancy Pelosi in the new Congress. In her piece published by *The Hill*, Fields maintains that the bill does not go far enough.

She says: "H.R. 1 is incomplete because it fails to recognize important changes within the broader electorate and ignores structural changes such as open primaries that would empower millions of African-Americans, and many millions more Americans, to fully participate."

She asks: "Shouldn't the Democrats be taking steps to tear down walls and make government work for everyone by championing democracy for all?"

[Read Fields' complete column here.](#)



Dr. Jessie Fields

Former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger Focuses on Terminating Gerrymandering at USC Summit



L to R: Stephen Wolf (Daily Kos), Katie Fahey (Voters Not Politicians, Michigan); Arnold Schwarzenegger, Kent Thiry (Fair Maps Colorado); Catherine Kanter (Better Boundaries Utah); Sean Soendker Nicholson (Progress Missouri)

Last week, former Governor **Arnold Schwarzenegger** hosted a Terminate Gerrymandering Summit sponsored by the USC Schwarzenegger Institute.

Independent Voting President **Jackie Salit** and **Open Primaries** President **John Opdycke** were on hand for the event, along with several dozen reform leaders and activists from across the country.

Leaders of the four states -- Michigan, Utah, Colorado, and Missouri (see photo above) -- that mounted successful redistricting campaigns headlined a panel discussion, moderated by Stephen Wolf of the *Daily Kos*. Spearheaded by independents, voters approved initiatives to take the power of drawing districts away from the legislators and give it to independent committees in each of these four states. Independent Voting endorsed Michigan's **Voters Not Politicians** campaign, and activists affiliated with Independent Voting in five states volunteered to help get the vote out on election day. **Western Colorado Independent Voters (WCIV)** were an endorser of the **Fair Maps Colorado** campaign.

"The people became more and more frustrated," Schwarzenegger told the *Atlantic*. "They decided that the system was fixed, there's nothing they can do about it. So they look for outsiders to save them -- outsiders like myself, or like Trump, or like Representative [Alexandria] Ocasio-Cortez, but unless outsiders are willing to take on gerrymandering and truly fight the establishment, the people will find no salvation." (" **Is This the Year for a Redistricting Revolution?** ")

Hoping to take the California model nationwide, Schwarzenegger has set a goal that two-thirds or more of the congressional districts drawn after the 2020 census be drawn by independent commissions. At the event, the Schwarzenegger Institute announced the launch of **fairmapsincubator.org**, a "how-to" website which builds off the success of Michigan, Utah, Colorado and Missouri.



Salit and Schwarzenegger



Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jackie Salit in discussion at the USC event.

"Arnold Schwarzenegger's voice in the Redistricting movement is unique," said Salit. "He's not a wonk. And he's not a wuss. For the Terminator, it's not about transferring power from Republicans to Democrats. It's about transferring power from the parties to the people. He's the anti-politician who linked redistricting reform to nonpartisan primary reform, and gave independent voters in California full voting rights. With 44% of the country now independents, that's the critical reform combo."

Baltimore Considers Open Primaries and Ranked Choice Voting Reforms



Hassan Giordano

Thanks to the efforts of **Hassan Giordano**, Baltimore activist and owner of DMVDaily Media Group, the Baltimore City Council is looking at the possibility of moving one of two possible reforms -- open primaries or ranked choice voting (RCV). Giordano asked City Councilmen Bill Henry and Brandon Scott to introduce a resolution that would open the Baltimore primaries. However, the City Council currently does not have the authority to change their election process. State Delegate Lierman (representing District 46 from Baltimore) is the sponsor of HB0026, a bill in the state legislature that would authorize the Baltimore City Council to pursue either of these political reforms. ([Bill attached](#)).

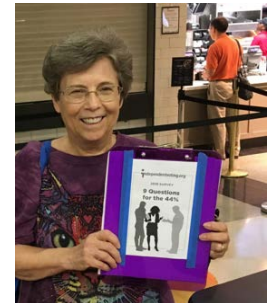
The Maryland House Ways and Means Committee held a hearing on Thursday, January 17 on HB 26. **Peter Taillie of Independent Voters of Maryland attended the hearing and testified.** He said:

"Open primaries is a way of increasing political participation and also democratic reform." Taillie indicated that the main opposition came from two Republicans (The Republican Party is the minority party in Maryland). Both who testified expressed concern about "confusion in the voting process," and one said that in a top-two primary, there would never be a Republican in the general election.

Dona Sauerburger, also of **Independent Voters of Maryland** wrote: "While organizing Independent Voters of Maryland, I surveyed dozens of Maryland independent voters, who make up more than 19% of Maryland's citizens, and many of them feel disenfranchised. Nationally, more than **80% of Independent voters** believed that the Republican and Democratic parties should open the presidential primaries to them." [Read her written testimony here](#).



Peter Taillie



Dona Sauerburger

Independent Voting and Open Primaries also submitted written testimony.

Cathy Stewart, Independent Voting Vice President for National Development wrote: "At a moment when 44% of Americans now identify as independents, we need an election system that does not demand that voters enroll into a political party in order to be able to vote in the first round of municipal elections." [Read more here.](#)

"Primary elections in the city of Baltimore are paid for by the taxpayers and should be open to everyone," commented **Jeremy Gruber**, Senior Vice President at Open Primaries in his [written testimony](#). "If the political parties, which are private organizations, want to conduct closed elections, they should not ask the public to fund them."

[Here is an article that appeared in the Baltimore Sun.](#)

Next up, the Baltimore State Legislative delegation will be discussing the bill later this month. Stay tuned.

EYES on 2020 -- Minnesota moves to a Presidential Primary BUT . . .

All over the country, the state and national parties are in the process of shaping the rules and culture of the 2020 Presidential primaries. In Minnesota, the state legislature voted to move from a party presidential caucus to a presidential primary in 2020. Good move, but the parties are demanding that the ballot (DP or RP) of each individual voter be a matter of public record, claiming, according to DFL Chair Ken Martin "...we need that information to comply with national party rules and to help party-building activities." (The Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party is the state name of the Democratic Party in Minnesota.)

Minnesota has nonpartisan voter registration with open primaries. Voters do not affiliate with a party in order to cast their ballots in any election. The primary ballot a voter selects is not made public. The Secretary of State Steve Simon has been searching for a compromise on how to handle the presidential primaries.

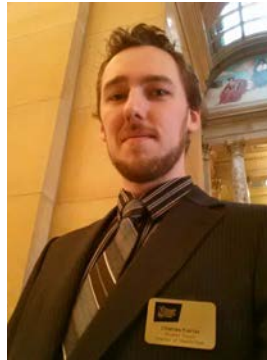
The state certifies the election results and can demonstrate WHO voted in the primaries and how many votes were cast in each party primary for each candidate. To provide any information beyond that, the state is using tax dollars to assist in the party-building efforts of two private organizations.

As the *Minnesota Post* put it in "[Secretary of State Proposes Exempting Presidential Primary Lists from Minnesota's Public Disclosure Laws](#)," "Minnesota voters who don't like revealing which party they support will have two choices when the state shifts to a statewide presidential preference primary in 2020: they can surrender those concerns; or they can not vote."

Ann Fryberger of Duluth and **Charles Karter** of Minneapolis, two independent activists who are part of the Independent Voting network, are working to bring the voice of independents into this conversation. They are concerned that the current design violates the culture of Minnesota elections, and the privacy of voters.

Fryberger notes, "This will have a chilling effect on voters across our state and whether they feel welcome to fully participate in the presidential primary process at a critical time in our country."

Charles explained, "I had the opportunity to speak with my local State Senator, State Representative, and the assistant to the Secretary of State's office this week. They were very receptive to the concerns that I/we raised, specifically the assistant who is going to help me continue this conversation with two individuals from government relations. What's happening is that, a conversation is already underway on a compromise between the two parties, about how to track which voters are taking what ballot, and what we're doing is trying to amend that, so that it is fair to Minnesota voters and independents, while also maximizing voter outreach, and voter privacy. This is occurring because we're transferring from a caucus system, where the parties do need to know who is a part of their party, to a primary, where they don't. Thankfully, we have a pretty receptive system of government here, and a lot of political capitol on our side. Just the other day the League of Women Voters Minneapolis shared a *Minnpost* article about this, and resistance to the Secretary of State's current compromise seems strong."



Charles Karter



Ann Fryberger

Fryberger and Karter are going to continue to educate the public about the design for the presidential primary.

Profiles in Independence

Dennis Flaherty, Chandler, Arizona

I am an independent voter. I wasn't always. For 30 years, I was on active military duty and a registered Republican. Back then, military members rarely engaged in political discussions. We were apolitical. While I always exercised my right to vote, I never thought about the primary process itself. In 1964, I cast my first vote by absentee ballot. I looked at the nominees, read the available campaign information, made my choices, and marked my ballot. With each succeeding election, I tried to be better informed. But, in truth, I never really got there.

Eventually, it dawned on me that I was too accepting of primary outcomes. In general elections, I often pinched my nose and voted for the perceived lesser of two evils. That didn't seem right especially in this, the world's greatest democracy. Why couldn't our major political parties field better candidates? Instead of ideas, money and influence were typical determinants of success. Party support was indispensable. This was a process I unwittingly supported for years. Enough was enough.

I changed my voter registration to independent and learned I was ineligible to vote in presidential primaries unless I registered with a recognized political party . . . exactly what I didn't want to do. My frustration grew. To me, the election processes of the world's greatest democracy were controlled by political parties more influenced by money than we the people. The very same "We the People" in the preamble to our Constitution to which I had sworn an oath to protect and defend. Am I angry? Actor Peter Finch said it best in *Network*, "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take this anymore."

Thus, I find myself at the door of the Independent Voting movement. There's still some fight left in this old GI and I'm willing to join the fray.



In the News

Former Kansas independent gubernatorial candidate Greg Orman: "**Why I remained an Independent Candidate**" (*RealClearPolitics*)

Here is an interesting video and article from *The Hill*, reporting on their year-end poll. In it, Republican pollster Ed Goeas says: "I think going into the next election cycle, I think the thing that will be the focus is not the suburbs, but the independent voters. They're the ones who keep going back and forth and, again, make the difference in the wider electorate." (*The Hill*)

Thanks to Drey Samuelson (cofounder of Takeitback.org) for this editorial, "**Legislature Must Maintain Legacy of Independence, Nonpartisanship**," about the importance of Nebraska's unicameral legislature maintaining its independence. (*Lincoln Journal Star*)

Read: "[Gallup: Americans Continue to Embrace Political Independence](#)" (*Independent Voter Network*)

More about proposed changes in presidential primary conduct in "[New Minnesota Law May Bring Change to How State Handles Presidential Primaries](#)" (*Bemidji Pioneer*)

Open Primaries President John Opdycke speaks about results to new poll results concerning opening the primaries in Florida on the Rob Lorelei "Radioactivity" live call-in show. To listen, click on the "[Listen on Demand](#)" and choose the show: **2019-01-17** (Thurs). (*WMNF*)

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