



February 26, 2019

Eyes on 2020

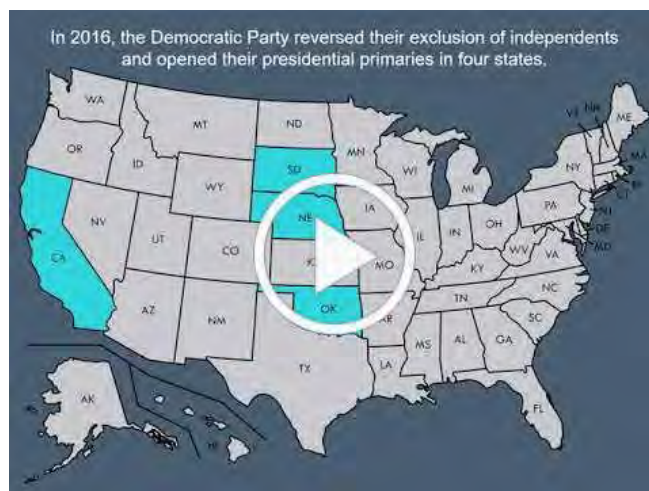
Independent Voting's national campaign to insert the voice of independents more fully in the presidential process has organized a cabinet of 21 leaders from 15 states to spearhead its initiatives.

[Visit our new Eyes on 2020 blog.](#)

The campaign is making a simple demand: Independents want full access to EVERY stage of the presidential process in EVERY state.

PRESSURING THE NATIONAL PARTIES

In Phase One, independents are pressuring the Democratic and Republican parties to commit to opening all 2020 presidential primaries and caucuses to independent voters. To that effect, over 940 independents to date have signed on to the **letter initiated by Independent Voting President Jackie Salit calling on DNC Chair Tom Perez to take action** to open the presidential primaries in all 50 states.



Eyes on 2020 Blog

PRESSURING STATE CHAIRS

The campaign cabinet is amplifying the Letter's impact by sending it with a personal cover note to Democratic State Chairs and Vice Chairs in their states.

Steve Hough, Director of **Florida Fair and Open Primaries** began his letter to Terrie Rizzo, Chair of the Florida Democratic Party, by saying, " As you may recall, I reached out to you during your campaign for the Chair position, for an opinion on opening Florida's primaries to nonaffiliated registered voters (NPAs). You were opposed, and while I respect your opinion from a purely partisan perspective, the number of NPAs continues to grow nationwide (44% of Americans now consider ourselves independents). As such, and while I am still involved in the movement to open Florida's primaries via a citizens' initiative, I am also supporting a national movement to open the 2020 presidential primaries in all fifty states."



Steve Hough

Kirsten Fulda wrote on behalf of Connecticut independents, "In 2016, close to 26 million independents voters could not vote in the presidential primaries. In Connecticut, the Democratic presidential primaries are closed. The Democratic Party of Connecticut has the authority to open these primaries to independent voters."



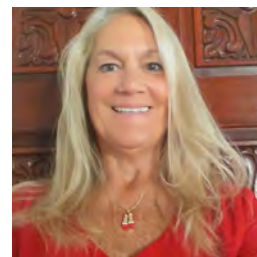
Kirsten Fulda

Al Bell of Independents for Arizona wrote "I was a registered Republican for over 50 years and have been a registered independent voter for the last 12. I have never been a registered Democrat, although I have voted for as many Democratic candidates as for Republican -- probably more during the last 25 years. I urge you to lead the Arizona Democratic Party in allowing independent voters to vote in the 2020 Democratic Preference Election... So, why would you listen to my message? 1. It would help Democrats prevail in 2020 and that would be far better than if Republicans did and 2. It is the right thing to do because we independents are American, too. Jackie Salit's attached letter to your National Chair underpins all of this better than I could say it."



Al Bell

Kim Wright, a former independent candidate in Missouri wrote to Jean Peters Baker, the Missouri Democratic Party Chair, "Independent voters in Missouri have enjoyed the opportunity to participate in state-wide primary elections. The number of voters registering as independent continues to increase in Missouri and the nation; and yet, across the country independents are locked out of primary elections. Unfortunately, legislation was introduced this legislative session (HB26) to actually close primary elections in Missouri. We, as independent voters, strongly oppose this introduced legislation. I write to urge you to oppose this legislation as well that would change the culture of elections in Missouri by instituting partisan registration, a closed primary and decreased voter mobility. I also write today about the 2020 presidential primaries. The time has come for presidential primaries to be open to independent voters in all 50 states."



Kim Wright

In addition to Bell, Fulda and Hough, letters to party chairs and vice chairs have been sent by **Jenn Bullock** on behalf of **Independent Pennsylvanians**, **Randy Wilson** for **Independent Voice** of California, **Evelyn Dougherty** for **Massachusetts Coalition of Independent Voters**, **Tiani Coleman** of **New Hampshire Independent Voters**, **Steve Richardson** of **Virginia Independent Voters Association** and **Cathy Stewart**, **Independent Voting's** Vice President for National Development, and Board Member **Dr.**

Jessie Fields to chairs in New York. The cabinet is looking to organize offensives in all 50 states.

YES THEY CAN!

Despite the common retort by party leaders that the issue is "out of their control," state parties have the authority to open or close their primaries, thanks to a Supreme Court ruling, **Tashjian v. the Republican Party of Connecticut**.

Cathy Stewart, **Independent Voting's** Vice President for National Development and Coordinator of **Eyes on 2020** said: "In fact, the Democratic Party in California, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and South Dakota did open their presidential primaries in 2016. I spoke with Jane Kleeb, the state chair of the Democratic Party in Nebraska. Every four years they decide how to conduct their presidential process. In 2016, they opened the presidential primaries to indies, but it was only a beauty contest since delegates were chosen at a party convention. This fall, Jane urged and won the vote of the party to end the caucus and use a binding open presidential primary for 2020. Here is how she sees it: 'Independents are independents for a reason and they do not want to affiliate, but maybe there are a lot of independents across the state who would be our natural allies.' A smart observation by Kleeb! 21.3% of voters in Nebraska are independents."

FACE TO FACE WITH THE CANDIDATES

Meanwhile, in New Hampshire, **Tiani Coleman**, **New Hampshire Independent Voters** Chair and member of the Cabinet, is engaging potential presidential candidates on the trail in New Hampshire.

" In my quest to reach as many presidential candidates as possible, I attended a crowded small town event with Pete Buttigieg (Mayor of South Bend, IN) today. He answered my question on whether he supports opening primaries to independents (they're closed in many states), and whether he supports Ranked Choice Voting. Aside from not trying to rock the 'rules boat' too heavily, he supports both! We also had a GOOD, short personal follow-up conversation about it afterwards. I like the guy. He's sincere, genuine and thoughtful." - Stay tuned for more candidates in the future.



Tiani Coleman

BILL TO OPEN ARIZONA'S PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE ELECTION INTRODUCED

Rep. Martin Quezada introduced SB 1057 in Arizona calling on the Legislature to open the presidential primaries. Currently, approximately a third of Arizona voters are not affiliated with a party.

"Even if you have no party preference, your vote should count when you vote for your president," Quezada said. "We had many independent voters showing up at the polls, believing they could cast a vote for president (in 2016) - which a lot think is the most important vote they can cast - and they weren't able to."



Rep. Martin Quezada

Independent activists **Dennis Flaherty** and **Al Bell** have written letters to the newly elected Secretary of State and US Senator Kyrsten Sinema urging they support the bill. In addition, the Eyes on 2020 campaign will continue to pressure party chairs to open the 2020 presidential primary in Arizona.

Read about Quezada's bill here.

The Neo-Independent: Spoiler Alert: Schultz, the Democrats and the Independents

"There is a dirty word in American politics, worse than 'crook,' more terrible than 'philanderer,' and more despicable than 'liar.' The word is 'spoiler,'" says **Jackie Salit** in her latest column for *IVN*, "Spoiler Alert: Schultz, the Democrats, and the Independents."

Read Salit's *IVN* column to see what she has to say about the attacks on Howard Schultz as he explores the possibility of running for President as an independent.



Read Salit's column [here](#) and check out [A Brief Recap of Some Spoiler Controversies](#).

Independent Voter Groups Protest Democratic Party Attacks on Free Speech at Howard Schultz Book Event in Philly

Independent Voting and Independent Pennsylvanians protested against the free speech attacks Democrats have launched against Howard Schultz and his exploratory independent presidential campaign outside a Schultz book event in Philadelphia. The independents held signs challenging the Democratic assertion that they "own" the opposition to Donald Trump, spoke with book event attendees and members of the press, and gathered signatures on a letter addressed to Pennsylvania Democratic and Republican party chairs urging them to open the 2020 presidential primary to independents.

"Elections belong to the American people," said Cathy Stewart, Vice President for National Development at Independent Voting. "Mr Schultz has every right to put his ideas before the American people. The American people will decide who the next president is."

"This is the first time for me at something like this," said **Julie Leak**, part of the contingent that traveled from New York. "The press that was here approached me and I tried to explain that we are here for the process, not to pick this one or that one candidate."

Added **Melida Davila** of Pennsylvania: "Our rights as voters are in question here. We need to adopt a more open voting system and keep our minds open to new strategies. A word to the media: you should be covering independents the same as you cover the parties. We do exist, and we're not going away!"



[Check out WHY's coverage.](#)

L to R Cathy Stewart, Norma Van Dyke, Stephen Bouikidis, Melida Davila, Barbara Patrizzi, Julie Leak, David Belmont, Nancy Hanks (Photo: Gail Peck)

Also, Jenn Bullock, the Chair of Independent Pennsylvanians penned a letter to the *Scranton Times Tribune* that ran on February 1. In her letter Bullock writes, "The parties and the politicians love to decide things before they get to the voters. Now they say that Schultz's candidacy could 'spoil' it for someone else. The Democratic and Republican parties are spoilers to an open and healthy democracy."

Massachusetts Independents House Party Raises Funds, Supports Ranked Choice Voting Drive

Seventeen people attended a houseparty organized by the Massachusetts Coalition of Independent Voters on Sunday, January 27 to support the campaign for Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in the state. Here's a report from Evelyn Dougherty, MA COIV's Chair on the event:

MA COIV held a house party to support the efforts of **Voter's Choice MA** to promote RCV as a reform effort in Massachusetts. The event was a fundraiser and an opportunity for independents in our network to learn more about RCV. We have been working with Voter Choice MA over the last two years in setting the stage for this innovative reform in how we vote. We also worked on the successful effort to bring RCV to Maine, when the Maine Legislature and the People's Veto then overturned the legislature. Independent voters made all the difference in securing RCV for the people of Maine.

As independent activists, we are fans of any reform that can give the voters new tools and help make our democracy work for everyone. Many different leaders and activists are stepping forward to reform the system and we support that unconditionally.



Top Row (L to R) : Diane Whitehouse, Billy Jackson, Ed Williams, Donna Silverman, Shaun Smith. Bottom row (L to R): Lowell Ward, Steve Savrann, Evelyn Dougherty, Sarah Bayer

The house party was lively and informative and we played a voting game ranking our preferences of our favorite drinks. Billy Jackson from Voter's Choice MA spoke to us about the effort. The Massachusetts State Legislature is currently considering a bill for RCV. If the bill does not pass, Voter Choice MA will petition to put RCV on the 2020 ballot so Massachusetts voters can decide. Mike Mullen, who ran in the last election as an independent candidate for Congress in Massachusetts District 3, joined us. We raised \$522 towards the effort and one of the attendees volunteered to throw her own house party.

Maryland Status Report

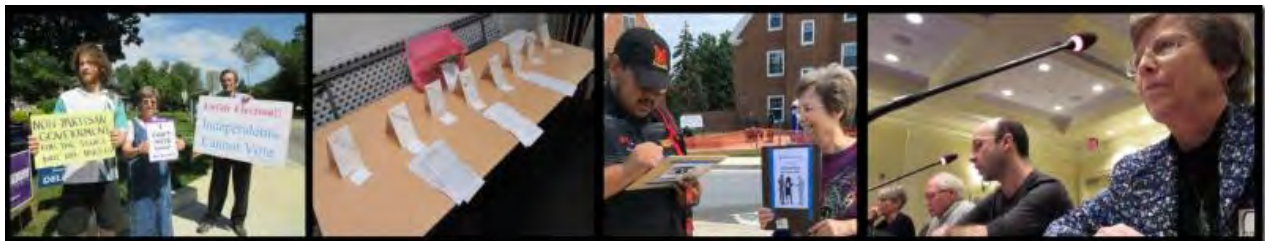
A Status Report from Dona Sauerburger, Independent Voters of Maryland:

Maryland is a very exciting place to be these days for independent voters, and **Hassan Giordano** and I are in the process of engaging them to make a difference. As a state that will not allow citizens to put a referendum on the ballot, our options are limited, but there are currently several bills being proposed that would open up primaries to independents in one way or another.

Senate Bill 385 Election Law - Primary Elections - Voting by Unaffiliated Voters (Sen. Zirkin) would allow voters who are not affiliated with a political party to vote in primary elections for the candidates of a political party of the voter's choice. Exceptions would be that unaffiliated voters could not vote for members of the local central committee of a political party, nor could they vote in presidential elections for delegates to the national presidential nominating convention of a political party.

Senate Bill 489 Ballot Access - Voter Registration - Affiliating With a Party (Sen. Kagan) would allow unaffiliated voters to participate in the primaries by affiliating at the polls.

Hearings for both of these bills were Thursday, February 21.



But the biggest change seems to be that Maryland's League of Women Voters (LWVMD), which had officially supported closed primaries since 1993, changed its position to support open primaries last year. And I have found that when LWVMD speaks, legislators and policy makers listen!

I'm pleased that I had the opportunity to be part of that process. The reason that LWV positions are so well respected is that they are based on a two-year study followed by a 6-month process to develop consensus. When I volunteered to be part of the study, even though I was a novice, I was welcomed and my opinions respected, and I learned a lot!

The folks at Open Primaries and Independent Voting were essential in this process, answering our questions and providing valuable resources and information that helped us develop our fact sheets for members to consider at the consensus meetings.



Sauerburger with Sen. Zirkin (Sponsor of Bill 385) and Chief of Staff

I am currently on the team that reports on state bills regarding elections, and presents testimony at General Assembly committee hearings on behalf of LWVMD. It's gratifying to have the ear and respect of the legislators (just yesterday a legislator contacted me to ask us to support his bill) and to be able to promote and support open primaries with the LWVMD position. Hassan and I are currently surveying Maryland independent voters and getting them involved, which will help in advocacy. A huge kudos and thanks to **Independent Voting** and **Open Primaries** for helping to make this happen!

And Gov. Larry Hogan, while being interviewed on C-SPAN, recently made a full throated endorsement of open primaries, saying that with open primaries, "you wouldn't have so much polarization in Congress." **Watch the endorsement here.** Governor Hogan was actually watching our testimony for open primaries live-streamed at the Senate committee meeting, and intervened during the hearing by sending the committee a letter supporting senator Zirkin's bill to allow us to vote in the primaries.

Stay tuned!

Join the national conference call March 4!



On **Monday, March 4 at 8pm ET**, independent activists from around the country will come together to discuss the political terrain for independents with Independent Voting President Jackie Salit on her regular national conference call.

The March 4 call is entitled "**Independent Eyes on 2020: Howard Schultz, Hysterical Democrats, Authoritarian Republicans, and the Rules of the Game.**"

Judging by the many questions that are pouring in, activists in our networks are very concerned about the rules of the game for 2020, both in regards to independents' rights to participation in all levels of the process and voters' rights to decide who will represent us.

Here's a sampling of questions:

Susan Sandoz, Highland Park, Colorado:

My question relates to overcoming the objections we hear about voting for others outside of the two-party system as being harmful and somehow shameful like "how dare you" messaging. Do we have a solid retort or facts in overcoming such fear-based reactions that are often directed towards independents (also known as 'Unaffiliated' in Colorado)?



Michael Touissaint, Cumming, Georgia:

How do we meaningfully chip away at the dual party culture? Why is an independent candidate already marked a "spoiler?"



Debbie Smith, Winter Park, Florida:

What feedback are you getting from the national leadership of the Republican and Democratic parties regarding opening primaries for the 2020 presidential? What can we do at a local/grassroots level to help?



Randy Miller, Syracuse, Utah

What are some practical, everyday things we can do to talk friends and family down from partisanship without also engaging in it as well? Is there any way to change a partisan mind?

Join the call and submit your own question.

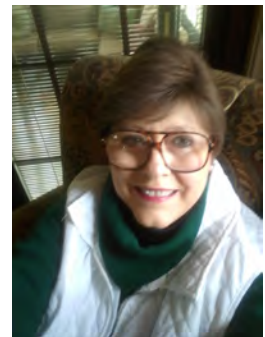
Register for the call here

Profiles in Independence

Donna Plunkett, Canton, Ohio

I have been an Independent for 35 years. It never made sense to me to slavishly follow a party or the people running for office under a party banner without thinking about each election's context. The kind of leadership needed varies depending on the issues of the time. What is happening socially, economically, culturally in society at the time of an election has a big impact on whom I choose to support.

I also believe in looking at candidates as individuals, rather than as an extension of any party. What is the candidate's history? Has s/he shown themselves to have a service mentality? Have s/he shown her/himself to be consistently honest, not tempted by the money and fame office often brings, aware of the issues and have sound, well thought-out, and rational ideas? Will s/he address the issues and get substantive results for the American people? What about his /her character? Does s/he understand s/he works for the people, rather than the party?



I found neither the Democratic or Republican parties able to entirely encapsulate what I look for when voting. What they say and what they do are often incongruent. *Caveat emptor* applies. In this case, however, it means: Let the voter beware. As citizens, we must be constantly vigilant that we are not "buying" the party line, without substance. Being an independent helps me to focus and connect to the tenets of our democracy and take action accordingly.

In the News

Dr. Jessie Fields participated in a *FOX News* TV panel of Democrats, Republicans, and independents in which Martha MacCallum, host of "The Story," claimed that voters were looking for candidates that would move both parties "further to the right." At 2:33 in the discussion Fields makes it clear that voters want a democracy plan that goes beyond the traditional divisions of left and right. **Watch here.** (*FOX-NEWS*)

Tiani Coleman's latest op-ed for *IVN*:

● **" URGENT: We Offer A Path to More Choice in Elections; Only The Duopoly Stands In Our Way" (Independent Voter Network)**

Read **Mainers for Fair Elections** representative **Joe Pickering's** Letter to the Editor, "**Time for Open Primaries**" (*Bangor Daily News*)

" Former Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz Says He's Considering Independent Run for President" (Howard Schultz's announcement on *60 Minutes*) (*CBS TV*)

Why Starbucks' Howard Schultz might have a shot at the White House (*CNN*)

Millennials and Gen Z will make up 37% of the 2020 electorate (*Axios*)

Off of a successful summit on gerrymandering sponsored by USC's Swarzenegger Institute, Michigan's **Katie Fahey** and **Arnold Swarzenegger** coauthored an op-ed "**Voters, Not Politicians must defeat gerrymandering**" (*The Hill*)

Read "**Organizations, Lawmakers Push for Open Primaries as Crowded 2020 Field Emerges,**" by Shawn Griffiths (*IVN*)

Read Western Colorado Independent Voters' Randy Fricke's Letter to the Editor, "**Movement afoot to make elections nonpartisan**" (*The Daily Sentinel*)

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