



March 26, 2019

Recap: National Conference Call Howard Schultz, Hysterical Democrats, Authoritarian Republicans, and the Rules of the Game

180 people from 35 states joined **Independent Voting** President **Jackie Salit** on her national conference call on March 4. The call was co-hosted by **Randy Fricke**, leader of **Western Colorado Independent Voters**, and **Gwen Mandell**, Independent Voting's Director of National Outreach. Many of the 120 questions submitted to Salit by independents from across the country touched on issues surrounding the 2020 presidential race, the current political culture, and strategies for action.

On the subject of Independent Voting's **Eyes on 2020** -- a national campaign to insert the voice of independents more fully into the presidential process, and the increased pressure that independents are exerting at the state level on the parties to include



independents in the primaries --
Salit said:

"We've got to make them feel us. They've got to feel us in every state capital, in every early-primary state, in every Super Tuesday state, in every conversation that goes on about candidates, about whether there's going to be an independent presidential campaign, what's the progress on HR 1 (the federal election reform bill) going to be, and what's the culture we want to have as a country as we move forward in these very challenging times. We have to make them feel that we're there, that we're building, that we're organizing, that we're reaching more and more people, that we're changing the terms of debate, changing the coalition building."

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

- [Howard Schultz and the spoiler effect](#)
- [Field of candidates shaping up for 2020](#)
- [Opening the presidential primaries to independents](#)
- [How is ideology coming into play with the emergence of a new democracy movement?](#)
- [Political reforms currently on the table](#)
- [What independents should be doing right now?](#)

Salit urged independents to contribute to the Eyes on 2020 online fundraising drive, with the goal of 1,000 people giving at least \$10 a month. "Having that 1,000 would be huge. It's part of making them feel us and making us visible. It would mean we have thousands of dollars to directly mobilize independent voters all over the country."

Please join the effort and make your donation today.



Eyes on 2020 Update

Independents want full access to EVERY stage of the presidential process in EVERY state. In Phase One of our "**Eyes on 2020**" campaign, we are pressuring party leaders, elected officials and candidates to commit to opening all 2020 presidential primaries and caucuses to independent voters.

Letter to William Weld

Steve Richardson of the Virginia Independent Voter Association and member of the Eyes on 2020 Presidential Candidate Cabinet Outreach team got to the heart of the matter in a letter he sent to former Governor William Weld, who announced the formation of an exploratory committee

for the Republican presidential nomination several weeks ago. Steve brought Weld up to speed on the Eyes on 2020 campaign including the letter to Perez and wrote:

"While we do not expect Democrats in every state to welcome Independents, we do believe they will seriously consider the option. It is far less likely that Republicans will like the idea, but together we may be able to help them see that this election is about far more than keeping or installing a party member in the White House; it's about restoring Americans' faith in our electoral system. Framed this way, Republicans have far more at stake. With or without open primaries, the Democrats are giving voice to anti-Trump sentiment and there is plenty of competition. Closed Republican primaries will only confirm all but the most loyal GOP voters' suspicions that the party has sold its soul."



Steve
Richardson

Letter to Newly Elected Congresswoman in New Mexico

Cabinet member **Dr. Jessie Fields** organized a group of New Mexico indies to send a letter to newly elected Congresswoman Debra Haaland, one of the first Native American women to be elected to Congress.

"We know you appreciate how important it is for American democracy to be truly inclusive," states the letter. "We are among the 26 million independent voters who were excluded from voting in the 2016 presidential primaries. In New Mexico 19% of Native American registered voters are independents. Among the grouping of voters who self-identify as independents nationally, 30% are African American voters, 41% are Hispanic voters, and over 50% are young voters."



Dr. Jessie Fields

Publicizing Efforts in New Jersey

New Jersey Independent Voters have reached out to Democratic Party Chair John Currie to discuss opening New Jersey presidential primaries and will be reaching out to Republican Chair Doug Steinhardt and other leaders in New Jersey regarding New Jersey independents' participation in the primaries.

Sue Davies, leader of **New Jersey Independent Voters** and member of the Eyes on 2020 cabinet, reported on the outreach in a letter to the editor published in several newspapers. She wrote:

"I am one of the 2.4 million independent voters in New Jersey. Independents outnumber both the Democrats and the Republicans here, yet we are excluded from the primaries and locked out of the most important electoral decisions in our state. That means a whopping 40% of NJ voters are effectively disenfranchised."



Read Sue Davies' Letter to the Editor, " **Independents Want to Vote in New Jersey Primaries.**" (*NJ Today*)

Independents Urge Governor Jay Inslee to Veto Anti-Independent Bill

Newly announced presidential candidate Governor Jay Inslee was about to receive a bill from the state legislature moving Washington State's presidential primary up in the calendar year to March. There was just one problem: Independent voters would have to declare a party affiliation

to participate. Would Inslee, whose presidential campaign is focused on fighting climate change, be as forward thinking on democracy issues?

Seven members of the **Independent Voting** network along with Independent Voting's Vice President for National Development **Cathy Stewart** signed onto [a letter to Governor Inslee](#) urging that he veto the bill, and a reporter from a local newspaper called for comment. Janice Lyle told the newspaper: "I want to continue to do my civic duties and one of those is to vote," she said. "But I can't, unless I lie, and that puts me in a bad place. There are so many of us who are not claiming either party these days and not letting us vote because we will not make the declaration is disenfranchising." ([Read the full article in The Everett Herald here](#)).

Inslee, unfortunately, was not listening and signed the bill before heading to New Hampshire to woo voters in that state where more than 40% of voters are independent. A number of Republican lawmakers endorsed the early primary date, but argued for the inclusion of independents, so the question of what the Republican Party will do in 2020 is an open one. In a state with nonpartisan voter registration since the 1930's and top-two state primaries, could there be a starker example of putting partisan interests before voter interests? ([Read Associated Press article here](#))

Eyes on 2020: An Independent View on the Field of Candidates

Sarah Lyons, Independent Voting's Director of Communications, wrote an op-ed about the **Eyes on 2020** campaign detailing who among the field of candidates has recognized the importance of independent voters. Her piece was published by South Carolina's *Post and Courier* as well as the *Independent Voter Network*.



"Independents will be asking these candidates -- and all who enter the 2020 race -- to lobby their respective parties to open the presidential primaries to independents. Undoubtedly, the road to the 2020 election will have many twists and turns. One essential feature independent voters will have their eyes on is whether we can become partners in American democracy -- not just kingmakers for the two party system."

[Read "Eyes on 2020: Independents to Call on Candidates to Demand Open Presidential Primaries"](#)

[Check out the Eyes on 2020 blog for the latest updates](#)

Florida's All Voters Vote Campaign Underway

Steve Hough, Director of **Florida Fair and Open Primaries** reports below on an exciting development in Florida, where 3.5 million independents (a.k.a. No Party Affiliation) are barred from voting in the primaries. Congratulations to Steve and his team and our colleagues at Open Primaries for many months of laying the groundwork for this critical next step in the fight to open primaries in Florida.

* * *

Florida Fair and Open Primaries is taking the fight for open primaries to the next level.

After the Florida Constitution Revision Commission refused to forward a proposal for a top-two open primary (the second most popular issue brought before them at public hearings) to the 2018 ballot, despite our mobilizing thousands of Floridians in support, our grassroots organization created a political committee, formed a non-profit corporation, and began a citizens' initiative to place it on the 2020 ballot.



With limited funding, our volunteers began circulating petitions in July 2018, collecting 8,500 signatures in a short period of time. In September, **Mike Fernandez**, revealed his support for open primaries in an interview with the *Miami Herald*. Shortly thereafter, Mike joined forces with **Gene Stearns** (a Miami Attorney) and **Carlos de la Cruz** (Chairman of CC1 and prominent art collector) to reboot **All Voters Vote**.



All Voters Vote (led by Stearns) had previously filed petitions with the state seeking to implement a top-two primary. Obstacles to fundraising stalled that effort but, with new sponsors, the effort has been reignited. Two new petitions are being circulated (one covers state elections, the other covers federal elections). Florida Fair and Open Primaries is proud to have laid the foundation for this movement, and we look forward to continue building on our past success in support of All Voters Vote.

In order to get the required 60% approval at the polls in November 2020, this must be a movement of the people. Florida Fair and Open Primaries will play a critical role in the coming months, mobilizing and expanding our network of volunteers, and making a statement about the bottom-up nature of this initiative.

[Read more here](#)

Politics For the People Announces Next Book Selection

The **Politics for the People Book Club** has announced its next selection: ***The Line Becomes A River*** by Francisco Cantú. Cantú will be the guest of Cathy Stewart, Independent Voting's Vice President for National Development and founder of P4P, on the next book club conference call, Sunday, June 2 at 7 pm EST.



Cathy Stewart

Said Stewart of Mr. Cantú's book in her review, "Memoir Gives First-Hand Account of the Real Crises on the Southern Border," published by the *Independent Voter Network*:

"Francisco Cantú, a third-generation Mexican American, became a Border Agent after college at the age of 23 and served for four years. His book gives us a nonlinear, at times poetic, account of his experiences -- of the desert, the thirst, the desperation of those trying to cross into the U.S. seeking a better life, the roles of the cartels and gangs that prey on people looking for safe passage, and the often dehumanizing tactics of the U.S. Border Patrol.

The Line Becomes A River is a haunting memoir about the people on the border and the desert, and the shadows that make it hard for us all to see one another. It's about much of what is missing in the partisan conversation about immigration and "the wall." Can we break down the partisan walls enough to let the actual people on the border -- both sides of it -- inform our conversations?"

Pick up the book and join the discussion on the **Politics for the People blog** and conference call for a different kind of discussion.

PEW CONTINUES TO LEAN AWAY FROM INDEPENDENTS: With the stakes increasing, independents' strength continues to be denied

With the trend among Americans towards political independence showing no sign of retreat and the possible entry of Starbucks Executive Howard Schultz into the presidential race as an

independent, pollsters at PEW, the self-described nonpartisan "fact tank," rehashed old assertions for a **new report** saying most independents are simply "leaners" and "true" independents comprise an insignificant portion of the electorate most notable for their lack of involvement in politics.

A few partisans eagerly jumped on the band wagon to amplify the anti-independent message including one in **New York Magazine** where the most meaningful thing the author states is that PEW's new study doesn't break any new ground. Meanwhile, **our summer survey of 5,000 independents** broke new ground, simply by asking independents new questions, including why they are independent and how they feel about pollsters' insistence on asking the "leaner" questions: 68% thought the question showed a partisan bias.



Barbara Patrizzi

"PEW persistently categorizes independents as leaners, so nothing new in this report," said Cathy Stewart, Vice President for National Development at Independent Voting. "However, it is unclear that the 'leaner' designations are of any predictive value. It surely didn't predict that independents would swing from Obama to Trump, or break for the Republicans in the 2014 midterms and then for the Democrats in the 2018 midterms (a 24-point swing). Surely, this is not the behavior of 'leaners'. So, perhaps that point of developing the topography of leaning is an exemption from asking the big question: why are people choosing to be independent?"

Profiles in Independence

Michael Toussaint, Cumming, Georgia

I was born in London, England and moved to the United States as a pre-teen. My father, who fancied himself somewhat of a philosopher, stressed critical thinking to me as a child and those lessons came to shape the core of who I became as an adult. My father encouraged questioning everything as a child, and I found that inquisitive trait even more critical now as I view the world through the more experienced lens of an adult. Independence of thought has always been liberating for me, and the basis for rejecting status quo in exchange for progress. It is in that vein that I have always rejected being pigeon holed in any part of my life - especially when it came to politics.



Michael Toussaint

For years I identified as a centrist conservative, however, I eventually came to realize that conservatives did not have all the answers. By the same token, I was also certain that neither did liberals. For instance, I noticed that blacks, who vote overwhelmingly Democratic, are not any better off, on any level, for doing so. I also watched white conservatives demand an end to Obamacare so that they can go back to having no healthcare. The utter insanity that is today's two-party politics has become a lesson in futility, and I came to understand that one had to truly suspend disbelief and contort oneself into grotesque shapes to subscribe fully to either of the two major political parties. As the Democrats race to the left and conservatives race to the right, the net effect is a desperate race to the bottom which benefits no one except the self-serving incumbent political parties. No, I CANNOT be a part of that. Not now. Not ever.

As it were, Gill Scott-Heron was correct: "The revolution will not be televised." Indeed, we must turn off our respective idiot-boxes and get out to where change happens if we hope to drive change. To turn the American political quagmire around so that it serves the people and not only a loyal constituency, we must find a new way forward by reclaiming politics so that it is again an

institution for the people - ALL the people. There must be a grassroots movement where the best ideas of conservatives and liberals are forged into an entity that is greater than the sum of its parts. And it is in that revolution where we will dismantle the existing party-line entitlements and force both parties to listen to the tempered reason that can only come from independent thought delivered through an independent political tidal wave of change.

On August 2, 1776 the Declaration of Independence was signed and it ushered in what would become the greatest country in the history of the world. And now, with a new political awakening strengthening across this great country, is it not time to sign a new declaration of independence? If not by us, then by whom? If not now, then when?

In the News

Following a ruling by the New Mexico Supreme Court, Independent Voting Counsel Harry Kresky wrote this op-ed asking, "**Will the N.M. Supreme Court Block All Paths to End Taxpayer-Funded Closed Primaries?**" (*Independent Voter Network*)

Read: **Letter to the editor: "Millennial, Generation Z voters should seek out independent ideas"** (*Portland Press Herald*)

Another attempt to change Tennessee's voter registration from nonpartisan to partisan was rejected. Read: **"Party registration wisely rejected; issue goes back 50 years"** (*Knox News*)

According to an **NBC/WSJ poll**, " **Almost 40% of Americans want a third political party, even if they don't like the candidates**" (*CNN*)

Senator Justin Chenette, co-sponsor of an open primaries bill recently introduced in Maine, penned the op-ed, " **Expand voter rights, offer access with open primaries**" (*Biddiford Courier*)

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