



May 23, 2019

National Conference Call for Independents

Jackie Salit's national conference call is the largest ongoing gathering of independents in the country. On May 13, 170 independents from 35 states joined the call, "How to See Clearly in Confusing Times: Thoughts for Independents." 70 questions sent in by independents kicked off the discussion.

In case you missed it, [listen to the entire call here](#) or click below to listen to excerpts.



- [Update on Eyes on 2020](#)
- [Parties Undermine Grassroots Electoral Reforms](#)
- [The Parties' 2020 Dilemma and Questions to Ask the Candidates](#)
- [Role of the Media and Independents' Voice](#)
- [The General Elections Debates](#)
- [Organizing Strategies](#)

Snap Poll Takes Independents' Views on Presidential Election

Jackie Salit invited conference call participants to take a snap poll., which took the temperature of independents on a number of critical issues concerning the 2020 presidential elections. The poll produced some expected -- and unexpected -- results!

- 96.4% said they feel that party leaders should take whatever steps are necessary to give independent voters the right to vote in the 2020 primaries.
- 92.8% said they would vote in those primaries.
- 99% said the media should ask us why we are independents!

A question about Howard Schultz was also in the mix. Here are a few of the results:

"Howard Schultz, the founder of Starbucks, is considering a run for President as an independent," the question begins. "Which of the following recommendations to Schultz would you urge in making his decision? You can choose as many as you like."

- 71.4% said that Schultz should talk to the 40% of the country who are independents. Their consensus was that if he can win their confidence, he has a real campaign and should run.
- 12.5% said that 2020 is "not the year to run under any circumstances."
- 66.9% thought that he should "Forget about polls. Go make your case to the voters, all kinds of voters from all different communities. Tell everyone you're running to build a new kind of politics in America."

2020 and Beyond: The View from County Road T

In her monthly column for *IVN*, Jackie Salit wrote about the swing states of Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan with a personal touch, having become a part-time resident of Wisconsin.

"Arriving at County Road T is a mixed experience for me. I'm happy to be out of the political game, where I spend much time, happy to be at a place that few in the game know about or care about. But this neglect also upsets me. This is "flyover country," the rural perimeter of the so-called Rust Belt which gained sudden fame in the 2016 presidential election because the 'Blue Wall' that made it a sturdy Democratic Party stronghold crumbled."



[Read Jackie Salit's complete column here](#) .

EYES on 2020: New Partnerships and Opportunities

Campaign in Arizona Forges New Allies

In Arizona, where registered independents outnumber registered Democrats, the state and local primaries are open. However, the Presidential Preference Elections (PPE) have remained closed. This led to mass voter confusion in the 2016 elections among the state's 1.25 million indies. Independents want to see this mass voter suppression end and are pushing to get the PPE open to all Arizona voters for 2020.



(L to R) Arizona Eyes on 2020 Committee: Dennis Flaherty, Heidi Davidson, Richard Sinclair, Tim Castro, Bill Pettinger, Al Bell with Cathy Stewart.

Cathy Stewart, Independent Voting's Vice President for National Development, recently traveled to

Arizona to support the effort. Over the course of several days, Stewart and local indie leaders including Tim Castro, Al Bell and Denny Flaherty met with local elected officials and party leaders to make the case for opening the PPE. They found some important allies.

- Adrian Fontes is the Maricopa County Recorder and oversees the administration of elections in the county, where over 62% of the state's voters cast their ballots. **Fontes**

was elected to the position in 2016 and became the first Latino to hold the office. Interestingly, 40% of Latinos in Arizona are not registered with either major party. During his meeting with Tim Castro and Cathy Stewart, Fontes articulated very strong support for opening the PPE. He immediately tweeted a message that was widely shared and liked: "Independent voters should be allowed to vote in Arizona's Presidential Preference Election next March...particularly because their taxpayer dollars fund it. Fair is fair." Fontes has begun to pursue a pathway inside the Democratic Party to get its PPE open. He told *The Hub*, "Including non-party voters in our Presidential Preference Elections is a no-brainer. I'm completely dedicated to making this happen so that we can continue to engage more Americans in our democracy. I'm going to work with state and local officials and party folks to try to make this a reality in 2020."



L to R: Tim Castro, Katie Hobbs, Cathy Stewart, Al Bell, Dennis Flaherty

Secretary of State Katie Hobbs met with our local team and went on record with her belief that since the Presidential Preference Elections are paid for with tax dollars, they should be open to all voters. Hobbs is planning to include a push to open the PPE in her budget request for the funding of the 2020 election. If that does not succeed, the Democratic Party can still open their PPE to indies and the state would be legally compelled to comply.

Said Castro who was instrumental in setting up a number of local meetings, "It's refreshing to have Secretary Hobbs and Recorder Fontes take time

to hear the concerns of independent voters. I am hopeful they will build a relationship towards individuals who wish to vote without a party affiliation and want to exercise their right at the ballot box."

Al Bell, leader of Independent Voters for Arizona and a cabinet member of the Eyes on 2020 committee, added "They both 'get it' about the plight of Independent Voters ...The seeds have been planted and it is up to us to tend to them."

The Arizona Eyes on 2020 Committee is expanding its outreach to the public with a letter writing campaign and by gathering signatures on the [open letter to Arizona Democrat and Republican Party Chairs Felecia Rotellini and Kelli Ward](#).

Progress in Pennsylvania Through Persistence and Coalition Building

Years of dogged lobbying by Independent Pennsylvanians, which represents the nearly 800,000 independents in the state, is paying off. A bill to open the primaries is now receiving a full-throated debate in the state legislature and has the backing of former Democratic and Republican chairs (who previously opposed open primaries) along with the backing of a broad array of good government and civic groups.

"This is the most traction [we've] seen in 15 years," said Jenn Bullock, leader of Independent Pennsylvanians in an *Associated Press* story. "An open primary system can erode the outsized influence of political parties over a system of elected government that doesn't address issues of concern to ordinary citizens anymore. I don't think the parties should be gatekeepers to our voting rights."



L to R: Jim Lundberg, Nichele Richardson, Dr. Jessie Fields, Gwen Mandell, Melida Davila, Allen Cox, Stephen Bouikidis, Jenn Bullock, Angus Lam, Juliana Francisco

Independent Pennsylvanians is circulating a [sign-on letter](#) directed to current chairs of the Democratic and



Bullock interviews supporter

Republican parties. They held a Day of Action on May 21 -- primary day -- to keep the spotlight on the exclusion of independents. Joined by fellow independents from New York, they held signs that read "I Can't Vote, Ask Me Why" and collected signatures on the letter to party chairs. Said Nichele Richardson, member of Independent Pennsylvanians, "I'm here because I think all citizens have the right to vote. An independent's vote is just as important as a Republican or Democrat -- so we should be able to vote in primaries."

More press coverage of the Pennsylvania open primaries debate:

- **Pennsylvania Capital Star, 5/1/19** (*Pennsylvania Capital Star*)
- **Open Primaries Can Benefit Democracy.** (*Phoenixville News*)

Maine

Earlier this week, supporters of semi-open primaries from across the state converged on the State House to lobby lawmakers in support of LD 211, legislation backed by Democratic, Republican, and independent legislators that would allow all unenrolled voters to vote in taxpayer-funded primary elections. This marked the second time in less than a month that supporters of opening Maine's primaries went to the State House to advocate for LD 211, which is working its way through the committee process and, hopefully onto the main floor of the state legislature. Organized by **Open Primaries Maine**, citizens from Bangor, Holden, Augusta and Belfast participated. Betsy Sweet, activist, attorney and former Democratic Party candidate for Governor, joined in. Adding a big boost to the effort, the **Portland Press Herald came out with a strong endorsement in support** of opening the primaries in the state of Maine.

In the build-up to the lobbying day, **an editorial** co-authored by Jane Kleeb, Nebraska Democratic Party Chair, and Cathy Stewart was circulated, along with **a letter Jane wrote to the Maine legislature.**

Kaitlin LaCasse, campaign manager for Open Primaries Maine and organizer of the Lobby Day said:

"We are not surprised to see growing support for LD 211. Unenrolled voters simply want their voices heard in taxpayer-funded elections, and most Mainers agree this just makes sense."



Lobby Day participants enter state house

Bob Croce of Mainers for Open Elections, Independent Voting's local affiliate, was on hand. His letter to the editor, **"Fight Partisanship with Open Primaries,"** appeared in the *Bangor Daily News* that week. Croce explained: "Maine is one of only 11 states that still have closed primary elections. It's time to stop feeding the partisan beast and move to open primaries."

Missouri

Good news: the bill introduced by Republican lawmakers to close the primaries and force partisan voter registration has died!

Independent Voting activists in the state lobbied against the bill, including writing letters to the editor. Kim Wright, Eyes on 2020 cabinet member, lent her voice to a robocall sponsored by Open Primaries that reached out to voters in Wright's hometown of Joplin. Said Wright: "Thankfully, HB922 did not make it out of committee this year. It will be important to continue our efforts to educate all Missouri voters about this introduced legislation for

future reference. Registering to vote without party affiliation in Missouri is a tradition that allows all voters to participate -- we must preserve that process." Wright's letter to the editor, "**Open Primary Process is Working**", was published in the *Joplin Globe*.

In his letter to the editor, independent Mark O'Bryan of St. Louis wrote: "Since primary elections are taxpayer funded, the change made by HB 26 is an infringement on voters' rights. If parties want to hold primaries which exclude voters then they should pay for these primary elections out of their campaign funds OR NOT be allowed on the ballot at all."



Kim Wright

Spokesperson Training Preps Independents

With independent voters again poised to play a significant role in national elections, media outlets have increasingly been reaching out to Sarah Lyons, IV's Director of Communications for commentary from indies at the local and national level.

"Having the opportunity to tell your story on TV is quite an adrenaline rush, but I have to say when I saw the final edited version, at first I was kind of bummed out. The panelist made a lot of poignant points about issues that matter to indies and 90% of it wound up on the cutting room floor. It was clear that *CNN* was much more interested in which way we were leaning that week. But when I look back, it was wonderful to get a seat at the table. We're never going to be able to affect how they do the editing, but they can't stop us from speaking out and we simply have to keep chipping away."

- Jim Lundberg, on *CNN* appearance



Jim Lundberg

"I had a blast! The host (Bruce Johnson) said speaking to independents was a pleasant break from the non-stop and oh-so-predictable partisan sniping. He invited me back a few days later to comment on Joe Biden's entry into the race. Sarah, I can't tell you how much your advice helped. I wrote down five things I wanted to say and managed to make every single point."

- Steve Richardson, on *WUSA CH 4* appearances



Steve Richardson

Lyons conducts spokesperson training every third Thursday of the month.

- **WUSA CH 9 Roundtable** with independents
- WUSA on Biden entry into the race. **Richardson used the occasion** to speak about what he is looking for from Biden, and every candidate who runs, and why he is an independent.

Contact Sarah Lyons at slyons@cuip.org if you are interested in Spokesperson Training.

All Independents Primary in California

The Independent Voter Project (IVP) has launched a campaign to create an All Independents Presidential Primary in California. Independent Voting has joined a growing coalition of reform organizations to support the campaign, including the National Association of NonPartisan Reformers, Open Primaries, FairVote, Unite America, RepresentUs and others. The campaign includes both a legislative and legal strategy and seeks to create a presidential ballot for California's 5.6 million independent voters (known in California as "No Party Preference" voters). Every independent would receive a primary ballot that includes *all* the presidential candidates. Political parties can choose whether or not to count the votes from this ballot. The campaign asserts a very simple premise, "Elections should serve people, not parties."

Said Chad Peace, IVP attorney, "Let the Democratic Party have its primary ballot. Let the Republican Party have its primary ballot. Why not give California's 5 million nonpartisan tax-

paying citizens who have exercised their first amendment right not to join either party the opportunity to cast a vote by simply providing them a ballot too?"

Check out this video announcing the campaign, and **sign the petition here**.



Don't let it happen again - California's
Unconstitutional Presidential Primary
Election

Politics for The People Book Club: A Different Kind of Conversation about Immigration and the Border

The Politics for the People Book Club's latest selection, *The Line Becomes A River* by Francisco Cantú, is generating a vibrant discussion on the **Politics For the People** blog. Cantú will be Cathy Stewart's guest on June 2 when the club discusses the book during the national conference call.



Francisco Cantú and Cathy Stewart

As Cathy Stewart, founder and leader of the club said in **her review about the book on IVN**: "*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.'"

Cantú was a guest recently on **Amanpour & Co.** speaking about the book, when the interviewer, Hari Sreenivasan asked if the border was as bad as he described, why weren't we hearing from other border agents?

Said Cantú: "Institutions rarely change from within. I think that everything is being done from the moment that you sign up at your border patrol recruitment facility and you show up at the border patrol academy, everything is being done to normalize the activities that you are participating in and to sort of desensitize you to the hard realities that you are seeing and participating in."

Join the discussion on the **Politics for the People** blog and on June 2 with Cantú, Stewart and book club members.

Politics for the People Conference Call
The Line Becomes a River
With Author Francisco Cantú
Sunday, June 2nd at 7 pm EST.
Call in number: 605-313-5156
Passcode 767775#

Profiles in Independence

Guy Tiano, Goodyear, Arizona

I'm Guy Tiano, and I've been registered as an independent since I first registered to vote. I've always preferred the non-partisan nature of not choosing a party. I love the idea of voting for a candidate based on her or his platform and views versus just toeing the party line and voting for a candidate because "They're on my team." My political journey of being more involved as opposed to just participating

in elections has only just begun. **I co-authored an op-ed with McKenzie Sadeghi**, another student at ASU, about Presidential Preference Elections in Arizona. Cathy Stewart, the Vice President for National Development at Independent Voting, saw the op-ed and reached out to me to attend a meeting on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship. Now I am currently focused on writing more op-eds as well as Letters to Editors to continue to push for Open Presidential Preference Elections. I am a veteran of the US Army, currently going to school at Arizona State University using the GI Bill, and I work as a Barback and Security at a local bar. While I have quite a bit on my plate, and I am not the greatest at time management, I'm getting better and am super excited for the opportunities to get more involved in trying to create a better future for myself and others.



Guy Tiano

In the News

In "**Midlands Voices: Independent Voters Help Win Elections**," Jane Kleeb, Nebraska Democratic Party Chair, and Cathy Stewart, Independent Voting's Vice President for National Development argue that the Democratic Party should change their rules to make sure independent voters are included in the primaries, including the presidential primaries next year (*Omaha World-Herald*).

In the wake of the voters of Michigan affirming an independent redistricting commission to redraw Michigan's lines, "**Opinion: Good Candidates, not Maps, Alter Election Results**," about a court ruling in support of redrawing lines, and, "**Redistricting Money Would Be Transferred to Legislature under House Spending Bill**," about the legislature's effort to undermine the will of Michigan voters. (*Detroit News*)

Western Colorado Independent Voters' Randy Fricke's letter to the editor, "**Don't Cut Independent Candidates Out**," appeared in the *Denver Post*. (*Denver Post*). His editorial, "**America Needs an Independent Presidential Primary**," was published by IVN. (*IVN*)

Read: "**U.S. District Court Rules against Level the Playing Field Lawsuit Seeking to Open Presidential Debates**." (*Open Debates*)

Mainers for Open Elections' Joe Pickering wrote an opinion piece: "**Voters Must Cast Off the Shackles of Two Party Control**" (*IVN*) and a letter to the editor, "**Maine Should Think Beyond Rulership by the Parties**." (*Portland Press Herald*)

"Traditional closed primaries are the largest active voter disenfranchisement currently happening in this country by several orders of magnitude," said Jeremy Gruber, senior vice president of Open Primaries, a non-profit dedicated to open and nonpartisan primary systems. Read "**Open Primary Movement Seeks to Empower Voters to Break Gridlock**" by Matthew Renda. (*Courthouse News*)

Florida

Florida Fair and Open Primaries' Steve Hough provides an update about on-the-ground activity in the fight to open the primaries in Florida in "**Will this Critical Battleground State Open Its Presidential Primaries in 2020?**"

Dr. Jeff Solomon organized a successful campaign to get a resolution passed by the Miami-Dade and Brevard County branches of the Democratic Party to support opening the presidential primaries. In "**All Voters Vote: The Campaign for Open Election Primaries in Florida**," he endorses the All Voters Vote effort to put a nonpartisan initiative on the ballot in Florida.

Gwen Mandell
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Give us a call today!