



June 25, 2019

Eyes on 2020 -- Momentum is Building

Pennsylvania Open Primary Bill Approved for Senate Vote

SB 300, the bill to open Pennsylvania's primaries was successfully passed out of committee with bipartisan support after a full committee debate and public hearing. It now heads to the Senate floor for a vote.

Jenn Bullock, Director of Independent Pennsylvanians, a grassroots advocacy group, commented to a *PennLive* reporter:

"This is a promising day for independent voters across Pennsylvania," said Bullock. "We've never had the opportunity to vote in what are often the decisive elections in our communities. Being forced to join a political party in order to have a voice in the electoral process is absurd and unfair. We're grateful that Senator Scarnati has taken up this cause and



L to R - Melida Davila, Jennifer Bullock, Jessie Fields, Nichele Richardson, Adaywale Fields

especially pleased to see both Democratic and Republican members of the State Senate Government Committee supporting the issue."

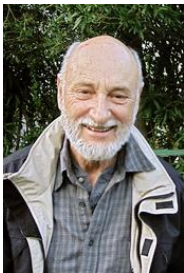
Independent Pennsylvanians, along with a coalition of reform groups -- including Common Cause, The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania and the Committee of Seventy -- launched **Open Primaries PA** to advocate for free voting rights for independents.

Last week, Dr. Jessie Fields of New York and Adaywale Fields of Philadelphia joined with Independent Pennsylvanians for a day of street work in the multi-racial community of West Philadelphia, gathering over 80 signatures in support of the open primary legislation.

"It was not the Democratic Party or the Republican Party that produced the Voting Rights Act," said Dr. Fields. "It was ordinary people, black and white, who responded to Dr. King and marched in Selma, and independents are continuing that legacy for full and equal voting rights. Almost everyone we spoke to eagerly signed and we plan to continue the grassroots outreach throughout the communities of Philadelphia and beyond."

Read "**PA Lawmakers Look to Change Laws to Spur Voter Participation; 'It is Time for Voting Reform'**" (*Penn Live*)

Arizona



Al Bell

"The Democratic and Republican parties in Arizona could open the presidential preference election (PPE) to the 1.26 million independent Arizonans with a flourish of the pen. That is what the Democratic Party did in Nebraska, California, Oklahoma and South Dakota." So wrote Al Bell in a timely op-ed **that appeared in the Arizona Capitol Times on June 10th**.

That is exactly what our team of activists is asking the Arizona Democratic Party to do. Earlier this month, Cathy Stewart (Vice President for National Development, Independent Voting); Tim Castro and Denny Flaherty (Independent Voters for Arizona activists); and Danny Ortega (immediate past Chair of the Board of Directors of the National Council of La Raza and an outspoken ally in the fight for opening the presidential primary), sat down with Arizona Democratic Party Chair Felecia Rotellini; the political director of the party, Quiana Dickenson; and chief of staff Kelly Paisley for a lively dialogue. The discussion ranged from the growing number of independents in the Latino community -- where upwards of 40% of the community is registering independent -- to who independent voters are and how opening the Presidential Preference Election is an opportunity for the Democratic Party to reach out to independents. Said Stewart, "Chairperson Rotellini listened intently and said that she would give the issue serious consideration. Stay tuned."

On a recent Eyes on 2020 leadership cabinet call, Castro reflected on progress made from 2016 to date: "What a change in a few short years!

Each person we met with advocated that if you're paying for the election, then you



L to R: Quiana Dickenson, Tim Castro, Cathy Stewart, Danny Ortega, Esq., Dennis Flaherty, Felecia Rotellini and Kelly Paisley

should be allowed to vote. The Democrats understand that the math works in their favor."

Florida

The resolution calling on the Florida Democratic Party to open all state and federal primaries in 2020 is gaining momentum. Introduced by Dr. Jeff Solomon, the resolution has now been passed by two county organizations, Miami-Dade and Brevard (where it passed unanimously). [Read more here.](#)



In addition, Aaron McKinney, State Committeeman for the Miami-Dade Democratic Executive Committee, has added significant support in his recent op-ed "[Time for Florida Dems to Embrace Open Primaries](#)" which appeared on *FloridaPolitics.com*.

"As an African American leader of the Florida Democratic Party, I believe we have two choices in how we relate to the growing ranks of independent voters, many of whom are people of color and young, like me. We can cross our arms and say, 'you must join our party if you want to vote,' or we can live up to our mission to be a party of inclusion, participation, diversity and progress, open the Democratic primaries, and build a new governing coalition for Florida. I choose the latter. Open primaries."

Steve Hough, Director of Florida Fair and Open Primaries, added: "Fifty percent (50%) of millennials and a third of African American and Latino voters are independent. These are traditional allies of the Democratic Party. The party needs to wake up."

Florida Fair and Open Election activists have now collected over 700 signatures on a letter to Democratic and Republican Party Chairs Terry Rizzo and Joe Gruters, urging them to open the presidential primaries. The Republican Party has decided not to hold a primary, so focus is on the DP. Hough is aiming for 5,000 signatures by October when the full state committee of the Florida Democratic Party will vote the broader resolution up or down at their state convention ([If you live in Florida, sign the letter here](#)).

[For more, read "Democrats Debate Primary Registration Changes."](#) (CBS Miami).

Poor Bernie

In her latest *IVN* column, "Poor Bernie," Jackie Salit lays out Bernie Sanders' dilemma.

"The fault lines in the Democratic Party -- which Sanders was so instrumental in revealing -- make it impossible for the party to accept that [Trump/Sanders voters] coalition. It will repel it. The Democratic Party would have to transform itself to embrace that cross-boundary coalition, rather than such a coalition being able to transform the party."

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



With Debates Scorecard, Independents Measure Appeal of Democratic Party Contenders in Presidential Primary Debates

This Wednesday and Thursday, June 26 and 27, *NBC*, *MSNBC* and *Telemundo* will be sponsoring the first of a series of debates among 20 of the Democratic Party contenders for president in 2020.

We have developed a debates scorecard for independent voters to measure the appeal of each of the 20 candidates. Tune in and use your scorecard to rate the candidates' performance. We

will tabulate your responses and release an independents' scorecard to the press and the public.

Download the scorecard here, watch the debates, and send your results to national@independentvoting.org or **use the online scorecard to record your answers here**.

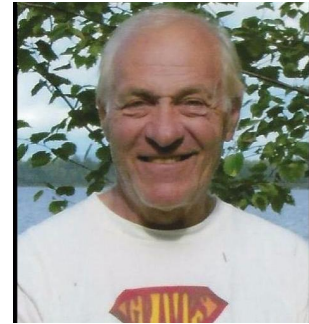


In Memoriam: Bob Croce

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Bob Croce, the co-founder of Mainers for Open Elections.

Bob was a tireless advocate for independents, including last month when Bob led the way in the fight for open primaries, testifying in support of a bill to open Maine's primaries.

Here's how the obituary in the *Bangor Daily News* characterized Bob: "Bob will be remembered by many as a nonconformist with a variety of interests and passions. He was not afraid to try new things and, as a result, had many diverse experiences that shaped him throughout his life while always staying true to his thoughtful, resourceful, independent, and occasionally curmudgeonly core."



Bob Croce

Joe Pickering, Bob's friend and coworker for over 20 years (and co-founder of Mainers for Open Elections) added:

"Bob was a remarkably dedicated American who helped many thousands of clients who were in great need as Director of Community Support Services at our former agency, Community Health and Counseling Services. He was a leader in the movement to help bring about the success of Ranked Choice Voting. As co-founder of Mainers for Open Elections, he testified in Augusta many times and wrote lots of letters to the editor. He left a big hole in my heart. He was gentle with his words and actions and persuasive in his personality. We lost a Voter Freedom Champion."

Bob will be deeply missed by all of us who were touched by him, and especially by those of us who had the pleasure of working with him. We continue our work to open our democracy with him in mind.

WANTED: Independents to Speak with the Media

CNN and *NBC* (among other media outlets) have recently reached out to Independent Voting for help in connecting to independent voters around the country. These media organizations are looking for independents to comment on the 2020 presidential elections. If you live in Florida, Iowa, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Wisconsin or Michigan and would like to be contacted by a *CNN* producer, please let us know. You'll be added to the distribution for Independent Voting's weekly media summary and invited to join the monthly spokesperson trainings offered by our Director of Communications, Sarah Lyons.



Let All Voters Vote: Independents and the Expansion of Voting Rights in the United States

Attorneys Harry Kresky (Independent Voting), Jeremy Gruber (Open Primaries) and Michael Hardy (National Action

Network) authored an important article on the challenge to win full voting rights for independents. It appears in the current issue of *Touro Law Review*. In it, they posit:



Harry Kresky, Esq.



Michael Hardy, Esq.



Jeremy Gruber, Esq.

"Meaningful political participation requires the opportunity to influence electoral outcomes and cannot be predicated on one's membership in one of the two major political parties. Voters, in our view, have a fundamental right to not associate with a political party. This right is violated when a state conditions the right to full participation in the electoral process on joining a private political party."

Kresky commented:

"We hope our work will impact on how courts and others in the legal/political arena respond to efforts to take on the two-party duopoly and move our country towards an electoral system that is fair and inclusive."

[Read the *Touro Law Review* article here.](#)

Politics for the People Book Club Recordings - A Conversation with Francisco Cantú

On June 1, 2019, Cathy Stewart and Politics for the People members from across the country dialed in for a conversation with author Francisco Cantú about his book *The Line Becomes A River: Dispatches from the Border*.

Francisco Cantú served as a border patrol agent from 2008 to 2012. His book, *The Line Becomes A River: Dispatches from the Border*, recounts his experiences working as an agent, as well as the emotional toll his work took on him.



Francisco Cantú and Cathy Stewart

[You can listen to the full discussion or excerpts of the call here](#)

Profiles in Independence

Ken Cerullo, Mahwah, New Jersey

My interest in the various proposed structural reforms of our flawed political system drives my interest in independent politics. As a political tourist in New Hampshire during the 2016 election, the message that the "system is rigged" resonated with voters across the board -- I saw voters seriously considering both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders. That message drove the election and should serve as the mandate of the 2020 election. Yet little seems to get done to fix our system despite public support for change!

Successful corporations universally follow a system of "best practices" to ensure longstanding business success through increased efficiency and productivity. We need "best practices" for our political system (by making ongoing and incremental reforms) to make our political system more responsive to the needs of the electorate. Unfortunately, we see



Ken Cerullo

little progress due to entrenched interests blocking progress (and spreading misinformation) along with elected officials more interested in scoring political points than solving problems.

There are a myriad of ways our flawed political system can be improved. I support any and all productive discussions on how to fix our system of government whether it be campaign finance, gerrymandering, term limits, open primaries, access to debates, congressional rule reform, fake news and information, etc. Only once we make meaningful structural reforms will people regain the trust in our political process and be willing to compromise and solve problems.

Wouldn't it be great to see CNN and Fox dedicate time to a comprehensive national debate on structural reforms of our political system?

I have been part of IndependentVoting.org as well as No Labels. Both are great groups with worthwhile initiatives, and there are many other independent groups across our great nation with other worthwhile initiatives. We need to find a way to unite our diverse group of independents that are independently working on worthwhile goals. And I would wager that the overlap in independent organizations is the desire for meaningful debate on structural reforms! Towards that end, I have tried to bring people together from these independent groups so that we can work together and support each other and consolidate our political clout when it makes sense. We need to better leverage our fractured political clout by unifying the 40% of independents and force political change. I am trying to do my part!

In the News

Read Frank Fear's " **Just How 'Independent' Are Independents? Survey Says.... But Wait!**" (*LA Progressive*)

Important editorial by Independent Voting's Cathy Stewart and Nebraska Democratic Party Chair, Jane KleeB, that originally appeared in the *Omaha News Herald*, " **Democracy, Voters, the Heart of Elections.**" (*Albany Times Union*).

Read " **State of Maine: Open Primaries Killed Again,**" an op-ed by Jill Goldthwait, retired nurse and former independent Maine State Senator. (*Maine Desert Islander*)

Larry Reinsch, a long time member of the Independent Voting network, doesn't apologize for voting for Trump in 2016 on **this Anderson Cooper 360 segment**. Why should he? He's focused on constitutional issues, not party politics, and in 2016 he didn't think Clinton was the stronger candidate on this core concern. (*CNN*)

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