



*September 27, 2019*

## **As Battle for the White House Heats Up, Independents Ask: What Can We Do About the Mess We're In?**

Four times a year, a community of independent activists gather to participate in Independent Voting President Jackie Salit's national conference call, the largest gathering of its kind. On September 16, 150 people from 27 states joined her to hear about the latest developments on the independent front and to discuss presidential politics. On the call, entitled "As Battle for the White House Heats Up, Independents Ask: What Can We Do About the Mess We're In?", Salit responded to questions compiled from the 75 that were submitted by call participants from across the



country. In her remarks about Independent Voting's Eyes on 2020 campaign, Salit said:

"We have put the parties in a position where they must explain what they've done and why they've done it. And I think this is so important because this is the beginning of holding the parties accountable for their actions. And let me just say this: We are the only ones who are going to do this. The courts are not doing it, the legislatures are not doing it, the parties are not doing it, the media is not doing it. We are the ones who are doing it. And we've broken new ground here...we have laid down a challenge that will not go away, and I think our message to the parties is 'You will be held to account'."

**Listen to the complete call [here](#)** or choose one of the topics below.

**The Eyes on 2020 Campaign: Accomplishments and Pathways Forward**

**The State of the Presidential Race**

**Turning the Hyperpartisan Noise into Opportunity**

**What Can We Do About Partisanship and the Way our Election Process is stalling Action in Congress?**

**Issues and Categories: What Do They Have to Do with Independents**

**Is an Independent Presidential Run a Viable Option for the Future? Where Do You See the Movement in 2025?**

## **"Big Mistake, Democrats": In Swing State Arizona, Democrats Vote To Exclude Independents**

Arizona, where 33% of the electorate and 41% of the Latino community are independent, has been a key battleground in the Eyes on 2020 effort to open the presidential primaries to independents.

Through a series of meetings with Democratic Party State Chair Felecia Rotellini and other party and elected leaders in the spring, independent activists met Maricopa County Recorder Adrian Fontes, who spearheaded an effort inside the Democratic Party to open their Presidential Preference Election.

While Fontes **editorialized** on the issue and pressed forward inside the party, Independent Voters for Arizona and Independent Voting developed a **hard-hitting cable and social media campaign** to bring the lockout of 1.27 million Arizona voters to the public eye. Hundreds of postcards were circulated by 45 independents across the state. We also took to the campuses, where 588 college students sent postcards to Rotellini and the Democratic Party State Committee urging them to do the right thing.

Last week, independents sat with the editorial board of the *Arizona Republic* for an extended discussion and did a group interview with *AP* reporter Jonathan Cooper, bringing Adrian Fontes and another prominent ally, attorney and civil rights leader Danny Ortega, into both conversations.

The story took root. Abe Kwok, who participated in the editorial board meeting, wrote an editorial that appeared the next day: "**Independents Need Democrats' Help to Vote in Presidential Primaries. Don't Count on It**"

The story that independents' voting rights hung in the balance broke through to national press just prior to the Democratic Party State Committee meeting when **U.S. World and News Report** picked up a local *Associated Press* story.

Last week, **Fontes appeared on the local PBS show "Arizona Horizon" with Independent Voting's Cathy Stewart, making the case again .**



Click on photo to watch Fontes and Stewart

Forty-eight hours later, Fontes led the effort at the Democratic Party State Committee meeting to pass an emergency resolution. A passionate floor debate ensued, with local press noting that "[a] fiery debate at the party's state committee meeting pitted party loyalists worried about legal expenses against younger activists, who argued that opening the primary election lives up to the party ideal of expanding voting rights." **AZ Capital Times.**

The resolution failed after a hand count of ballots, but ever the warrior-optimist, Fontes concluded: "**I am SO proud of the young folks who stood for voters outside their party today. The future requires fairness and faith in our systems and each other as Americans. Today was a big step in that direction!**"

After the state committee meeting, Arizona's leading political columnist Laurie Roberts offered **this scathing critique** of the Democratic Party's decision in the *Arizona Republic*, writing: "Arizona Democrats claim to be the party of inclusion. Just not when it comes to opening their presidential primary to those all-important independent voters."

Tim Castro, an activist with Independent Voters for Arizona commented, "This campaign increased public awareness of the barriers independents face to participating in the all important presidential primary. Our job was to put the issue on the table and force the Democratic party to

respond. We succeeded, and now they are being held accountable for their undemocratic answer."

With this decision, the Arizona Democratic Party joins the Florida Democratic Party leadership -- two swing states -- in saying "no" to the participation of independents. Check out this important editorial by Dr. Jeffrey Solomon that appeared in the Miami Herald entitled, "**Florida's Democratic Party Leaders Sabotage a Chance to Attract Independent Voters.**"

(For complete press coverage of the fight, visit the [Independents for Arizona blog](#))

## Debate Panelists: "Here's What I Would Say"

A panel of independents have been watching the 2020 Democratic Party Presidential Debate, rating the performances of candidates and moderators. They have been looking for signs of recognition and respect for independent voters and support for political reform.

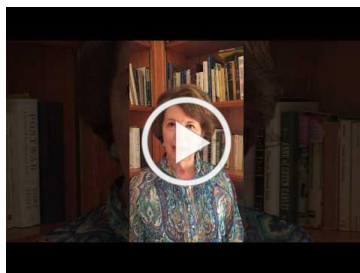
The panelists' observations (not to mention the dwindling number of participants from first panel to last -- 87 participated in the first, 57 in the second and 18 in the most recent ABC-sponsored event -- indicate a growing sense that the Debates are not a place where any kind of development can take place.

Carl Farmer of Rhode Island said of the second debate: "This was not a debate in the pure sense of the word. It was more a media event for the network to improve its ratings. Magic-show entertainment rather than a fact-finding exercise. Overall, I was and am disappointed. "

**On the most recent scorecard, we asked panelists to respond to the question, "If you were a presidential candidate (or advising one), what would you say to (or advise your candidate to say to) independent voters. Five panelists recorded their responses on video Check them out.**



David Belmont, New York, New York says: Invite independents into the dialogue



Nancy Lippincott, Cincinnati, Ohio says: Put governing first and listen across partisan lines



Steve Hough, Panama City, Florida: "Address independents. Why would any candidate not want to go after every vote?"





If Judy Depenau of Santa Rosa, California were a candidate, she would say: "Independents, I support your active participation in the process at all levels..."



Joanne Corley, Villa Rica, Georgia to the candidates: "Look beyond your base and see what the independent voter wants."

## Jackie Salit: The U.S. Open, Open Politics and the Anti-Corruption Awards

In her column for *IVN* this month Jackie Salit writes about the contrast between an epic sporting event and the blood sport of politics.

*"How few things in mass culture are like that. Certainly, politics in America is nothing like that. In the political game, when are you allowed to admit mistakes? When are you subject to rules that you or your allies did not write? Where are you encouraged to show your true and best self? The corruption of political life -- of governance, of elections, of policy-making, of the spin on governance, elections and policy making -- is so pervasive and so damaging. Soul crushing is a term that comes to mind."*



In the column, Salit previews The 19th Annual Anti-Corruption Awards, titled "Independents are the Future Now" scheduled for October 25 and shares her thoughts on this year's awardees.

"Every year, for 19 years, a community of activist independents hold an event in New York called the Anti-Corruption Awards. The recipients are chosen for actions they take to break the rules of the game, to challenge the political status quo, to assert the need for systemic change, to bring outsiders in to reshape the corruption of entrenched political culture. This year the awards ceremony will take place on Friday evening, October 25. The awardees are three political visionaries who, in different ways, are working to break open a highly controlled aspect of political life.



**Adrian Fontes**, the Maricopa County Recorder in Arizona, has been on a non-stop effort to pressure his party, the Democratic Party, to permit independent voters to cast ballots in the 2020 presidential primary. Fontes is quick to note that

41% of Latinos in Arizona are independents and are currently being denied their voting rights.

**Katie Fahey**, the leader of The People and the architect of the Michigan Independent

Redistricting Initiative enacted by the voters in 2018 -- which is now being stalled by partisans in the Michigan state legislature -- is a political independent and a champion of up-from-the-bottom activism.

**Jane KleeB**, chair of the Nebraska Democratic Party, has opened her party's primaries to independent voters and is lobbying other state party leaders to do the same. KleeB, an experienced rural activist and builder of non-ideological coalitions (including a coalition to stop the Keystone Pipeline), believes the Democratic Party benefits by the inclusion of independents and understands independents have reasons why they do not want to affiliate with a party.

There will also be a special tribute to the **EYES on 2020 Cabinet** -- Independent Voting leaders who have been spearheading our efforts to open the presidential primaries.

[Read the complete column here .](#)

[Get your ticket to the event or make a donation here](#)

## Eyes on Pennsylvania: Community Forum on Political Reform

Pennsylvania State Senator Anthony H. Williams hosted a public forum on electoral reform at the Lucien E. Blackwell West Philadelphia Regional Library. The event was part of a statewide tour being organized by Open Primaries PA, a coalition of forces that has been conducting a public education campaign about the fight to open Pennsylvania's primaries to independents. The coalition includes Independent Pennsylvanians, Open Primaries, the Committee of Seventy, Common Cause Pennsylvania, Commonwealth Commonsense, Philly Set Go and League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania. The forum followed the state senate's unprecedented passage of HB 300, the bill to open Pennsylvania's primaries. The bill is now in the hands of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.



The panel: David Thornburgh, Committee of Seventy; Dr. Jessie Fields, Open Primaries; State Senator Anthony H. Williams; Micah Sims, Common Cause; Michael Fabius, Ballard Spahr LLP

The dynamic panel featured Micah Sims of Common Cause, Dr. Jessie Fields of Open Primaries and Independent Voting, David Thornburgh of Committee of Seventy and Michael Fabius of Ballard Spahr LLP. The discussion focused on the prospects for opening the primaries in Pennsylvania.

Said Williams, "I don't really fit into any space other than that I listen to what's around me...So increasingly, this issue of non-partisan elections [is] one that I think is very pragmatic - whether you are a senior, working class folks or millennials. I think most of us want to know 'What are you going to do with our election -- there's so much that's depending upon it.'"

Dr. Jessie Fields, a national board member of Open Primaries and Independent Voting, added: "I

became a doctor because I wanted to make a difference to the black poor, and I have practiced and continue to practice in communities of color, currently in the Harlem community. I consider the issue of voting rights, which is so fundamental and so important, to be key for the further growth and advancement of the African American community, of communities of color, and of this nation in its entirety. The recognition of the rights of unaffiliated voters, of independents who choose to register to vote, but don't register in the Democratic or Republican parties, for me, is really a continuation of the long struggle for equal civil and voting rights that the African American community in this country has led."

Jennifer Bullock, Director of Independent Pennsylvanians commented, "Independent Pennsylvanians has been fighting for open primaries for 15 years and it is so heartening that state Senator Anthony Williams hosted a forum on election reforms. He really gets the importance of the need to make our elections fair and open to independents."

Williams, in conjunction with the Committee of Seventy, one of the coalition member organizations, will be sponsoring a second forum on Electoral Reform on Wednesday, October 9 at 6:00 pm at University of the Sciences in Philadelphia. For more information, contact [independentpa@gmail.com](mailto:independentpa@gmail.com).

## Profiles in Independence

Susan Sandoz, Highland Ranch, Colorado

I was born independent...in spirit and with inquiring mind. Raised in privilege, I wasn't in charge of me back then. By 18, I began navigating my own way in this world. Voting for the first time, coming from my Republican family, I had no shot other than voting Republican. None of this resonated with me. So I tapped into my innate wisdom and began undoing much of what I was taught. My activism reemerged in 2016 on the night the election was called. I instantly knew that I had more work to do.

I want independents to be the leaders in a top three system and I will jump to vote for candidates who create a paradigm shift for our nation and the world. We will never again have to vote for the lesser of two evils or any evils. We will lead with fair and just regulations, corruption and oppression non-existent, rules and laws that work when implemented and a movement with respect for all people as a tenet.

We will be mature and thoughtful adults caring deeply for such great responsibilities. Our guiding principles are already in place and just waiting for fair and intended use.

Being an independent is far from treasonous. It is a gift. We will one day deserve being called a great country. Independents are arising to our purpose. We now see within our grasp a possibility becoming a reality. Our time is well deserved and long overdue. I am envisioning it as accomplished.



## In the News

Read Dr. Jeffrey Solomon's opinion piece, "[Florida's Democratic Party Leaders Sabotage a Chance to Attract Independent Voters](#)." Solomon worked to introduce a resolution to change

Florida state party rules and allow independent voters (NPAs) to vote in Democratic primaries. ( *Miami Herald*)

Read " **Primary Reform Proposal Almost Guaranteed 2020 Ballot Placement**," which speaks about the top-two non-partisan initiative that is likely to make it to the ballot in 2020. ( *Florida Politics*)

Read Frank Fear's column, "**It's Time to Take America's Independents Seriously**." ( *LA Progressive*)

Read Bob Perls commentary, "**Real Change Starts with Political Reform**." ( *Albuquerque Journal*)

Read "**Voters Say Neither Party Represents Them**." ( *Rasmussen Reports*)

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