



*November 13, 2019*

## Anti-Corruption Awards Shine Light on Leaders Challenging Status Quo

On Friday, October 25, over 100 guests attended Independent Voting's annual Anti-Corruption Awards in New York City. The Anti-Corruption Awards were established 19 years ago to shine a spotlight on leaders in civic and political life who challenge the status quo and fight for systemic change. This year's event honored Katie Fahey, Adrian Fontes, and Jane Klee and celebrated the work of the 24 members of the Eyes on 2020 Cabinet.



(L to R:) Steve Hough, Jenn Bullock, Katie Fahey, Jackie Salit, Dr. Jessie Fields, Cathy Stewart, Adrian Fontes, Dr. Lenora Fulani, Alvaader Frazier

Last January, the Cabinet began to raise a simple but historic voting rights question: Will independents be given the same voting rights as all other voters in the 2020 presidential campaign? Three years ago, in 2016, 26 million independents were locked out of the presidential primaries. In 2020, that number could be as high as 30 million.



Cathy Stewart, Jenn Bullock, Jessie Fields, Steve Hough

The evening's hosts -- Steve Hough, Florida Fair and Open Primaries; Dr. Jessie Fields, national board member of Independent Voting and Open Primaries; Jenn Bullock, Independent Pennsylvanians; and Cathy Stewart, Vice President for National Development, Independent Voting -- are all members of the Cabinet and gave spirited reports on the Cabinet's recent accomplishments.

The event, whose vibrant fundraising committee was co-chaired by David Belmont and June Hirsh, raised over \$100,000, including ads placed in the **event's**

**commemorative journal.**

Sarah Lyons, the producer of the event and Independent Voting's Director of Communications, describes the event in detail in a feature article published by the *Independent Voting Network*.

**Read the full story, "2019 Anti-Corruption Awards Honors Three Political Disrupters" [here](#),** check out the photo collage of the event, and click the videos below to view each awardee's acceptance speech.



## Katie Fahey: 2019 Anti-Corruption Awards Honoree

**Katie Fahey** is a Michigan-based activist and an independent. As the founder and Executive Director of the grassroots, nonpartisan campaign Voters Not Politicians, Fahey ignited a political movement in 2016 that took on gerrymandering in Michigan by amending the State Constitution via a ballot initiative that received 61 percent of the vote in 2018.

Fahey is currently the Executive Director of The People, a nonprofit that aims to unite citizens from across the country and across the political spectrum in altering the status quo.



Katie Fahey Anti Corruption Award 2019 Honoree

## Adrian Fontes: 2019 Anti-Corruption Awards Honoree

Adrian Fontes is an Arizona native, born and raised on the Mexican border in Nogales. After witnessing the mismanagement of the 2016 Presidential Preference Election in Maricopa County, he decided to run for County Recorder and was elected in 2018.

As Maricopa County Recorder, he is responsible for administering elections in the fourth largest county in the country. He has worked to bring renewed energy and vision to the office, with the goal of rebuilding public trust in the county's election system. Fontes has been an outspoken advocate for independent voters in Arizona, leading the effort to urge the Democratic Party to open its presidential preference election to the 1.27 million independents in the state.



Adrian Fontes 2019 Anti Corruption Honoree

## Jane KleeB: 2019 Anti-Corruption Awards Honoree

Jane KleeB is the State Chair of the Nebraska Democratic Party, and the founder and president of Bold Nebraska. She is an experienced grassroots organizer and political strategist. Early in her career, she became the Executive Director of the Young Democrats of America in Washington, DC.

Formerly an elected member of the Hastings School Board, KleeB has been an outspoken advocate for the inclusion of independents in the democratic process, urging that "...the Democratic Party benefits by the inclusion of independent voters." Currently, KleeB is expanding Bold Nebraska into the Bold Alliance, an alliance of organizations based in rural states aiming to protect the environment and tackle climate change, while also serving as Treasurer on the board of Our Revolution. KleeB's book, *Harvest the Vote: How Democrats Can Win Again in Rural America*, will be released in January of 2020.



Jane KleeB: Acceptance speech at 2019 Anti-Corruption Awards



## Jackie Salit's Remarks at the Anti-Corruption Awards

"There are communities in this country -- communities of color and the community of independent voters for whom the system was not built and who have a vested and historical need to change the system. And if those communities were to come together, that's something the power brokers, the parties, could not control.

**Check out Jackie Salit's inspiring talk at the Anti-Corruption Awards.**



Jackie Salit - 2019 Anti Corruption Awards Remarks

## Eyes on 2020 Cabinet Members Talk Independent Politics with Three Prominent Leaders

Following the successful Anti-Corruption Awards, Jackie Salit hosted a meeting with members of the Eyes on 2020 Cabinet. Salit invited three powerhouse guests to join her for broad discussions, ranging from how to view the fight for political reform, to organizing at the grassroots, to the role of organization in building an independent movement.

Salit began by interviewing **Katie Fahey**, Executive Director of The People, and asked her to give a snapshot of where things stand on the implementation of redistricting in Michigan. Fahey painted a picture of the various challenges activists have faced since Michigan voters won the right to establish an independent redistricting commission, including defending their hard-fought gains from additional partisan attacks.



Jackie Salit and Katie Fahey

As the dialogue developed, discussion moved to questions about grassroots organizing and political reform.

"When I made the Facebook post [calling on others to join her in fighting gerrymandering], it was about gerrymandering," said Fahey. "To me, that was the root cause. And then, as soon as I started seeing how hungry people were for authentic engagement, and to be valued enough to have an opinion on a constitutional amendment, which is going to impact their lives...that's when it clicked for me that it's not

gerrymandering. Gerrymandering is wrong, but that is actually a symptom of an even greater systemic problem, which is that the people of America do not have a strong place at the table any more in the political process at all."

**Rev. Gregory Seal Livingston**, President of the Coalition for a New Chicago, is a seminary-trained pastor and prominent social justice activist from Chicago who recently relocated to New

York. He previously served as the Illinois Chairman of the National Action Network and as the National Field Secretary and Chief of Field Operations for the RainbowPUSH Coalition.

Salit brought the Cabinet into the ongoing conversation she and Rev. Livingston have been having about the intersection between the civil rights and social justice movement and the independent political movement, and the tactics that flow from that intersection. They discussed police/community relations and the fight to address violence in black communities of Chicago.



Jackie Salit and Rev. Gregory Seal Livingston

In describing the environment that he helped to create in which incumbent Mayor Rahm Emmanuel did not run and in which Lori Lightfoot was elected Mayor, Livingston said: " We had attacked commerce.... We knew we were making it inconvenient. We knew we were making folks uncomfortable. But we also knew it was uncomfortable for the blood to be running through the streets. We knew it was inconvenient for schools not to have proper equipment and books in a culture that encouraged learning. We knew all these things were greater than our discomfort. So that opened up the political playing field, because all of a sudden everyone jumps into the race, which for me is okay. This is a democracy."



Jackie Salit and Jim Jonas

In the final session of the day, Jackie was joined by **Jim Jonas**. Jim is the Executive Director of the National Association of Nonpartisan Reformers, of which Independent Voting is a member. Jim is an experienced political, public affairs and corporate communication consultant based in Denver, Colorado. He was a co-founder of Unity '08, a consultant to Americans Elect and the campaign manager to Greg Orman's independent campaign for the US Senate in Kansas in 2014. He was also an insider in the Republican Party before he

decided to leave and become an independent after the Ross Perot campaign took off. Salit and Jonas' discussion focused on the state of the independent movement, among other things.

"Independent is a real thing and it's growing and it's expanding, and it's hard because it's not this ideological bubble that you define and shape and say, 'this is what it means to be an independent.' We're still in the definitional stage of 'we're not them,' and we need to get to the spot where we say, 'this is us.' We're not there yet."

Added Salit, "Many different social movements began as an independent force not tied to a political border or party whose cause was then taken up by one or the other of the major parties, and that's been the pattern really throughout American history. I think what's interesting and different about our [independents'] situation, is that our issue is the redistribution of political power. That for the holders of political power is a very difficult thing to co-opt."

As for the rejection by the Democratic parties in Arizona and Florida of the recent request by the Eyes on 2020 campaign to open the presidential primaries to independents, Salit said: " We're making a record.... That record is becoming known to the American people. It's really not just about proposing reforms and fighting for that. It's about how those simple, basic democratic reforms were rejected by the parties, because they're going to have to live with that. And I think this movement is really about forcing that historical process onto the political stage."

Cabinet members engaged in conversation with each guest, ranging from how nonpartisan elections played a role in the Chicago elections, to the role of political culture and being intentionally provocative, to the nuts and bolts of fundraising in the Michigan redistricting campaign.

## Some Cabinet Member Takeaways



**Eyes on 2020 Cabinet members were asked for their thoughts following the October 26 meeting. Here are some of their takeaways:**



Steve Richardson, Dr. Jessie Fields,  
Wayne Griffin, Caroline Donnola

**Steve Richardson**, Virginia Independent Voters: "The highlight of the weekend for me was a couple of hours on Saturday with our guests Katie Fahey and Reverend Livingston. Both have amazing stories to tell and told them with extraordinary skill. It was a privilege to be one of about 20 veteran independents being schooled by someone roughly half our age (that would be Katie). An important takeaway for me was confirmation that courage is not absence of fear but acting in spite of it. Both of them volunteered that they may have appeared fearless when speaking truth to power but felt moved to do it, anyway. That should inspire all of us."

**Wayne Griffin**, Chair, South Carolina Independence Party and member of the City Council in Greer, South Carolina: "The Cabinet meeting had a very special kind of energy. It was an awesome feeling to be in the room with so many outstanding energetic leaders sharing ideas."

**Dona Sauerburger**, Independent Voters of Maryland: "Getting to talk in person with fellow members of the Cabinet gave me inspiration that could not have come from reading or chatting on the phone. Learning about Katie Fahey's refreshing approach to organized advocacy gave me an incredible new paradigm to think about, and chatting with Jim Jonas gave me a huge insight about the goals of engagement being broader than a single issue. I had been focused on specific issues and immersed in various organizations, and my head is still spinning as I grapple with these mind-blowing perspectives and figure how I can be most impactful to making a better world."



Sue Davies, Dona Sauerburger, Stephen  
Bouikidis, Steve Hough

**Steve Hough**, Florida Fair and Open Primaries: "It was a pleasure hearing from all three special guests and interacting face to face with my fellow cabinet members. I love Katie, and it was great to hear details from behind the scenes. Reverend Livingston's story is equally inspiring. Jim Jonas topped it off with an insider's look at how the sausage gets made. Much has been accomplished in the realm of organizing and empowering independents, but a lot more work remains."



Randy Miller, Rev. Livingston, David Cherry

**Jenn Bullock**, Independent Pennsylvanians: "Jackie's talk on Friday and interviews and conversations on Saturday was the highlight. The two parties are controlling our government and election system without the consent of the governed. Randy Miller quoted Ghandi 'They may have our compliance but will never have our obedience.' The weekend energized us activists to focus on that message."

**David Cherry**, City Leader, All Stars Project in Chicago and leader of United Independents of Illinois: "As the endless partisan fights continue to dominate the news, it was refreshing to attend a meeting of principled independent activists at the Eyes On 2020

Cabinet meeting. I'm proud to be with a group of people who are dedicating their time, energy and lives to make our society better for everyone."

**Sue Davies**, New Jersey Independent Voters: "Katie Fahey and Reverend Livingston shared how they both created a people's movement in their states. It was an inspiring and realistic discussion. We heard of the successes and the challenges. The sincere commitment to real democracy and

the people's voice is so important. I also learned a lot from meeting the independent leaders from around the country. There is much to bring back to the New Jersey team. It was a privilege to be there."

**Gwen Mandell**, Director National Outreach, Independent Voting : "Jim Jonas, Reverend Livingston, and Katie Fahey - three enormously accomplished leaders with very different locations and rich histories in the fight to advance the cause of the American people. Together with Jackie Salit and independent leaders who were in and not in the room, we represent the energy and potential of a new movement in this country that could challenge the status quo and redistribute power. As a leader of this movement, I left the meeting feeling a renewed responsibility to continue to develop the tools that we all need to make this movement a reality for activists at the local level and for millions of people in this country."

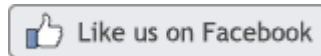
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