



**December 17, 2019**

## **Diverse Political Reform Leaders Meet in Denver: Momentum Growing**

The Second Annual Summit of the **National Association of Nonpartisan Reformers** (NANR) was held on December 5-6, 2019 in Denver, Colorado. NANR is a member-led association that serves as a glue among a diverse array of political reform organizations, which includes Independent Voting. The NANR Summit brought together 150 leaders: primary reform activists, independent voting leaders, gerrymandering activists, activists supporting alternative voting methods, campaign finance reform activists, congressional and corruption reform advocates and those from the "vote at home" movement, and all signs point to a movement that is healthy and growing.

As Shawn Griffiths of the *Independent Voter Network* said in his piece about the event, "**Voters First: Nonpartisan Reformers Unite to Carry Historic Victories Into 2020**" : " The momentum behind the growing movements to pass pro-voter reforms was on display in Denver. Optimism

along with new partnerships and coordination between reformers at the summit point to more historic victories to come."

Mortan Kondrake of *RealClearPolitics*, in "**Political Reform Movement is Moving Fast**," wrote: "Whatever it's ultimately called, the movement is coalescing at the state and local level into a potent political force. And it may actually be a benefit that the national media all but ignores it for now - the better to take the entrenched, polarized and dysfunctional political establishment by surprise."

The event began with a welcome breakfast and statement by Jim Jonas, Executive Director of NANR. Accelerator Awards (13 grants totaling \$250,000) were then presented by the Unite America Fund to groups working around the country "to put voters first by increasing participation, competition, and accountability in our political system." 100 applications had been submitted. Among the recipients were the New Hampshire Ranked Choice



(L to R): Jim Jonas, Susan Lerner, Kyle Bailey, Jackie Salit, Chad Peace, John Opdycke, Cara McCormick

Voting campaign through an application submitted by New Hampshire Independent Voter Chair Tiani Coleman; New Mexico Open Elections for its work on primary reform and The Committee of Seventy, one of the coalition members of Open Primaries PA. **[Click here to see all of the awardees.](#)**

At lunch, participants heard from Katherine Gehl, co-author of the insightful and widely read report issued by the Harvard Business School "**Why Competition in the Politics Industry is Failing America**" and Josh Silver from RepresentUs on the state of reform.

Among the workshops and panel discussions that took place was a lively and well-attended breakout session moderated by Open Primaries president John Opdycke, entitled Independent Voters: Fact or Fiction? Independent Voting President Jackie Salit was joined on the panel by Chris Cooper, Convergence Targeted Communications; David Thornburgh, Committee of Seventy; and Carlos Sierra, Renegade Public Affairs.

Kent Thiry of Let Colorado Vote, recounted lessons learned from bringing reform to Colorado and recited the Gettysburg Address. Chad Peace of the Independent Voter Project discussed future NANR projects.

At the closing dinner, **Salit was honored with a Lifetime Achievement award**, presented by Opdycke. In introducing Jackie, he praised her belief in people and her capacity to see possibilities. Cara McCormick of the Chamberlain Project presented awards to Kyle Bailey, Campaign Manager for The Committee for Ranked Choice Voting 2020, and Susan Lerner of New York Common Cause for their successful work on Ranked Choice Voting in Maine and New York City, respectively. "Getting an award is a kick," said Salit, "but there is really nothing like getting an award from your peers, from the folks who are on the front lines in our

movement, from the people who get up every day and make it happen. That's a very special thing. My congratulations to Susan Lerner and Kyle Bailey, whose long-standing work was also recognized."

## A Visit to the Western Slope of Colorado

On her way to the NANR Summit, Independent Voting's Vice President for National Development, Cathy Stewart, paid a visit to Glenwood Springs in Western Colorado to meet with members of Western Colorado Independent Voters (WCIV). WCIV was formed in 2018 by Randy Fricke and meets regularly at the Glenwood Springs Library, where they have sponsored candidate and educational forums on political reform topics, attracting local media coverage.



Back Row:(left to right) Maggie Fricke, Dale Reed, Fred Malo,Jr., Gwen Ballard, Randy Fricke  
Front Row (left to right) Art Ackerman, Joanne Rock, Sheila Fricke, Debra Wenzer

Stewart shared that the work WCIV is doing to organize independents and bring their voice into political conversation in

Colorado is some of the most important going on in the country. Stewart also talked about of the recent success and challenges in putting the independent movement on the map this year. "The critical issue that you see in the organizing process is the issue of governance," said Stewart, "and how the rules of the game are set to lock out independents and the American people from our place at the table."

Referring to the Eyes on 2020 campaign where Independents pressed the Democratic Parties of Arizona and Florida to open their state's 2020 presidential primaries to independents, she said, "We were able to get close enough to the parties to land some punches, and to make a public record. The parties' refusal to open up the political process is becoming known to more and more Americans. We are telling the stories of how basic democracy reforms were rejected, are being fought against and hopefully in the case of Florida -- where an initiative for top-two nonpartisan primaries is making its way toward the 2020 ballot -- how the American people will prevail when given the opportunity, as they did here in Colorado. As we see in the work you are doing, and across the country, independents are in the earliest stages of becoming organized and insisting on being recognized."



"I came away from Cathy Stewart's presentation with two main things," said Fricke.. "Essentially, the Democratic Party does not want independents involved or interfering with their primary elections or their party business. Independent Voting and the independent voter movement needs a new path forward that establishes our independence from the two major parties. The independent voter movement must lead

Randy Fricke and Cathy Stewart  
election and governmental reform."

the nation in establishing real democratic

## The People Launch Initiative for Democracy

In the midst of the election frenzy surrounding presidential politics 2020, **The People**, a new organization focused on empowering and training citizen activists to reform our democracy, held kick-off gatherings in five towns



Manchester meeting

throughout New Hampshire December 9, 10 and 11. Independent Voting and Tiani Coleman, President of New Hampshire Independent Voters, reached out to independents to participate in the initiative to help foster a new way of doing politics for New Hampshire and for all Americans.

Katie Fahey, Executive Director of The People, said: "It is time that the people of America set the agenda and not politicians, special interests and big money. ...These gatherings empower Granite Staters to get involved as a force for good in the political process. Not left. Not right. Forward." Fahey shocked the nation when she put together the "Voters Not Politicians"



Portsmouth meeting

grassroots initiative in Michigan that mobilized 14,000 volunteers to pass nonpartisan redistricting reform in 2018. She is taking her experience in Michigan and bringing it out across the country to build state-based networks of all kinds of Americans to work on similar reform campaigns.

Katie's efforts are supported by some out-of-the-box backers, including the actor/entrepreneur Andrew Schue, who is President of the organization.

"The People," said Schue, "is building a movement of citizens to tackle what is broken in our democracy. Independents are key in building that movement, as they know the system needs a real overhaul and that partisan solutions will not work. Independents are bridge builders; they connect to people across and between party lines."

Peter White of Nottingham noted: "I was really glad to attend The People's inaugural meeting in Portsmouth and meet Andrew Schue and Katie Fahey and a dozen others who are passionate about remaking our democracy. At the meeting, there was a discussion about the state of the nation and the need to get people organized. As an independent, I'm glad to be a part of this kind of effort that is looking to create new options for the American people."

Steven Borne of Rye, who was invited by Independent Voting to attend his local gathering, wrote





Katie Fahey, Tiani Coleman, and Lisa Nash, New Hampshire Co-Leader of The People

about his experience in "[Ex-Melrose Place star in Portsmouth to help fix nation's broken politics](#)," which was published in [Seacoastonline.com](#).

"It was a joyous occasion," said Tiani Coleman about the Manchester meeting, "to be among many new kindred friends and independents in New Hampshire who care deeply about the need for systemic electoral reforms to help ensure that power truly resides with 'the people.' I look forward to working with The People, as I envision a force, for good, to be reckoned with as people everywhere are rising to 'change the rules of the game' so that every person from every belief and walk of life feels like they're being represented, like they have a voice, and like they can make

a difference."

## Florida Update

**Steve Hough, Director of Florida Fair and Open Primaries provided a first hand report to the *Hub* on the latest in the fight for open primaries in Florida:**

On December 3, along with Jeremy Gruber and Russell Daniels of Open Primaries, Jeffrey Solomon and I co-hosted a second conference call with Florida supporters of open primaries. In response to opposition by the leaders of both major parties, we are promoting [an online petition](#) demanding that the Florida Secretary of State stop using tax dollars to fund closed party primaries. Closed primaries are tantamount to taxation without representation, and with 27% of Florida's electorate (3.7 million strong) registered to vote without a party affiliation, opposition to opening our primaries is untenable.

We are using the conference calls as a means of getting new ideas about how to spread the word as well as enlisting volunteers to share the petition on social media and write letters to the editor. Since our first call, a supporter has obtained a commitment from the Florida League of Women Voters to include articles about our effort in their biweekly newsletter, and I had [a guest column](#) published in my local newspaper along with two other sister papers. And I'm excited to report that the League President, Patricia Brigham recently endorsed All Voters Vote's proposed amendment for a top-two open primary in [an interview with](#) a local Orlando television station.



Steve Hough

All Voters Vote has surpassed the 766,200 verified petition signatures required to place Amendment No. 3, the proposed constitutional amendment on the 2020 ballot, but both parties filed briefs with the Florida Supreme Court in an attempt to prevent voters from deciding whether we should have open primaries. Oral arguments were heard the day of our call, and initial reporting indicated that the court was not likely to keep it off the ballot. However, no one knows when the court will issue its decision, so we must continue to keep the pressure on. That's what

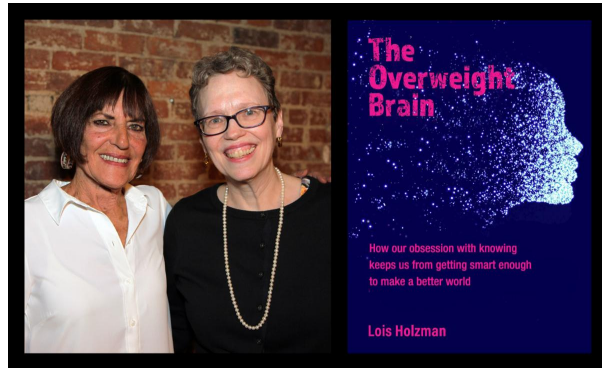
we intend to do.

## Politics for the People Discusses "The Overweight Brain"

On Sunday, December 8, Politics for the People members from 17 states joined Cathy Stewart and author Lois Holzman to discuss her book *The Overweight Brain: How our obsession with knowing keeps us from getting smart enough to make a better world*.

Cathy kicked off the call with Dr. Holzman by inquiring about the book's title asking, "how does our obsession with knowing keep us from getting smart enough to make a better world?" Lois, after taking a brief moment to celebrate the P4P reader's forum explained her take on the title:

"If you do an act in your life, whether you're an individual or community or a nation, on what you know, then you will be doing, acting on and living what has already happened - and that's, I think, bad enough. Even worse than that is the capacity to create everything that's known. How we got to create everything that's known is by not knowing, and if you stifle that capacity to do what you don't know how to do, then we're literally paralyzed. Stuck. Fossilized. Heads in the sand."



[Listen here to the full conversation, along with questions and discussion from Politics for the People members.](#)

## Profiles in Independence

JoAnn Corley-Schwarzkopf, Atlanta, Georgia

I grew up in a solid middle-class, union family and married into one. I naturally took on the beliefs of my parents as staunch union Democrats, both of whom were from the south and lived through the civil rights movement. In our household we had champions and heroes - King and Kennedy, in particular.

When I started my professional career and eventually a business that focused on management and Human Resources, I began to pay closer attention to how politics and governmental policy influenced my specific world, clients and those around me. I came to see that politics was winning over constructive policies, and that's when I made the decision to become independent.



Now more than ever I am deeply disappointed by our two-party system and the relentless fight for status quo political control rather than an investment in fresh thinking that leads to innovative solutions for our modern challenges.

We need an independent pathway - one that presents the opportunity for inclusive, visionary leadership that serves the collective good.

-- JoAnn Corley-Schwarzkopf, Native Chicagoan now residing in Atlanta; Founder of Manage Global

**Check out the video statement that JoAnn made** as a member of Independent Voting's debates-watch panel in answer to the question "What would you say if you were advising the presidential candidates today?"

## Save the Date



**Click here or the image above to register**

## In the News

Jackie Salit was featured in a piece by Rory Middleton, " **The Middle: Political consultants target nonpartisan voting bloc.**" She says: "If all you're doing is trolling for votes, then you relate the entire voting public as a yes, no or maybe. And you depress your no voters and get your yes voters." she said. "But if you're trying to lay the foundation and propel a new political force into the future, then how to appeal to independents becomes a more significant question." (*Las Vegas Review Journal*)

In their opinion piece "**The Mythical Independent Voter isn't Going to Save Us**," political scientists David B. Magleby and Candice J. Nelson make a claim that independents have grown accustomed to hearing that we don't really exist -- we're just closet partisans. ( *CNN* )

Read former Commission on Presidential Debates member Mitch Daniel's opinion piece, "**Let's have more than two candidates in the general-election presidential debates**" ( *Washington Post* )

Watch Sue Davies of New Jersey Independent Voters **explain how partisan gamesmanship dictates the impeachment process and could drive down voter turnout in 2020**. ( *CBC* )

See President of New Hampshire Independent Voters Tiani Coleman **talk with NBC-TV** about the impeachment inquiry and how she'll continue to engage with candidates who travel to the Granite State and scrutinize their willingness to put the country's interests over party interests. ( *NBC-TV* )

Joe Pickering of Mainers for Open Elections wrote a letter to the editor, "**Time to End the Two-Party Prison**." ( *Portland Press Herald* )

*Politico's* "**How Bloomberg Could Win. Again**" is a welcome addition to the story of Mike Bloomberg, as the role of independents in his three runs for mayor is at least acknowledged. Also, read Jackie Salit's *IVN* column, "**Being Mike Bloomberg**," which puts a challenge to Bloomberg about the kind of campaign he could run to shake up the establishment.

Read "**Commission Failure Shows Need for One True Reform to Fix New York Elections**" ( *Gotham Gazette* )

In "**Expert says new poll shows Arizona independents will play big role in 2020**," Salit told KTAR News 92.3 FM that polls often leave out independents, so it was good the Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University included them. ( *KTAR* )

Doug Smith, independent in Portland responds in a letter to the editor, "**We Do Need Open Primaries**" ( *Oregonian* )

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