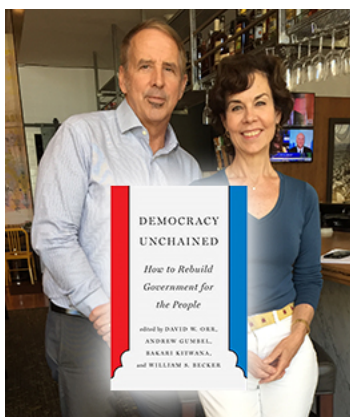




*February 18, 2020*

## Just Released: Democracy Unchained

[Order Democracy Unchained here.](#)



Just released! You can now order your copy of the major new book published by New Press today! The book is titled **Democracy Unchained: How to Rebuild Government for the People**, which addresses the complex question of how to make our American democracy work to solve problems that have long impaired our system of governance.

The book is a collective work of thirty of the country's most perceptive writers, practitioners, scientists, educators and journalists, and contains a chapter co-authored by Jackie Salit and Thom Reilly, the chancellor of Nevada's Higher Education System, titled "Can Independent Voters Save American Democracy? Why 42 Percent of American Voters are Independent and How They Can Transform Our Political System."

## 170 Independents Join National Conference Call to Discuss the Power of the 45%

On January 26, 170 independents from 35 states joined Jackie Salit on Independent Voting's first national conference call of 2020, tackling the question of what it means to be an independent in 2020.

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

[What does it mean to be Independent in 2020? An overview.](#)

[Disrespect by the parties towards independents: Is there an opportunity to make our voices heard?](#)

[Presidential candidates: What's an independent to do?](#)

[Independent candidacies and third parties; Where is an independent candidate for president?](#)

[Political reforms and their importance to independents: What's the relationship between these political reforms and our empowerment?](#)

[The character of our movement: Top priorities for growing/organizing independents.](#)



## Announcements

Cathy Stewart, Independent Voting's Vice President for National Development, has joined the staff of **The People**. Cathy will be the full-time National Field Director for the grassroots organization for a period of six months. The People is led by Katie Fahey (who championed the "Voters Not Politicians" grassroots initiative in Michigan that mobilized 14,000 volunteers to pass nonpartisan redistricting reform in 2018). Its mission is to empower ordinary citizens to lead government reform efforts that can restore self-governance.

Said Stewart: "Throughout my work in the independent movement, I have been committed to bringing together Americans across political and cultural divides. I'm thrilled to be joining this dynamic team and to take their energy and drive for a vital and participatory democracy into building a new force for truly nonpartisan political reform."



Katie Fahey and Cathy Stewart

Gwen Mandell, Director of National Outreach for Independent Voting, will continue her work building Independent Voting's national network of independent leaders, which has been so crucial to establishing that independent voters - 45% of the country - are a potent force with the power to remake our political system. However much the pundits and partisans may try to diminish us, Gwen and the Independent Voting network are dedicated to the proposition that the people, not the parties, must be the driving force of our democracy.

At the same time, Independent Voting's longtime Director of Communications, Sarah Lyons, is moving on. Sarah is a true and unique veteran of the independent movement. She was first drawn to independent politics by the historic independent presidential campaign of Dr. Lenora Fulani and decided to run for statewide office herself in Oregon, her home state, as an independent. With that experience in hand, Sarah relocated to New York and became a part of the team that ushered in the decade of the National Reform Party and the founding of its New York affiliate, the Independence Party. Sarah was an active leader in the Independence Party's partnership with Mike Bloomberg, serving as chair of the Staten Island County Organization of the Independence Party, mobilizing petition signatures, popular support and votes. She was outspoken in the fight to bring nonpartisan elections to New York and for a new political coalition in New York known as the Black and Independent Alliance.

As a media liaison and a media strategist for Independent Voting, Sarah has been dedicated to establishing public and press recognition of the independent voter, training spokespersons for

radio and TV appearances and connecting news producers with independent voters to broaden the coverage of this pivotal 45%.

Sarah's advice on responding to media manipulations and her creative ideas on how to tell the complex history of this movement have been invaluable. We wish her the very best in her future political and professional activities.

## Independents in Iowa and New Hampshire from the Ground Up

Here's what some independents in our network had to say about their experience participating in the Iowa Caucus (February 3) and the New Hampshire Primary (February 11):

**Tiani Coleman, President of New Hampshire Independent Voters:**

"This year, it is assumed that most independent voters will vote in the Democratic primary. In other words, to the powers that be, independent voters' primary value is in their party preference. Independent voters are still not well understood. Candidates who have demonstrated some independence from their party are not rewarded by highlighting their independence in a party primary process -- they either become 'nonviable,' or they lose some of their independence. It has been very disheartening watching the Republican Party crown their winner without holding a fair and open primary process.



Tiani Coleman

So my take in general is that what started out as a great experience meeting the many candidates has gotten more heated and negative, and many of the attacks look more like political gamemanship than honest campaigning. I'm concerned that in these deeply divided, partisan times, we're looking for leaders who can best express their party's ideology or partisan differences. The system doesn't effectively lend itself to building new, cross-partisan coalitions to bring in a new era of democratic progress. So while it's been exciting and educational to engage in the primary process with some positives, it's also been a reminder that we're not there yet. We still have work to do."

**George Carpenter, Deering, NH :** "My experience with the New Hampshire Open Primary indicates we're still seen as optional, an accessory. 'If I make a bold statement will it hurt me?' The candidate I see that embraces the presence of 'other-party voters' the most is Tulsi Gabbard, which angers the Democratic 'base' greatly. The primary as seen by that 'base' of 'loyalists' should be closed - not open. Managed - not grassroots, 'respectful' of leadership decisions."



Peter White

**Peter White, Nottingham, NH :**

"Every presidential candidate that has come though New Hampshire is talking about election reforms and getting special interest money out of our elections. They know that independents want them to change the status quo, and they better listen to us!"

**Steven Borne, Rye NH** was the organizer of a number of **Presidential Primary Taverns** , which attracted many "Undeclared" New Hampshire voters (that's what they call independents in the state): " I feel the DNC let us down by structuring the debate requirements to pander to the democratic base, and the GOP continues to show they care more about winning than doing the right thing."

Said **Kim Tremel, Coralville, IA** , before the caucus: "I wish I could caucus for a candidate or each party. I like Bill Weld's bipartisan record but also find the same appeal with Amy Klobuchar. I am doubtful that Klobuchar will be viable, so I will be forced to choose someone else - huge flaw in the process in my opinion." And after: "Our group ended up with just enough votes to make her viable in my precinct, so I definitely feel like my vote mattered. It was great to be part of the process."



Kim Tremel

## Reform Leaders Meet in Florida to Discuss "All Voters Vote" Campaign

On February 5, Independent Voting President Jackie Salit attended a meeting organized by Open Primaries and All Voters Vote in Miami, Florida to discuss the All Voters Vote campaign for nonpartisan primaries. All Voters Vote collected 1.2 million signatures on a petition to amend Florida's constitution. Designated Amendment 3, it would implement a top-two open primary for all state races. Florida is currently a closed primary state where 3.6 million voters are registered No Party Affiliation (NPA) and are not permitted to cast primary ballots



Jackie Salit; David Cherry, Chair United Independents of Illinois and City Leader, All Stars Project; David Gilmour, Director of Corporate Civic Responsibility at Business for America; Rev. Gregory Livingston



Steve Hough, Florida Fair and Open Primaries; Katie Fahey, The People; Jeremy Gruber, Open Primaries; Gene Stearns, Founder of All Voters Vote; John Opdycke, Open Primaries; Gary Sheng, Civics Unplugged; and Jackie Salit

Four Florida papers have signed on to an editorial originally published by the **Sarasota Herald-Tribune editorial board** which endorsed the All Voters Vote campaign for top two open primaries.

John Opdycke of Open Primaries and Jeff Solomon of Florida Fair and Open Primaries penned "**Floridians Want Open Primaries; Let All Voters Vote**" which appeared in the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*.

Check out the new edition of **The Fulcrum**, featuring an interview of Steve Hough, Director of Florida Fair and Open Primaries about the effort to open Florida's primaries to all voters, by Katie Fahey (The People).

## Eyes on Nevada

Keep your eyes on the state of Nevada!

Sen. Ben Kieckhefer has filed a statutory initiative to replace the current closed primary system with a top two nonpartisan system that would allow all Nevada voters (regardless of affiliation) to participate in determining their elected officials. Kieckhefer is gearing up for a drive that would garner enough signatures (just under 100,000) to allow the voters of Nevada to decide the fate of the initiative, should the Legislature reject it.



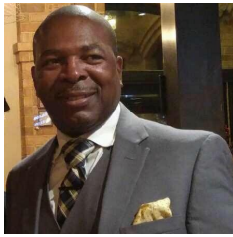
Sen. Ben Kieckhefer

We look forward to working with Sen. Kieckhefer and activists in Nevada to make sure the voters have their say on this important political reform issue.

[Read more here.](#)

Meanwhile, Rory Appleton, a reporter from the *Las*





Rodney Smith

*Vegas Review Journal*, contacted Jackie Salit for help in identifying independent voters to participate in a panel of nonpartisan Nevada voters on local and statewide issues and the presidential election. Panelists will be interviewed throughout the presidential campaign for their viewpoints. Two independents in our network, Rodney Smith (left) and Travis Barnes (right) were **featured in the article**.

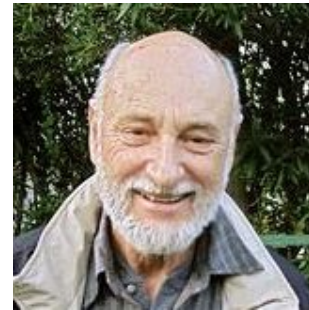


Travis Barnes

## Arizona Activists Register their Protest of Independents' Exclusion from the Arizona Presidential Preference Election

On her January 26 national conference call, Jackie issued a challenge to activists on the call: "If you're in a closed primary state, register some kind of protest that independents are barred from voting, whether it's calling your local elected officials, your board of elections, your Congressperson, or challenging the officials on site if and when you try to vote."

Having recently waged a battle as part of Independent Voting's Eyes on 2020 campaign to pressure Arizona officials, Al Bell and Denny Flaherty knew just what to do. They both fired off letters to a number of their elected officials.



Al Bell

Said Bell in his letter to state legislators:

"With extreme reluctance, I just re-registered as a Democrat so I could vote in the upcoming Presidential Preference Election (PPE). I did that because Arizona law and major party policies prohibit my voting in that election since I am registered as 'No Party Preferred.' The Republican party offers no PPE this year. As an active voter for the past 64 years, I resent the parties absconding with my rights as an American. I do not believe that is serving us well. So I lied about who I really am in order to vote and will return to my true status after the election. I am at a loss to understand how that fiction promotes party loyalty and respect."

**[Read the full letter here.](#)**

Bell received a phone call from one legislator in response to his letter and the two have begun an engaged dialogue.



Dennis Flaherty

Flaherty received a note from his Senator in response to his inquiry, saying that he would support allowing indies to vote in the presidential primaries and claiming broad support on the Democratic side. Flaherty responded: "If, 'there is broad support for this (open preference elections) on the Democratic side,' why have Democrats opposed it? It makes no sense. All the more reason your continued support for open preference elections is invaluable."

The conversation continues.

## Profiles in Independence

**Elaine Stephen, Wichita, Kansas**

The 2016 choice of presidential nominee by the GOP emotionally separated me, a lifelong Republican, from the party. Losing the partisan identity hurt, but it opened my mind to the possibilities presented by independent candidate Evan McMullin, whose traditional conservatism I supported. Still, I kept my Republican affiliation since, in Kansas, most decisions are made in the primaries.

After 2016, I volunteered in earnest for independent efforts. As Kansas chapter leader for UnitedAmerica, I had an automatic "in" to volunteer with Greg Orman's Independent campaign for Kansas governor. What an experience! Greg Orman's book, *A Declaration of Independents*, became my primary resource for explaining the problems with our current partisan system. Interacting with voters, engaging in campaign events, and explaining the importance of independent candidates drove home, for me, the abundance of solutions and working relationships available outside the confines of the duopoly.



Elaine Stephen

2018 didn't pan out for independent candidates. Then, organizations including Unite America pivoted. Independents in Kansas recently formed a small but growing group called Kansans Demand Better (KDB). We focus on providing a voice to independents while using political and electoral reforms to level the playing field for all candidates. KDB is part of Rank the Vote Kansas, a nonpartisan coalition working to see ranked-choice voting enacted statewide.

On January 2, 2020, I finally unaffiliated from the GOP as I can no longer leave my name on their rolls in good conscience. I must say that it sure feels good to be free!

## In the News

In the runup to Super Tuesday, Western Colorado Independent Voters founder Randy Fricke was quoted in "**Colorado Voters - Including Independents - Set to Help Decide Super Tuesday Outcome March 3**" (*Post-Independent*)

An important and interesting lawsuit by SAM (Serve America Movement), a minor party that won ballot status, was initiated in New York State in response to the state changing the law to make it more difficult for minor parties to get on the ballot. Read "**Minor Party Sues over Law Making it Harder to get on the Ballot.**" (*Associated Press*)

Abdul Hakim-Shabazz, editor and publisher of *IndyPolitics.org* says "**Let's Put an End to Taxpayer Funded Primaries**" (*WIBC-Indiana*)

Ben Sprague, member of the Bangor, Maine City Council opines about "**Why I Became an Unenrolled Voter.**" (*Bangor Daily News*)

Neil Simon, businessman and Maryland independent senatorial candidate in 2018 wrote "**Voters Need More Third-Party Options. Americans Should Demand It.**" (*USA Today*)

Read Ezra Klein's editorial, "**Why Democrats Still Have to Appeal to the Center, but Republicans Don't**" which speaks to the crisis in the parties and the need for democratization. (*New York Times*)

Read "**Something Has to Give: The Case for Independents**" (*Independent Voter's Network*)

Gordon Hill of Las Cruces, New Mexico wrote a letter to the editor, "**Open Primaries Would Lessen Divide**" (*Las Cruces Sun News*)

New Jersey independent Hugh Campbell shared his opinion in "**Iowans, especially Independent Voters, have the opportunity to make the 2020 Caucus a Referendum of Money in Politics**" (*Oped News*)

Read this opinion piece by Sen. John McCollister and Sen. Adam Morfeld of Nebraska, "**Local View Expand Nonpartisan Elections.**" The two senators just introduced legislation to expand Nebraska's nonpartisan primary ballot process to statewide & federal offices (*Lincoln Journal Star*)

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*Give us a call today!*