



*October 7, 2020*

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## **Confronting A New Political Reality: Independents Speak Out Special Report Released**

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It's here -- the results of Independent Voting's national survey:

**"Confronting A New Reality: Independents Speak Out"** and we're happy to share them with you in a Special Report! Over 3,600 independents took part this summer in the survey which covered every state in the country.

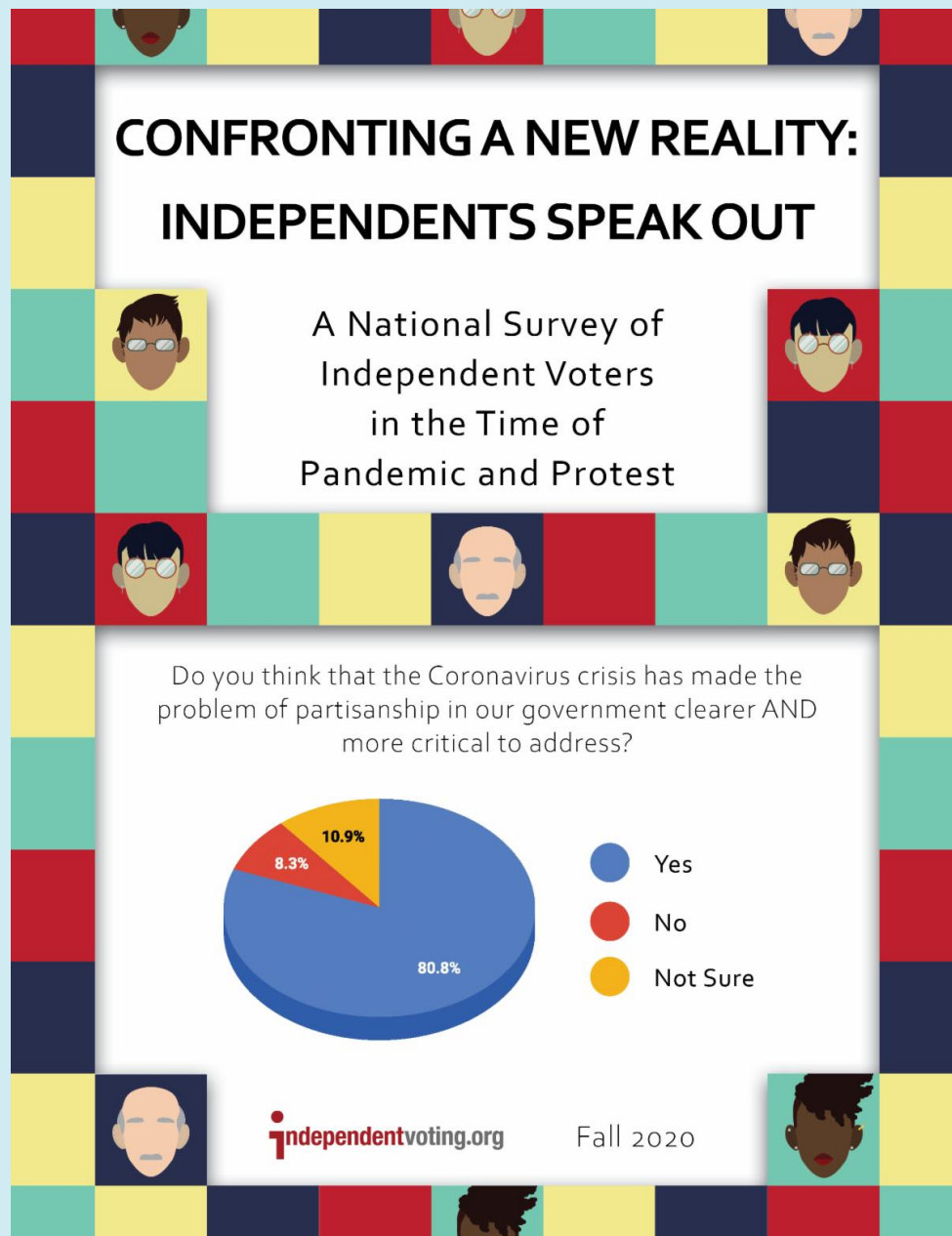
In the survey, independents speak for ourselves about some of the critical concerns of our time.

**Independent Voting President Jackie Salit notes in the report's introduction:**

"Voting is not enough. Not nearly enough. Not when the political system

itself is in a state of corruption and disrepair. What I love about this survey, its results, and the activity of collecting the responses is that it develops new leaders and activists; builds local, regional and virtual infrastructure; and makes it harder and harder to ignore the reality that 40% of Americans are independents. If our country is to free itself from the clutches of partisanship, independents will have to lead the way."

Check out the results of the survey by [clicking here](#) or on the image below.



And check out *The Fulcrum* for Shawn Griffith's piece ("[Pandemic Made Partisanship Even Worse, Independent Voters Say](#)") about the report.

## Yes for Amendment 3 in Florida

*The Sarasota Herald-Tribune* recently joined the list of publications ([See list here](#)) endorsing Florida's Amendment 3, which would allow all registered voters to vote in a nonpartisan primary.



Steve Hough, Director of Florida Fair and Open Primaries

The *Orlando Sentinel's* statement reads: "We shouldn't accept voter disenfranchisement in any form, so why is this one allowed to exist? Because it makes the two major parties more powerful and in control, and they want to keep it that way."

Amendment No. 3 would eliminate separate primaries for the parties and allow everyone — regardless of party or non-party affiliation — to participate in primary elections."

Steve Hough, co-chair of Florida Open Primaries and Director of Florida Fair and Open Primaries, added: "When both major parties aggressively seek to prevent approval of Amendment 3, I can only conclude that they like the status quo. That's odd, because 3.6 million Florida voters have rejected the status quo. How large must that number get before we allow all voters to vote in every election?"

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### Amendment 3 Open Primaries:

ALL registered voters vote in one taxpayer-funded Primary Election for state races - Governor, Cabinet and Legislators.

ALL candidates for all races are on a single primary ballot.

Candidates campaign to ALL voters - not just to their party members.

Each voter casts one vote in each race for the candidate of their choice, regardless of affiliation.

The two highest vote-getters advance to the General Election.

**Vote YES for AMENDMENT 3**

For more information: [FloridaOpenPrimaries.org](http://FloridaOpenPrimaries.org)  
or email [33037.openprimaries@gmail.com](mailto:33037.openprimaries@gmail.com)

Independent Voices of Ohio activist Sadie Moore Stewart was one of six voters interviewed by talk show host Ali Velshi for his Sunday morning talk show on MSNBC. Velshi has been traveling to cities around the country for his pre-presidential series "Velshi Across America." **In this first of two segments** (4:40), Stewart talks about being independent. **In the second segment** (5:27), she responds to Velshi's question about the pandemic and the response of leaders to it.



Sadie Moore Stewart

"As an independent, I don't just want to be taken for granted that I'm going to always vote independent. Give us a chance. Give us some information so we can make some choices."

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Donna Plunkett, activist in Canton, Ohio, watched the first presidential debate, with an eye on scoring the candidates' performance from an independent perspective. Here's her brief takeaway:



Donna Plunkett

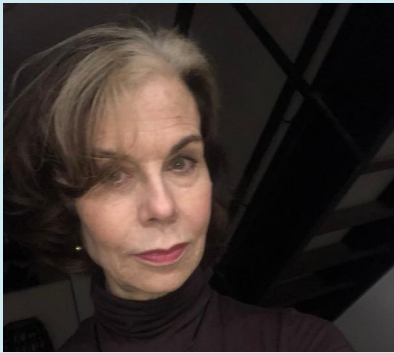
"It is evident we need to restructure how we 'do' elections to attract people with a public servant mentality to politics who can work in a bipartisan manner in the interest of the American people once they are elected. This will require major restructuring of national elections, as an example, and major restructuring of how Congress and the presidency operate.

Last week's debate debacle should have put paid to the idea that we can continue politics 'as is' with gridlock, power plays, politicians selecting their voters, the tyranny of the minority, money as more important than votes, and absolute disdain for rules, values, and decency."

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Independent Voters of Connecticut members were interviewed for a *News12 (ABC)* piece after the debates. The group's founder, Gwen Samuel, said: "Candidates are focused more on winning and gaining power than what is in the best interests of the people that elect them into public office."





Jacqueline Salit

In **"Chaotic Trump-Biden Debate May Count for Little - Voters Already Decided,"** a reporter for *The Guardian* noted that Independent Voting President Jackie Salit observed that she believes a lot of independents didn't watch the debates because they are "sick of the process now." But she predicts that most independent voters will vote for the Democrats.

The reporter continues: "Many female independents she has spoken to who saw the debate compared it to 'watching two little boys in a sandbox have a fight.' Salit added: "Trump revealed the level of his bullying to a new level."

## National Spotlight on Primary Reform

**Open Primaries** and the **National Association of Nonpartisan Reformers** hosted an important virtual discussion featuring reform leaders from across the country. The discussion was moderated by John Opdycke, President of Open Primaries, and Rev. Daryl Gray, former Kansas state senator and civil rights leader. Rev. Gray was an early endorser of Prop D, the open primaries/approval voting measure on the November ballot in St. Louis, (more below) and an advocate for the Black community to explore new approaches for achieving political power and quality representation.

Representatives from Alaska, Florida, Oregon, Pennsylvania, North Dakota, Arkansas, Pennsylvania, and St. Louis gave updates on current efforts to reform primary elections in their state. You can view the full discussion below.





## Politics for the People Hosts Facebook Live Discussion

Independent Voting and The People co-sponsored a special Facebook Live discussion featuring three key women leaders of the reform movement. It was held in advance of the Politics for the People Book Club's discussion with Katherine Gehl about the book, *The Politics Industry*, which she co-authored with Michael Porter. That discussion has been rescheduled for Sunday, October 18 at 7pm ET. Cathy Stewart, founder and leader of the Politics for the People Book Club, hosted the Facebook Live discussion, which featured Gehl, Independent Voting President Jackie Salit, and The People's Katie Fahey. The discussion centered around issues of political innovation, voting and what it means to be a woman in politics. On October 18, Stewart and Gehl will dig deeper into these issues and other issues raised in the book, and club members will get an opportunity to ask Gehl questions. Watch the Facebook Live discussion below. Check out the [Politics for the People Blog](#) for more.



## Support for Democracy in St. Louis

Meanwhile, The STL Approves campaign, Prop D for Democracy, continues to rack up big **endorsements** from a diverse group of local leaders and activists across the city who are joining together and saying: “St. Louis needs a representative democracy that responds to the needs of the people!” Prop D would establish a nonpartisan election system for the offices of mayor, comptroller, the president of the Board of Aldermen and aldermen.

The most recent endorsement comes from Cori Bush, the Democratic Nominee for Missouri's First Congressional District. Bush is a nurse, pastor and "Ferguson-made activist in the fight for justice."



Said Bush:

Cori Bush

“I ran for office because too many of us are suffering every day from the consequences of a flawed electoral system that enables complacent leadership,” said Bush. “In this unprecedented election year, it’s clear now more than ever that we need mass electoral reform, and that can start right here in St. Louis. I’m proud to support Prop D so we can finally reform outdated election practices and make sure our representatives work hard to earn our votes.”

The *St. Louis American* **endorsed** Prop D and urged voters to Vote Yes for Black and progressive power.

## Democracy Unchained: A Conversation Series

Jackie Salit speaks about independent voters in Episode 3 of the documentary, "Democracy Unchained: A Conversation Series," part of the **State of American Democracy** Project. Salit co-authored a chapter in the book, **Democracy Unchained: How to Rebuild Government for the People**, with Thom Reilly, Former Chancellor of the Nevada System of Higher Education. The chapter is titled "Can Independents Save American Democracy? Why 42% of American Voters are Independent and How they Can Transform Our Political System." Her segment on independents, viewable below, begins at 1:05:40.



**Join Jackie Salit's Post-Election Zoom Briefing**



**independentvoting.org**  
NATIONAL  
**Zoom Event**  
WITH JACKIE SALIT



## Jackie Salit's Post Election Zoom Briefing

**Sunday, November 15, 7pm ET**

Independent Voting's national conference call moves to Zoom. Salit will share her thoughts about the presidential election and the work ahead for independents.

**[Register here and send your questions.](#)**

## The People Thank Cathy Stewart and Independent Voting

Independent Voting welcomes back Cathy Stewart, our Vice President for National Development, who joined the staff of The People in February as part of a 6-month collaboration between The People and Independent Voting. In their newsletter, The People issued this statement:



Katie Fahey (L) and Cathy Stewart (R)

"In February, Cathy Stewart joined The People as part of a 6 month collaboration with Independent Voting. Boy, did The People end up on the good end of that deal! Cathy has been a community organizer and strategist in the independent and political reform movements since the early 80's, and over the last six months has been The People's National Field Director. She not only brought a wealth of experience and knowledge to The People, she also inspired us with her passion and enthusiasm to work for democracy reform, 'rule by rule, and state by state.' Cathy spearheaded the SAFE Challenge, Coordinated The People's effort in Missouri to work with Open Primaries to defeat HB 1639 (which would have closed MO's open primaries and forced Missourians to

register with a political party or forfeit their primary voting rights), helped lay the groundwork to move forward with our grassroots efforts in New Hampshire, lead the Voting Rights and Volunteer Engagement Committees, and invited The People to join the Politics for The People Book Club. While we are thankful for all her hard work, it is her boundless energy, positive attitude, and infectious good nature that we will miss the most. Thanks for everything Cathy and Independent Voting! We're honored to have you on the new Slate for the House of Delegates and look forward to continuing to work with you in the coming years!"

## We Endorse the Pledge for Diversity

Independent Voting has endorsed the **Pledge for Diversity** from Inclusive America.



This is a pledge for candidates to sign onto, most particularly the presidential candidates, to say they will make sure that diversity, equity and inclusion will be a priority in the hiring/appointing of government personnel. We're partnering with @InclusiveUS because we believe that our policymakers should reflect the rich diversity of the communities they serve. A more inclusive government is a more effective government.

Urge the candidates to #PledgeforDiversity. [Learn more here.](#)

## Profile in Independence

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Michael Cox • New Orleans, Louisiana

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My name is James Michael Cox and I'm an independent voter in New Orleans, Louisiana. I'm an illustrator, software designer and IT analyst. Over the years I've freelanced for organizations spanning from left-leaning human rights groups to conservative start-ups. Based on the relationships I've made over the years, it's my belief that the majority of



Michael Cox

Americans aren't extremists and wish to co-exist peacefully, respectful of others' views.

I got involved in the independent movement when I saw how partisanship at the highest levels was splitting this country apart. How the battle between a handful of people from just two parties determined the fate of all Americans. Every election I was told "this is the most important election, we cannot afford to split the vote" or "you have to vote for the lesser of two evils." I became tired of voting for evil. I could no longer stand the vitriol of the major political parties in this country. And because of that I became heavily interested in breaking down the two-party duopoly that has split this country and pushed it to the brink of civil war.

It will be a long battle, but I would love to see open federal primaries, ranked choice voting, financial caps on campaign contributions, redistricting reform, and more representative parties in office.

I believe that change can only happen in this country when we repair the "fixed" electoral system in America that keeps the two-party duopoly in play.

If you are interested in learning more about Louisiana Independent Voters, contact Michael at [theindievoter@gmail.com](mailto:theindievoter@gmail.com)

## In the News

Open Primaries President John Opdycke appeared on **David Jolly's "American Resolution podcast"** to discuss some of the myths and facts surrounding open primaries and why they both think it's one of the greatest tools for improving democracy.

Nathan Leach has created NonPartisan Nebraska to combat "eroding civility and

increased partisanship” in the Legislature through dialogue, education, reform efforts, and historical and scientific research. **Read about it.** (*Omaha World Herald*)

In **"Can We Escape the Political Industrial Complex,"** Elliot Ackerman quotes Katherine Gehl and Michael Porter's analysis in the *Harvard Business Review*: "Far from being 'broken,' our political system is doing precisely what it's designed to do. It wasn't built to deliver results in the public interest or to foster policy innovation, nor does it demand accountability for failure to do so." (*New York Times*)

Joe Pickering, co-founder of Mainers for Open Elections talks about why Mainers (and citizens all across the country) should support the fight in Florida for open elections in **"Maine Voices: Florida Election Could Help Ensure Voter Liberty for Mainers."** (*Portland Press Herald*)

Danny Ortega, attorney and long-time advocate for community empowerment, writes: "The rise of independent affiliation in the Latino community and across every demographic is enormous, and has serious political consequences," in **"Why Joe Biden Can't Expect to Automatically Get the Latino Vote."** (*Arizona Republic*)

### **Some additional press coverage of Amendment 3 in Florida**

In **"Black Democratic Party Elected Officials Denounce Open Primary Constitutional Amendment,"** Dr. Jessie Fields, board member of Open Primaries and Independent Voting, points out that "some of the arguments made by members of the Black Caucus ignore the fact that there are approximately one million people of color who are political independents in Florida currently shut out of participating in the state's primary elections. (*Spectrum News - BayNews9*)

Choice Edwards, longtime independent activist, agrees. "I fail to see how opening up the electoral process to 3.6 million No Party Affiliated voters, including 1 million minority voters, is suppressing the minority vote; it is the exact opposite." Read Edwards' editorial, **"Closed Primaries are State Sponsored Voter Suppression."** (*Orlando Sentinel*).

Daniel Cruz Rodriguez and Elena Ashburn, cofounders of Students for Open Primaries, discuss why they think Amendment 3 is so important, in their piece, **"We're Ready and Eager to Vote But We Can't Because We're NPAs."** (*Miami Herald*)

And a Monmouth University poll showed support for Amendment 3: **"Poll Shows Strong**

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*Give us a call today!*

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