



independentvoting.org The **Hub**

February 8, 2022

***NEW YORK TIMES MAKES MAJOR DISCOVERY;
THERE IS SUCH A THING AS AN INDEPENDENT VOTER!***

The New York Times

Jan. 20, 2022

***'THE LOWEST POINT IN MY LIFETIME':
HOW 14 INDEPENDENT VOTERS FEEL ABOUT AMERICA***

BY PATRICK HEALY AND ADRIAN J. RIVERA

Says Frank Luntz, "You sound like you're independent because you reject both political parties. Not that you like them both and you want to choose between both, but, actually, you're rejecters."

The New York Times Opinion page, with help from veteran G.O.P. pollster Frank Luntz, convened **a focus group of 14 self-identified independents** to get their perspectives.

Despite the reporters' (and to some extent, Luntz's) insistence that independents are "moderates" or "in the middle," members of the focus group made it clear that they are not so easily placed in traditional categories and that they are independents for a reason. Independent Voting president Jacqueline Salit commented, "Good to see the *Times* covering these pivotal voters. It only took them twenty-five years to notice. Better late than never."

The article concedes that "there seems to be a striking theme: They're exasperated. As Nick from Pennsylvania put it, "We've been promised a lot by past politicians, and it just seems that nothing ever changes."

Luntz to the focus group: "I'm going to ask you this question, because I'm trying to understand you. You sound like you're independent because you reject both political parties. Not that you like them both and you want to choose between both, but actually, you're rejecters. Kristine, do I have it right?"

[Click here to read what independents had to say](#)

Moving Forward: Conversation with Andrew Yang

Former presidential (and New York City mayoral) candidate Andrew Yang, was a special guest of a virtual discussion co-sponsored by **Open Primaries** and the **Politics for the People Book Club** (a project of **Independent Voting** and **The People**). The conversation was moderated by Open Primaries' president John Opdycke and Independent Voting Vice President for National Development (and Politics for the People founder) Cathy Stewart. The event was attended by 300 people around the country, many of them independents and reformers, who brought their own unique experience and perspective to the discussion.



Everything You Want to Know About Andrew Yang & the Forward Party

'But the Pundits, Politicians and Parties Hope You Won't Ask

A Virtual Discussion with Andrew Yang

Co-hosted by
Independent Voting's Cathy Stewart
and Open Primaries' John Opdycke



 independentvoting.org



OPENPRIMARIES

Yang, on a book tour for his recently written book ***FORWARD: Notes on the Future of Our Democracy***, spoke about why he started The Forward Party, a new party focusing on principles and values, not on ideology.

"The core problem is we have this artificial duopoly. Neither party is truly responsible to the people because they don't have to be. There's no true competition in 90% of the country. A lot of people are checked out on politics, because they know their vote doesn't matter — and they're correct."



Jarell Corley and Dr. Jessie Fields kicked off questions from discussion participants, asking Yang how he and The Forward Party planned on reaching out to African Americans. Corley pointed to the growing numbers of young people of color registering as independents. Added Fields, "You would think the Democratic Party would be speaking about open primaries but it's not. The Democratic Party has been taking black and poor and other communities of color for granted for many years and

that allegiance — that dynamic — has restricted the potential of the black community to lead the entire country and really fundamentally transform our political process."

[View the full virtual discussion.](#)

Also, check out *Independent Voter Network* Shawn Griffith's coverage of the event, "[Andrew Yang: You Should Be Allowed to Vote Regardless of Your Party;](#)" and

Read independent columnist Frank Fear's article in the *LA Progressive* "[Moving Forward as an Independent and a New Party.](#)"

[FOX NEWS: As President Biden's Poll Numbers Drop, the Media Takes a Closer Look at Independents](#)

Martha MacCallum's *Fox News* show, **The Story**, featured a panel of independent voters talking about the Biden administration's handling of key issues.

Amikka Burl, graduate of Independent Voting's spokesperson training program and recent co-host of our [20th Annual Anti-Corruption Awards](#), was joined by Gary Sheng, COO of Civics Unplugged and Brooke Corbett from Fairfax, Virginia.

Asked if she thought Biden should run again, Amikka said:

"We all know we are in crisis right now, and I think the question is not whether he'll run in 2024 — I don't even know if I'll vote for him — but we need to fix our political system, it's broken and the American people know it's broken. Something needs to change, and I think that's why the independent voice is so important. We're not in the middle, we're not leaners. We're right in front and we're making decisions!"

[Watch the segment here.](#)



From Left to Right: Amikka Burl (MI); Gary Sheng (NY); Brooke Corbett (VA)

Spokesperson Training Program Brings in the New Year



From Top Left to Right: Gwen Mandell, Jacqueline Salit, Cathy Salit, Maureen Kelly (staff); Russell Koutrouby (NY); Rodney Smith (NV); Doug McConatha (AL); Ron Dumas (NC); Luanne Taylor (GA); Ryan Cole (NV); Steve Barratt (NJ); Sandi Hebley (TX); Lainie Block-Wilker (OR); Liza Holland (KY); Aaron James (TN); Jim Lundberg (PA); John Madrid (NY); Eric Bonner (MO); Patti Garrison (DE); Gwen Lowenheim (NY)

With independents on the rise and a growing interest in finding out what independents are going to do, Independent Voting's maverick spokesperson training program is becoming a hot ticket.

In an exercise wrapping up the first training of the new year, 16 spokesperson trainees from a cross-section of the country shared 14 words about why they are independents. "I'm an independent because independents are the key to bridging

America's political divide," began spokesperson training participant Ron Dumas, a student leader at University of North Carolina-Asheville. Sandi Hebley of Dallas, TX followed: "I'm an independent because I refuse to be put into a box and be told what to think or do."

The exercise was the culmination of the public speaking segment section of the training in which each participant had five minutes to prepare and perform a 90-second presentation to an audience of their choice with the benefit of feedback from seasoned performance coaches (and long-time independents) Cathy Salit (founder of the **Global Play Brigade**) and Maureen Kelly, president of the leadership consultancy, **Performance of a Lifetime**.

When asked to share thoughts about the session, Russell Koutrouby of Huntington Station New York had this to say: "I'd like to clap for everybody ... Everybody who spoke — to take five minutes to come up with a presentation, depending on who your audience was — we all gave it that honing necessary to relate to the audience we wanted to address."

Liza Holland of Lexington Kentucky added: "I just really love the diversity of approaches and in some respects, we have the same message, but from so many lenses and perspectives — we're in an age of informational overload — and for people to hear the same kind of message in multiple different ways is really important."



Staff: Gwen Mandell, Maureen Kelly, Cathy Salit, Jacqueline Salit

The performance training exercises were preceded by a power point presented by training organizer and host, Gwen Mandell, containing key anecdotes and statistics about independents, and a section in which participants dialogued with Independent Voting's president Jacqueline Salit.

In response to one of the questions posed to her, Jackie shared:

"One of the reasons we run this [spokesperson training] program is because independents speaking with other independents and talking about why we became independents is a crucial part of the cultural and political change. We're not just talking about a set of structural changes in and of themselves, we're talking about the terms of self-governance. Right now, unfortunately the parties act as a mechanism to contain that and oppress that desire for self-governance and they are narrowing the field of debate and ways we interact as Americans in a way which is dangerous for the country. The experts are working overtime to deny that this is a huge and meaningful statement that half country is trying to make right now."

Following the training, Jim Lundberg, a long-time independent from Pennsylvania said: "To be honest, the current hyper-partisan clamor in our government and media sometimes makes me wonder if we are beating our heads against the wall. The skill, passion, and enthusiasm of the staff and the participants was a powerful booster shot in the struggle against the duopoly virus."

Want to Help Make Independents Visible? Join the Spokesperson Training

Here's a testimonial from Eric Bronner, Missouri independent, attorney and founder of Veterans for Political Innovation after completing the training:

Are you an independent voter? Do you get lonely, sometimes, in our hyper-polarized two-party system? If so, then, this training will be a balm for your heart, mind and soul. The training is very insightful and practical and it was super encouraging to meet and hear from other active independent voters from all over the country. Sign up for this training today and you will feel even more confident and encouraged in your independent voice. Personally, I'm ready to shout, "Independents Unite!"



If you'd like to apply for the upcoming training, [fill out and submit this application today.](#)

Closing Primaries is Voter Suppression

On a recent segment of CNN's "Reality Check," John Avlon spoke about closed primaries as almost as dangerous and cynical as other forms of voter suppression because it's an attempt to suppress majority rule. "The desire to close the primaries, he says, is a desire to make sure the elections are less representative." Avlon cites the efforts of the organization, Open Primaries, in his report.

Watch the segment below.



Political Reform on the Agenda in Oregon

Over one million registered voters in the state of Oregon are prevented from voting in the critical first round because of the state's CLOSED primary system. **Oregon Open Primaries** has launched a petition drive to change that!

The Free and Equal Elections initiative seeks to amend the state constitution to guarantee the right of all voters to vote and all candidates to compete for the state's most important offices, without regard to party affiliation.



Ed Doyle, one of the co-founders of the campaign, said:

"Party affiliation or non-affiliation shouldn't be a requirement for participating in publicly funded primary elections! Yet that's the case today, where over 40 percent of Oregon's voters are barred from primaries for our state's most important offices — simply because they do not belong to one of the two major parties. Our approach is simple, straightforward, and nonpartisan — we're sponsoring an amendment to Oregon's Constitution that confers on all voters the right to vote and on all candidates the right to compete, regardless of their party affiliation or non-affiliation. Our initiative is showing great appeal, though the in-person signature gathering process is a slow one due to the pandemic and weather. It's all hands-on deck, and we urge all Oregon voters to go to our website at oregonopenprimaries.org to access the electronic petition form!"

Check out Doyle's [letter to the editor](#) and the video message (above) addressed to independents from co-campaign leader Mike DeWolf.

Profiles in Independence

Luanne Taylor, Woodstock Georgia



Luanne Taylor

Voting seemed like an exciting event when I was a child. I was anxious to grow up and participate. Maybe Civics classes helped. Once there was a "Government" class in high school and I really enjoyed it.

My first Presidential election was Carter/Reagan, I voted for Carter, even though my father told me I was crazy. I loved that my vote was private, not a soul could stop me from my pick. Felt like freedom to me.

Over time, I developed zero interest in either of the two major political parties. Then CSPAN came along in the late 80's, and it was exciting. I became a big fan. There I watched both parties in action. I was still not inspired to join up, but you can't watch CSPAN for 33 years and not learn something.

Ross Perot came along in 1992, he was a dream. Today I marvel that he managed a run for President as an Independent. I know Perot inspired thousands, yet I never had the chance to vote for an independent candidate again.

In 2018, I ran for Georgia House District 49 as an independent. I wanted to find all these independent candidates I knew Perot, and others, had inspired. I found them fumbling about, collecting thousands of signatures and rarely making the ballot.

Now I am an advocate for independent candidates in Georgia.

Independents are a diehard bunch. Currently, there are folks contemplating a run for office, maybe thinking, "I could run as a Democrat or a Republican so easily, piece of cake, but instead, I'm going to try to collect these thousands of handwritten signatures and run as an independent." I want to back those people.

In the News

At a time when "**non-major-party voters surpassed Democratic and Republican voters**" for the first time in Nevada state history, a Carson City judge has ruled in favor of the proposed ballot question calling for open primaries and a ranked-choice general election in a lawsuit aimed at keeping the initiative off the ballot. Read : "**Judge rules in favor of ballot measure for open primaries, ranked-choice voting.**" (*Nevada Independent*)

Another victory! Read "[Alaska Supreme Court upholds election changes ending party primaries.](#)" (*The Hill*)

Read "[Another Push to Open Primary Elections in New Mexico.](#)" (*KSFR*)

Read Independent Pennsylvanians' director Jenn Bullock's [Letter to the Editor.](#) (*Philadelphia Inquirer*)

Gwen Mandell
Director of National Outreach
IndependentVoting.org
800-288-3201

gmandell@independentvoting.org

Make a Donation!

Contact us!



IndependentVoting.org | 9322 3rd Avenue, #406, Brooklyn, NY 11209

[Unsubscribe {recipient's email}](#).

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by gmandell@independentvoting.org