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August 2, 2022

One Step Forward

Breaking news first reported by the *Reuters* news service this week:

The Forward Party, Renew America Movement and the Serve America Movement have announced the merger of the three organizations, creating the basis for the creation of a new national political party, The Forward Party. A press release announcing the development, notes that "The Forward Party was established in 2021 by former U.S. presidential candidate Andrew Yang to fight for the American people with practical, common-sense solutions, alongside leaders of the independent movement such as Jackie Salit [president of Independent Voting]."



In a letter to supporters, Yang said: "Through our combined efforts, we have the experience and expertise to build a new viable, durable,

credible national party in American politics. It's a new party founded on the principles of responsiveness to the needs of our citizens, providing transparency and collaboration in the decision-making process, and being consensus builders in our communities."

Salit told the *Hub*: "Here's the challenge that the Forward Party faces right out of the gate: Can it give the American people some new tools to create an independent political force that blends the values of fairness and freedom? If it succeeds, this will change everything!"

Read the *Reuters* story, "**Former Republicans and Democrats form a new third U.S. political party**" [here](#) and check out the **Forward Party's new website**.



David Cherry, President of the **Leaders Network** and Independent Voting board member, organized a meeting at the Greater St. John Bible Church in Chicago to bring together key faith leaders with founders of the new Forward Party. From Left to Right: Rev. Ira J. Acree, Cherry, Maru Opabola, Rev. Cy Fields, Andrew Yang, Jacqueline Salit, Rev. Marshall Hatch and Joel Searby

Check out Cherry's oped, "**Americans mourn while politicians remain paralyzed**," written this summer.

A significant article about independents has appeared in the *New York Times* in recent weeks, reinforcing the notion that politics-as-usual could be in for a bit

of a shake up:

The New York Times

OPINION
DAVID BROOKS

A 2024 Presidential Candidate Who Meets the Moment

July 14, 2022

Only July 14, David Brooks, longtime *New York Times* columnist and national commentator wrote in "A **2024 Presidential Candidate Who Meets the Moment**":



"I'd like you to consider the possibility that the political changes that have rocked this country over the past six years will be nothing compared with the changes that will rock it over the next six. I'd like you to consider the possibility that we're in some sort of pre-revolutionary period — the kind of moment that often gives birth to something shocking and new."

Brooks notes the growing discontent of the electorate and in particular the rise of independent voters as two of the key factors responsible for these changes. He says:

*"Americans are detaching from the two political parties. Far more Americans **consider themselves independents** than consider themselves either Democrats or Republicans, and independents **may be growing more distinct**. And there's some research that **suggests** independents are increasingly not just closeted members of the two main parties but also hold different beliefs, which put them between parties. Sixty-two percent of Americans **believe** a third party is needed."*

Read the complete article here or in **pdf form**

Announcement: New Book on the Independent Voter to be Released

A seminal book on independent voters will be hitting the market this fall. Co-authored by Jacqueline Salit, President of Independent Voting, Dr. Thom Reilly, Professor in the School of Public Affairs at Arizona State University, and Dr. Omar H. Ali, Dean of Lloyd International Honors College and Professor of African-American political history at the University of North Carolina Greensboro (and Independent Voting board member), the book is being released by Routledge Press and examines who independent voters are and how they are transforming the political landscape in the United States.



The book includes a Foreword by Forward Party founder Andrew Yang and an Afterword by Dr. Jessie Fields.

Here's what former California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger had to say about the book:

"The Independent Voter does a fantastic job chronicling the rise, and power, of the fastest-growing segment of the electorate in the United States. It is clear that more and more Americans are tired of partisan gridlock and want their leaders to be public servants, not party servants. Republican and Democratic leaders should take note, and anyone interested in the future of American democracy should read this book."

Here's how the publisher describes the book:

"....Drawing on historical and contemporary data (including survey data, participant observation, interviews, and current writings and scholarship) and providing timely new analysis, the authors argue that independents are an engine for a transformation of U.S. democracy, perhaps even its saviors. Rather than "leaning" to a party or an ideology, independents vary on issues but share a deep distrust of the partisan system. What are the consequences of this distrust? What about shifting trends among Black, Latino, and Asian communities regarding party loyalty? What of young voters who eschew party identification, wanting a different kind of political culture? For a wide variety of

audiences, this book gives students, scholars, campaign professionals, activists, and media analysts an insight into current voting dynamics and future possibilities."

The first edition of the book will be released September 29, about the same time as the launch of the new **Center for an Independent and Sustainable Democracy** at Arizona State University, co-directed by Reilly and Salit. **The book is currently available for pre-order here** (with an e-book version available in the coming months).



Jacqueline Salit



Dr. Thom Reilly



Dr. Omar H. Ali

Nevada Voters to Vote on Final Five in November

By Doug Goodman, Founder and Executive Director, Nevadans for Election Reform

Good things come to those who work diligently and are patient.

In 2013, **Nevadans for Election Reform** began discussing nonpartisan open primaries combined with ranked choice voting (RCV) with anyone who would listen: legislators, business leaders, community groups, and national election reform organizations. A bill for a top-three primary and RCV was actually filed during the 2015 Nevada legislative session but failed. Other attempts for legislation in 2017, 2019, 2021 plus an initiative in 2018 all met the same fate. One bright spot was the 2020 Nevada Democratic Party Presidential Caucus when the party used RCV during early voting, for the first time allowing party members to cast a vote without being present on caucus day.

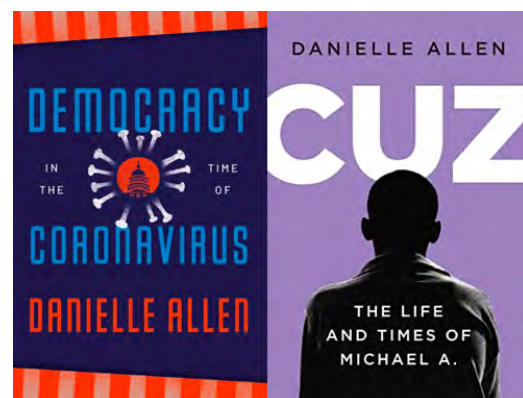


Fast forward. In the fall of 2021, the **Institute for Political Innovation** took notice. What evolved was **Nevada Voters First**, a broad coalition of leaders of election reform efforts in Nevada along with others who recognize the value of ensuring that all voters have maximum choice and a loud voice in all elections. Led by a professional staff, the Better Voting Nevada final-five voting initiative was filed in November 2021 and on July 20, 2022, it was certified for the November 2022 ballot by the Nevada Secretary of State.

Just over 140,000 signatures were required. Over 266,000 Nevada Voters signed. Ballot qualification was the first hurdle. As a Constitutional Amendment it must pass the voters twice, 2022 and 2024. The first final-five election will take place June and November 2026.

Politics for the People with Dr. Danielle Allen

On Tuesday, June 21, people from across the country joined **Politics for the People** host Cathy Stewart for a virtual discussion with Dr. Danielle Allen, James Bryant Conant University Professor at Harvard University, and Director of Harvard's Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics.



The discussion was wide ranging, including discussions about two of Allen's recent books: **Democracy in the Time of Coronavirus** and **CUZ: The Life and Times of Michael A**, as well as about her impetus for writing them and her reflections on her recent run for governor of Massachusetts.

Commented Allen:

If as a society we had that sense of commitment to each other and the people around us, we could do so much more for one another. There's really not anything limiting us from the point of view of resources or capacity, even creativity. It's really a question of what's in our hearts towards others around us."

You can watch the full conversation (which includes questions and comments from book club members) below.



Summer Highlights - Local Roundup

New Jersey

The New Jersey State Legislature just passed a bill further restricting the rights of independent/unaffiliated voters to vote in the primaries. It sits on Governor Phil Murphy's desk waiting for his signature. **New Jersey Independent Voters**, led by Sue Davies, is calling on Governor Murphy to not only veto A3820/S2869, but to make a strong statement that he welcomes independent voters and supports their full participation in the political process.

Bill A3820/S2869 prohibits **2.4 million unaffiliated voters in New Jersey** (43% of the electorate) from receiving mail-in ballots for the primaries. Instead, independents would be sent a party affiliation form, ostensibly coercing them to join the party rather than making it easier for them to vote. As Davies says in a **press release published in the Hudson Reporter**:

"This action sends a strong message to independent voters. The Democratic Party doesn't respect you, doesn't want to build bridges with you, and does not welcome your participation in taxpayer funded elections."

Members of New Jersey Independent Voters have been calling and emailing the Governor to urge him to veto the bill.

In addition, the New Jersey League of Women Voters and the Institute for Social Justice have come out against the bills, saying that it "will create a two-tier system of rights for voters" and will adversely impact "people with disabilities and mobility issues, elderly voters, and people who are not physically near their polling place."

New Jersey Independent Voters has its hands in a number of projects this summer in addition to the fight against the passage of A3820/S2869. They have been on the streets surveying independents with Independent Voting's national survey: **"From 2022 to 2024: Independents Look Ahead."** New Jersey Independents Steve Barrett and Ken Cerullo have been active in an effort to bring Initiative and Referendum to the Garden State and members have been working in coalition with other political reform groups in the state on a variety of political reform measures.

Pictured below are Davies and Javier Luque, surveying independent voters at the local Hasbrouck Chamber of Commerce street fair. Davies commented: "The response to the survey was very positive, with many voters appreciating the opportunity to express their feelings about the current political and economic situation and the midterm and 2024 elections."



Activists in a number of states have spent their summers coming together to launch new independent groups. Here are two of them:

Arizona



A new effort to engage and empower independent voters is emerging in Arizona. Three citizens with strong interests in voting rights for Independents are beginning a process for communicating with other

independent voters, a first step toward scaling the message to a statewide level. Richard Sinclair and Henry Schulgasser (Scottsdale), and Al Bell (Peoria), have crafted an initial organizational framework and are now embarked on creating a functional communication network in support of this timely and essential initiative.

From top left: Henry Schulgasser, Al Bell, Richard Sinclair

Maryland

UPDATE from the Independent Voters of Maryland team: Independent Voters of Maryland is on the move. Over the past few months, our team developed and finalized our two-page “Talking Points” marketing message and a snazzy brochure we hand out at in-person meetings with candidates running for office and potential activists. We developed and use an 18-page Action Plan to direct and track our efforts. We implemented a website and found an already established Facebook Group. We are developing model op-ed and Letter-to-the Editor drafts. Finally, with a big assist from Gwen Mandell and Cathy Stewart at Independent Voting and Russell Daniels at Open Primaries, we emailed almost 100 prospective activists and asked them to join our effort. We intend to host an “open house” with those expressing interest right after Labor Day. Between now and the general elections in November, our biggest challenge and top priority is recruiting and engaging additional members to focus on building support for open primaries among Maryland state senators and delegates when they start their next legislative session in January 2023.



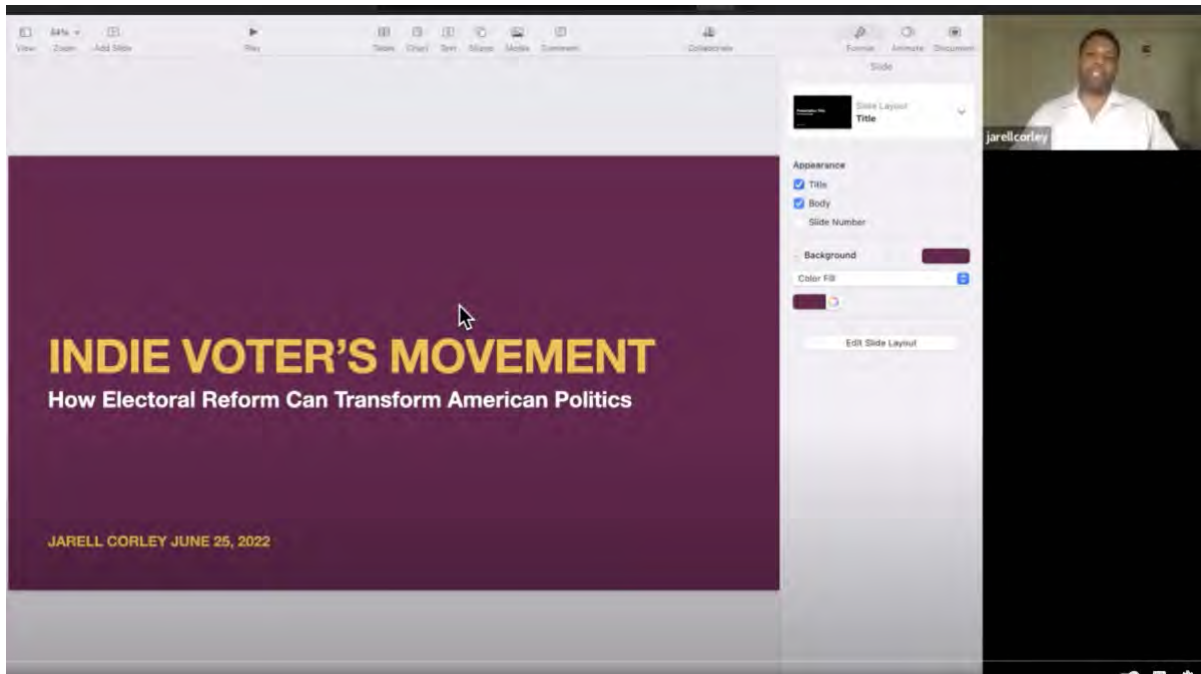
From top left: Len Breslow, Darius Holt, Bottom: Reed Harrison, Dona Sauerburger

Illinois

In early July, Jarell Corley, Independent Voting activist (and founder of the **YouTube channel, The Independent**), was invited to make a presentation on independent politics by Chicago's College of Complexes, a group that hosts

weekly free speech forums on social issues and current events. Jarell had the opportunity to present his first power point presentation, "American Electoral Reform, Open Primaries, Independent Voters' Rights" to members of the group and invited guests from the Independent Voting network, and to respond to some challenging questions presented by members. The presentation can be viewed by clicking on the image below. Great job, Jarell!

Also, check out Jarell's op-ed in *Blavity*, "**Why I Believe Black American Should Embrace Political Independence.**"



Survey Update

Our survey, **From 2022 to 2024: Independents Look Ahead**, was launched to be a catalyst for conversation about the current political crisis and how we are thinking about 2024. To date, over 1,700 independents have taken the survey and several thousand dollars have been donated to help spread the word.

The Independent Voting network has been spreading the word through **letters to the editor, video messages**, and directly taking the survey directly to the street.

Please help by donating today

For every \$25 you give, we can expand our advertising to reach another 500 independents.



Take the Survey Here

Share the survey widely (Find the survey on **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **Instagram** or from the **campaign page** of **Independent Voting's website** or **download the survey here**).

Join our survey team! Contact Gwen at gmandell@independentvoting.org for more information.

independentvoting.org

SPOKESPERSON TRAINING

**Want to help make independents visible?
Apply to participate in Independent Voting's next
Spokesperson Training.**

We are now taking applications for Independent Voting's next Spokesperson Training, which will be held in the Fall at a date to be announced soon.

Part educational, part performance training, the Spokesperson Training program is a tool to combat the idea that independents don't exist -- that we're just a myth. 80 million independents are not a myth and our voices must be heard.

Every independent has a story to tell about why he/she became independent. Join our spokesperson training to increase your skills and comfort in telling your story!

Attendance is limited to allow full participation.

Apply Here

When the People Decide

This summer, a new podcast, **When the People Decide** has been launched by Jenna Spinelle, Strategic Communications, Penn State McCourtney Institute for Democracy. The podcast explores how citizen-led ballot initiatives are breaking political gridlock and allowing new coalitions to form. The eight-episode series explores the promise — and sometimes peril — that ballot initiatives have brought to American democracy by telling the stories of people who have organized initiative campaigns across the country.



Asked why she decided to launch the podcast at this moment, Spinelle said: "I started working on the series in early 2021 after seeing the results from ballot initiatives in the 2020 election, as well as efforts by state legislatures to restrict the initiative process. I thought it was important to highlight the hard work of people on the ground fighting for issues they care about and building new political coalitions along the way. I hoped it would provide some hope heading into the midterms and, from what I've heard from listeners, that seems to be the case."

Check out the podcast here

Profiles in Independence

Michael Katz

Wilmington, Delaware



Michael Katz

After years of involvement in State and national policy-making, I have concluded that America's political system is broken. Grounded on tribal politics and the core value of winning, the two major political parties (Democrats and Republicans) and the political industry are the root cause of America's divisive society and eroding democracy.

In order to protect America's democracy and restore integrity in our political system, citizens should pledge to abide by a code of conduct that is guided by America's constitutional values of Liberty, Justice and Equality, to respect each other, to seek national unity, and to work together to improve our society as public servants.

An independent voter is an independent thinker, who makes decisions in service to our society, to improve our society for all, regardless of political party affiliation and interests.

Realizing that my duty to serve society can be most effectively fulfilled by a commitment to the code of conduct and not a political party, I changed my party registration from Democrat to "no party."

Establishing a Delaware Independent Voting affiliate will provide the needed resources to elevate independent voices who are committed to protecting our democracy and restoring integrity in our political system.

(Michael Katz, MD MBA is a former Delaware State Senator, a multi-partisan activist, and has spent thousands of hours knocking on Americans' front doors listening to their concerns.)

In the News

Read "**We must radically change election administration to preserve American democracy**" by Thom Reilly and Jeremy Gruber (Sr. Vice President, Open Primaries) (*The Hill*)

Reilly's "**Can Independents Be a Bridge Over Our Partisan Divide?**" can be found in the current issue of *Governing*. (*Governing*)

Read "**Nonpartisan Top-Five Primary and Ranked Choice Voting Qualify for Nevada Ballot**" (*IVN*)

Read "**Guest commentary: Don't call me unaffiliated,**" by Steve Mandell (*Aspen Times*)

Read "**California's top-two primary is what democracy should look like,**" by Jason Altmire, former Representative from Pennsylvania and advisory board member to Open Primaries. (*The Fulcrum*)

Read "**Lawmakers may close Alabama primaries during next legislative session**" (*Alabama Political Reporter*)

Read "**Arizona's Independents are largely powerless in primary elections**" (*Arizona Mirror*)

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