

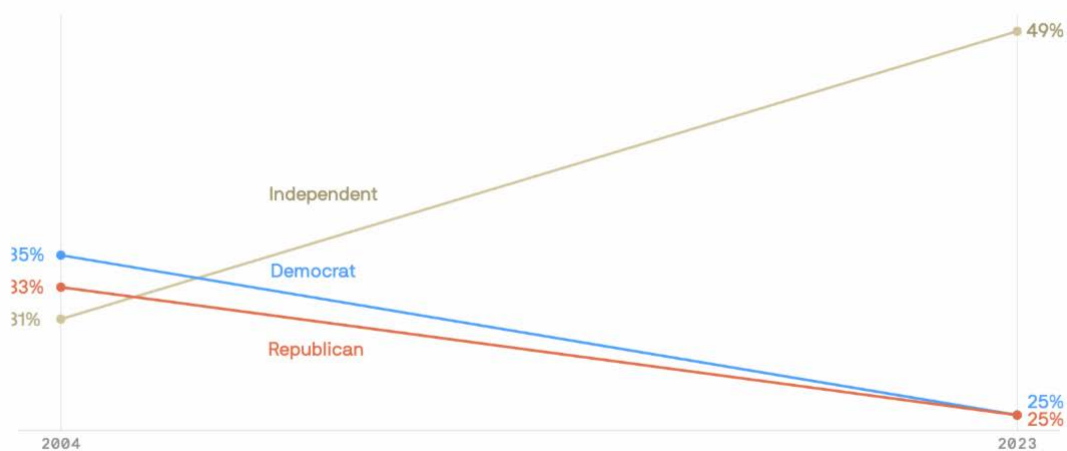


May 30, 2023

Why I'm an Independent: New Gallup Poll Sparks Independent Response

At a moment when polarization and demonization are rampant and voter approval of our government is at an all-time low, it's no surprise that so many people in the country identify as independent.

Surveys of at least 10k U.S. adults conducted March 2004 and March 2023



Data: Gallup. Chart: Tory Lysik/Axios Visuals

Gallup's latest poll on political identification found that 49% of Americans see themselves as politically independent — almost as much as the two major parties put together. (The percentage of those identifying as Democrats or Republicans was 25% for each party.) Gallup asks the question "In politics, as

of today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat or an independent?" Gallup has conducted this poll (usually monthly) since 2004 and the 49% figure for independents is close to the all-time high. (The number reached 50% briefly in February of 2021, after hovering around 40% over the past decade.)

In his piece, "[Gallup: Half the Country Now Identifies as Independent](#)," Independent Voter Project Shawn Griffith speaks to some of the myths about independent voters and points to the positive impact the rise of independents has had on stimulating non-partisan reform, and John Opdycke of Open Primaries addresses some of the pushback that independents get on [Paul Rieckhoff's "Independent Americans" podcast](#).

When Gallup released their latest statistics, we at [IndependentVoting.org](#) decided to send off a quick note to our network, asking independents to tell us why they are independent (in 15 words or less). Several hundred people immediately responded.

Steve Hough, director of Florida Fair and Open Primaries, wrote a piece characterizing the poll and its response (A version of this Commentary, entitled "[Half the people reading this likely identify as independent voters](#)," appears in Florida's *Orlando Sentinel*). In it, he says:



"With these kinds of numbers, why are independents ignored and denied full rights of participation in the electoral process? It's likely due to a follow-up question asking whether the voter leans more to the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. Without delving deeper, this allows political scientists and pundits to erroneously conclude that we are not truly independent. I'm a lifelong independent, and I'm sure I'm not alone in taking offense.

"As the director of Florida Fair and Open Primaries and a Florida task force leader for Veterans for Political Innovation, I interact with people who have discarded their longtime party affiliations, and young new voters who are registering without declaring a party affiliation. Half of military veterans maintain a non-partisan stance after serving, and do not affiliate with a political

party. I believe there's a better explanation for this phenomenal growth of self-proclaimed independents than to suggest that we are being deceitful."

A hallmark of Independent Voting's organizing has been to showcase this important national phenomenon — to promote the reality that almost half the country is saying that they don't want to identify with either major party and are looking for a new way of doing politics. At Independent Voting, we believe that it's critically important that indies all across country become more visible, more powerful and speak for ourselves about why it is that so many of us have chosen to be independent. To date, this is a question that Gallup has not asked. We think they should, and in every facet of our organizing, we have insisted that this be at the forefront of the conversation about who independents are. We have conducted national surveys over many years asking independents to speak to this, and we have created our landmark **Spokesperson Training** program, to give independents the tools and the opportunity to share their story. (The Spokesperson Training program is now three years old and takes place several times a year.)

Independent Voting's Spokesperson Training ends with an exercise where participants share in why they're independents. **Here's a short video** highlighting the program, where a number of participants speak for themselves. (**Fill out this application if you are interested in applying for the next one**).

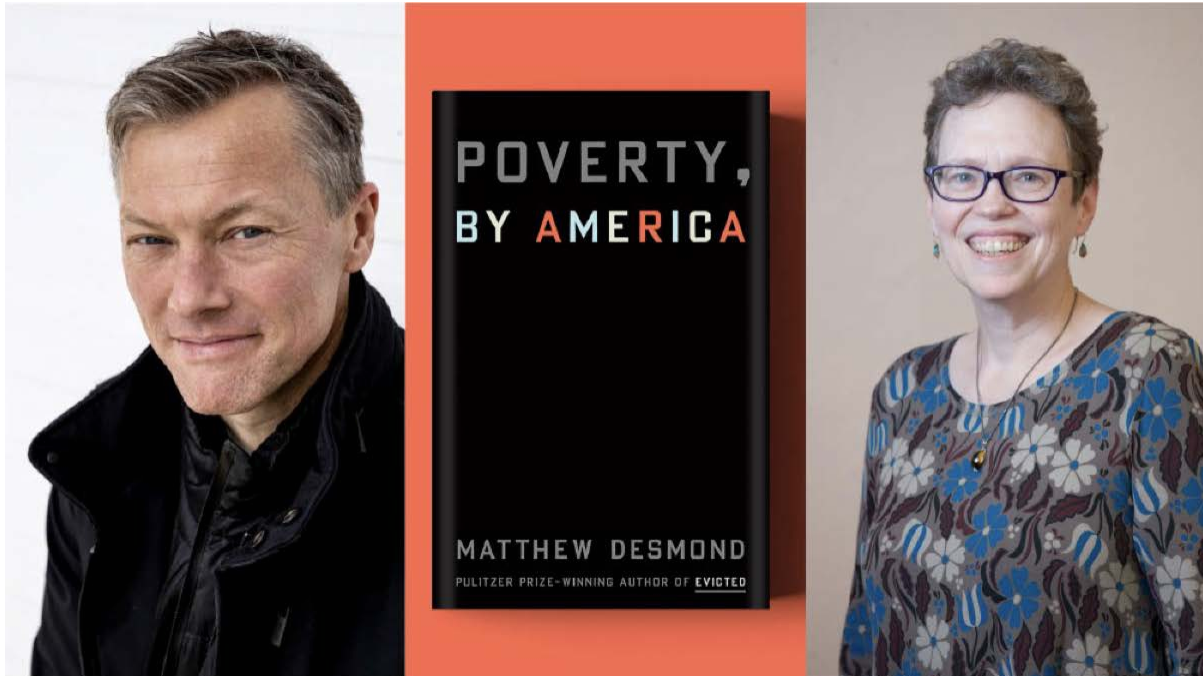
As Hough says, "*We are not simply closet Democrats or Republicans. Just ask us!*"

Politics for the People Discusses *Poverty, By America*

Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Matthew Desmond will be returning for a virtual discussion on July 25 with **Politics for the People book club** founder, Cathy Stewart, to discuss his new book ***Poverty, By America***. Desmond, who also wrote *Evicted*, takes a deeper dive into poverty in America in his new book, and asks: Why haven't we been able to solve this crisis in the richest country in the world.

The Politics for the People Book Club reads fiction, history, poetry, and current affairs. Club members read each book over a 6-8 week period and have the opportunity to participate in a lively conversation in the Readers' Forum on the **Politics for the People** blog. In addition, the blog provides members with reviews, author bios, interviews, and videos to enrich the reading experience. Each selection culminates with a lively conference call with the author of the book, where participants have a chance to speak directly with them and create a thought provoking conversation. **The Politics for the**

People Book Club enjoys a reputation among participating authors for creating conversations about their work that have great depth and scope.



**Register here for the
Politics for the People Book Club Virtual Discussion
with author Matthew Desmond
Tuesday, July 25 at 3pm ET**


Families in the top 20 percent receive almost 40 percent more in government subsidies than families in the bottom 20 percent.

POVERTY, BY AMERICA
MATTHEW DESMOND

Poverty isn't simply the condition of not having enough money. It's the condition of not having enough choice.


POVERTY, BY AMERICA
MATTHEW DESMOND

THE END OF POVERTY IS SOMETHING TO STAND FOR, TO MARCH FOR, TO SACRIFICE FOR.



POVERTY, BY AMERICA
MATTHEW DESMOND

WE DON'T NEED TO OUTSMART THIS PROBLEM. WE NEED TO OUTHATE IT.



POVERTY, BY AMERICA
MATTHEW DESMOND

We talk about welfare dependency but the bigger problem is welfare avoidance: Low-income Americans walk away from over \$100 billion in aid each year.

POVERTY, BY AMERICA
MATTHEW DESMOND

We talk about welfare dependency but the bigger problem is welfare avoidance: Low-income Americans walk away from over \$100 billion in aid each year.

POVERTY, BY AMERICA
MATTHEW DESMOND

A Lifetime of Achievement: Lisa Rice Honored at PLEN's 2023 Mentor Awards

by Jacqueline Fuller, Independent Voting activist from Alexandria, Virginia

Lisa D. T. Rice, electoral reform advocate and a leader in the independent voter movement, received PLEN's 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award at their annual awards ceremony in Washington, DC. PLEN is a nonpartisan organization that focuses on preparing college women for careers in public policy. Rice is a longtime supporter of the organization and served in various roles such as a Board Member, speaker and Interim Executive Director. Rice explained in her acceptance speech how important it is to volunteer as a mentor for the next generation of women in the field and to seek mentorship when starting out in public affairs or changing careers. She also reflected on the times she was the "only" one in the workplace who was a political independent.

Congratulations Lisa on your achievements to prepare the next generation of women to succeed in their endeavors!



Lisa Rice and Jacqueline Fuller

The Campaign to Repeal Pennsylvania Closed Primaries

For years, independent activists in Pennsylvania have been working at the community level to replace Pennsylvania's closed primaries with open primaries. Recently, this fight has gained momentum and may finally succeed in the passage of Senate Bill 400, introduced by Sen. Dan McLaughlin (R) and Sen. Lisa Boscala (D) this legislative session.

John Opdycke, **Open Primaries** President, and **David Thornburgh**, Chair of **Ballot PA** moderated a recent virtual discussion sponsored by Open Primaries, which updated viewers on the latest developments in this campaign. It included a video of Rocky Bleier (Vietnam vet and former Pittsburgh Steelers running back) endorsing the campaign and an appearance by former Pennsylvania Senate President, Representative **Joe Scarnati**.

Watch the full Open Primaries virtual discussion below.

05.09.23 (1PM EST)

SPECIAL EVENT!
AN INSIDE LOOK
AT THE CAMPAIGN
TO REPEAL
PENNSYLVANIA'S
CLOSED
PRIMARIES

HOSTED BY:
OP PRESIDENT
JOHN OPDYKE
& BALLOT PA
CHAIR, DAVID
THORNBURGH

FEATURING: FORMER PA SENATE PRESIDENT JOE SCARNATI,
INDEPENDENT PENNSYLVANIANS DIRECTOR
JENNIFER BULLOCK... & SPECIAL GUESTS!

OPEN PRIMARIES
EDUCATION FUND

Back in 2007, **Jenn Bullock**, Director of Independent Pennsylvanians, started leading protests in front of polls to inform voters that independents could not participate in the presidential primaries. "Historically, you couldn't always say it's a fun time to be an independent," she said. "15 years ago, we would be talking to voters in Pennsylvania who identify as independent and there was a real lack of any sense of power, and now we can talk to independents and people say: "This has got to change!" The passion that people bring in is really exciting to see." She added "It's really exciting to hear how legislators are talking about this bill, not just us advocates."

Mary Kelly-Cavotta, a former medic in the U.S. Army, spoke on behalf of veterans and **Harry Hou** about the response of students.

Hou, a sophomore at Swarthmore, said: "There's a clear indication that a lot of young people support this issue. A lot of our generation has grown up in a time of very fragmented national discourse, a very polarizing time, and that has led a lot of folks in my generation to feel unaffiliated with either major party. Even if we register with a particular party, it's an identification that we don't feel strongly about. And we found that once you get the conversation going, this is an issue that a lot of folks support."

For more, read Opdycke and Thornburgh's editorial, "[It's Time for Open Primaries in Pennsylvania.](#)"

Check out the short video below, made by Jenn Bullock and Independent Pennsylvanians, and if you are in Pennsylvania (or know folks there) [use this link](#) to send a note to your representatives to repeal closed primaries. Independent Pennsylvanians hold monthly meetings by Zoom. Email independentpa@gmail.com for more info.



Pictured: Jenn Bullock, Stephen Bouikidis of Independent Pennsylvanians

Report from New Jersey Independent Voters

Here's a report from Sue Davies of [New Jersey Independent Voters](#):

Democracy in New Jersey is on the menu for both independents and for the two major political parties. A number of anti-democratic reforms have been pushed through by the controlling Democratic Party, including prohibiting independent voters from receiving mail-in ballots for the primaries. This spring, every independent voter in the state was mailed a party affiliation form in an attempt to coerce unaffiliated voters into registering in a party.

[New Jersey Independent Voters](#) is fighting back and working to strengthen the voice of independents. We are circulating a petition to our elected officials and are going out on the street to speak to independents, Democrats, and Republicans about open primaries and how to strengthen our democratic processes. The petition says: "**Let All Voters Vote**" and calls on elected officials and leaders to stand up for democracy in New Jersey by supporting open primaries (non-partisan elections) in the state. The current system

prevents 2.4 million New Jersey independents from participating in publicly funded primaries.

Our next stop is the Hasbrouck Heights street fair on June 4th. In addition, we recently did a presentation to the local Forward Party on open primaries.

Please spread the word to everyone you know in New Jersey to **sign onto our petition** and **join our Facebook Group**. Our next monthly meeting is on Monday, June 19th at 7:30 pm. For Zoom information, email **nj-independentvoters@gmail.com**



Sue Davies and Javier Luque at a previous Hasbrouck Heights street fair

A Hearing on Non-Partisan Elections in Maine

Representing Mainers for Open Elections, Bangor resident **Joe Pickering** testified at a hearing before the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee in support of **LD 1959**. The bill was introduced by Senator Joe Baldacci, and would create a non-partisan election. The bill stipulates that all of the candidates, including candidates enrolled in a party and unenrolled candidates, must appear on the same open primary ballot, and that all qualified voters, regardless of enrollment status, are eligible to vote in open primary elections. Ranked choice voting would be employed for offices where it is currently mandated.

Legislation creating semi-open primaries in Maine went into effect May of 2022 after a successful fight, allowing the 36% of voters in Maine who are independent to vote in partisan primaries. Ranked choice voting was first used in the 2018 election.

Said Pickering in his statement,

"We thoroughly support Senator Baldacci's LD1959. It gives greater freedom and more candidate choice to the voter and hopefully to the public who currently refrain from voting, which is tragic ... Our parties participate in this true open primary (also called non-partisan elections) but they do not own the public election system. Two private corporations should not own our public election system."

Dr. John Long, a retired physician, Veteran of the Vietnam War and also a member of Mainers for Open Elections, said in his written testimony:

"Each of you are members of a political party. In general, you agree with the major tenants of your party. Understandably, you feel a significant degree of loyalty to your party, but your party did not elect you and your primary loyalty should be to those people in your community who did. You serve the people first and not the party."

Pickering is encouraging Mainers to **submit your own testimony in support of the bill.**

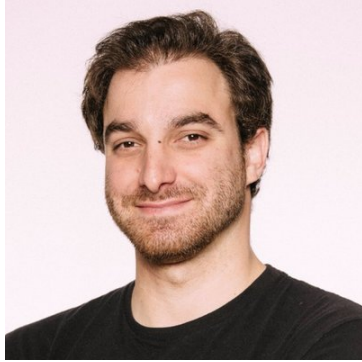


Profiles in Independence

In this issue of Profiles in Independence, we feature two new leaders in the campaign for non-partisan elections in New York. For more information on the campaign, go to the **Final Five NYC website.**

Devin Balkind

Brooklyn, New York



Devin Balkind

My journey to independence started in high school, during the lead-up to the Iraq War. Seeing mainstream Democrats and Republicans line up behind such a phony case for war shocked me.

After Trump was elected in 2016, I decided to get involved with the Libertarian Party, which is America's third largest. I became chair of the Brooklyn Libertarian Party in 2017 and got to work organizing regular events and upgrading the party's communications and technology infrastructure. I was excited when the Libertarian Party, after many decades of work, finally achieved "major" party status in New York in 2018, but that victory was short-lived. The next year Democrats and Republicans came together to change the rules governing political parties and stripped the Libertarian Party of its hard won major party status.

Since then I've embraced my independent voter status and now focus my efforts on reforms that shift power from political party insiders to the general voting public. I'm very excited about the **Final Five NYC** campaign, a ballot initiative that will bring nonpartisan primary elections to New York City, enabling the city's one million independents to vote in primary elections.

Ed McGlone Queens, New York

For my entire civic life, I have felt most comfortable identifying as an independent. Growing up in the 1990s and 2000s, I watched both parties struggle to come together to solve major national issues that continue to have downstream effects in my state and local community. I have no interest in blindly supporting any party and will evaluate candidates on the merits of their plans to fix problems and better the



Ed McGlone

lives of the Americans they represent, regardless of their political affiliation or lack thereof.

January 6, 2021, was a wake-up call for me. I needed to get off the sidelines and play a more active role in improving the condition of our democracy and reducing toxic partisanship. I completely changed careers and dove headfirst into the democracy reform space.

I joined the team over at Final Five Voting NYC, which is committed to leading a ballot initiative that would open up the primaries to independent voters in the city and allow them to meaningfully participate in all phases of the democratic process. I have also spent time working for the Forward Party national team in their Communities and Building division, encouraging and supporting everyday citizens to be more civically engaged. I am also a proud supporter of and volunteer for Braver Angels, an organization dedicated to reducing the political polarization at the root of so many of our problems.

In the News

In California, former US Representative Tom Campbell, Open Primaries, and FairVote have asked the state's high court to give the Independent Voter Project — and the individual plaintiffs signed onto the lawsuit — [a chance](#) to lay out the evidence that the California system unfairly burdens the voting rights of independent voters in the presidential primary process. Read "[Letters Urge CA Supreme Court to Hear Evidence that California Suppresses the Rights of Independent Voters.](#)" (*IVN*)

Read Rickie Schott's editorial "[New York's Closed Primary System Silences Independent Voters.](#)" (*NY Post*)

Two articles "[Opinion: Open primaries and ranked choice voting reflect Alaskans' spirit](#)" (*Anchorage Daily News*) and "[Alaska's election innovation](#)," written by Veterans for Political Innovation leaders Todd Connor and Eric Bronner (*The Fulcrum*), address the experience of voters since they established the nonpartisan voting system in 2020.

Read "**Volunteers hopeful new amendment will bring open primaries to Oregon.**" (*Statesman-Journal*)

Read Arthur Florio's Letter to the Editor, "**Open primaries to one million independent voters.**" (*PennLive*)

Ed Kilgore writes another piece which looks to close down any conversation about a potential No Labels' presidential candidacy, "**The Fallacy Behind No Labels Independent Unity Ticket**" (*New York Magazine*)

This opinion piece written, "**Want to encourage centrists? Tell the party bosses to back off,**" written by the board of the *New Jersey Star-Ledger* included a podcast interview that Andrew Yang did with Independent Voting President Jackie Salit. (*New Jersey Star Ledger*)

Read "**Group pushes for open primaries in South Dakota**" (*KOTA-ABC*)

Read "**Krysten Sinema's Party of One: What the Arizona senator's breakup with the Democrats means for American politics.**" (*New York Times*)

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

gmandell@independentvoting.org

Make a Donation!

Contact us!



IndependentVoting.org | PO Box 94, Shushan, NY 12873

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

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

Sent by gmandell@independentvoting.org