

Letters to the Editor



TUCSON WEEKLY

DECEMBER 24, 2015

NEWS & OPINION - LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letter to the Editor

#IndependentVotersMatter

We are independent voters residing in Tucson and just a few among the 1.219 million independents in the state who will be barred from voting in the most important election in the country, the presidential primaries.

Although independents are the largest community of voters in Arizona, having surpassed the number of registered Democrats and Republicans, we are currently excluded from voting in this election. That is wrong. No American should have to join a party in order to have the right to vote.



Thousands of Arizona voters, of all political affiliations, are calling upon the chairs of the Democratic and Republican parties in the state, to open the primaries and allow all voters to participate in our process. They have the power to do so. Many states already allow independents to vote in the presidential primary and last month, the Democratic Party of Oklahoma took steps to do so also. These elections are publicly funded. To exclude the largest group of registered voters in the state amounts to taxation without representation and is undemocratic in the extreme.

—Mary Larik, Joshua Hubbard, Deborah Palmer and Agata Szwaykowska

The Glendale Star

Glendale's Community Weekly Since 1978

Letter to the Editor: Independents should have right to vote in party primaries

Posted: Thursday, December 24, 2015 12:00 am

We are independent voters residing in Peoria and just a few among the 1,219,000 independents in the state who will be barred from voting in the most important election in the country, the Presidential primaries.

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Billy Carlton and Jim Cawley

Verde Independent

12/29/2015 1:45:00 PM

Letters: Independents will be shut out in Presidential Preference Election

Editor:

About 36 percent of Arizona's voters, Independents, will be disenfranchised in the March 22 Presidential Preference Election (PPE), whereby registered voters of participating, recognized political parties cast their vote for who they prefer the Arizona delegates cast their vote for at their party's national convention.

On the Secretary of State's website, the 3 participating parties in the PPE are the Democratic, Republican and the Green Parties. This is not a primary and the only candidates that will appear on the ballot are the presidential candidates from their respective political parties.

But in order to vote and have a voice in this election, voters must be registered to one of the three participating recognized parties. Independents who can usually request a ballot for their party of choice at primary time, cannot do that in this election.

They must be registered to one of the participating parties. The voices and votes of all Airzonans are important and we urge independents to go to www.servicearizona.com before Feb. 22 and register to one of the recognized parties for this election. After the election, Independents can re-register as independents and carry on as usual for the primary and the general election. But, please, don't let yourselves be shut out from the March 22 Presidential Preference Election.

Barbara Litrell

President, League of Women

Voters Greater Verde Valley

Peoria Times



Peoria's Community Newspaper Since 1952

Posted: Friday, December 18, 2015

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Billy Carlton and Jim Cawley



Everyone should be able to vote

posted: Wednesday, December 16, 2015 4:00 am

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Although independents are the largest community of voters in Arizona, having surpassed the number of registered Democrats and Republicans, we are currently excluded from voting in this election. That is wrong. No American should have to join a party in order to have the right to vote.

Thousands of Arizona voters, of all political affiliations, are calling upon the chair of the Democratic and Republican parties in the state, to open the primaries and allow all voters to participate in our process. They have the power to do so. Many states already allow independents to vote in the presidential primary and last month, the Democratic Party of Oklahoma took steps to do so also. These elections are publicly funded. To exclude the largest group of registered voters in the state amounts to taxation without representation and is undemocratic in the extreme.

Mary Larik, Joshua Hubbard, Deborah Palmer and Agata Szwaykowska
Tucson

ARIZONA CAPITOL TIMES

Your Inside Source for Arizona Politics, Government and Business

An Independent responds to the Arizona Republican chairman

By: Guest Opinion November 25, 2015

The *Arizona Capitol Times* recently aired the views of Mr. Robert Graham, chairman of the Arizona Republican Party, concerning the fledgling effort by Arizona citizens to place an initiative on the 2016 ballot to reform our state's election laws. Mr. Graham's blatant attempt to mislead and frighten Arizona voters must not go unanswered.

Mr. Graham characterizes the forthcoming 2016 reform effort as nothing more than a plot by losing liberal candidates to tilt Arizona's election system to give them a better chance of winning. Using a quintessential political ploy, he cites the involvement of Paul Johnson and Terry Goddard as proof of this specious claim.



I am a registered independent who strongly supports open nonpartisan elections and full disclosure of campaign contributions. I am not now, nor have I ever been, a candidate for public office. But I am a former, duly elected, Republican precinct committeeman. I am volunteering in the effort to place a reform initiative on the 2016 ballot because the current political parties represent the parties' interests, not the interests of average voters. Party leaders, in particular, have a commitment to ideology rather than a commitment to governing.

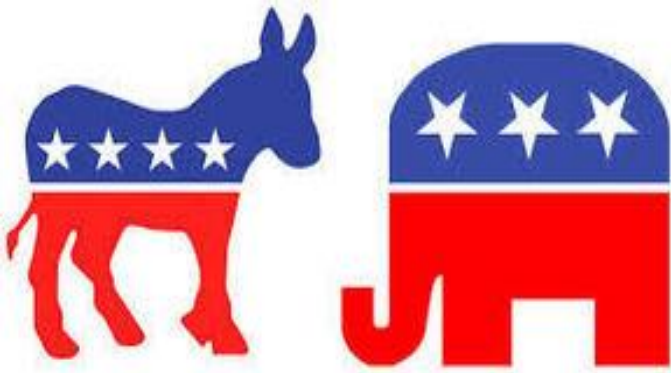
I'm sure Mr. Graham is aware that independents now account for 36 percent of Arizona voters, surpassing both Republicans and Democrats. I suspect he also knows what a recent Arizona State University study found: that 46.8 percent of registered Republicans would consider changing their party registration to independent. These factors explain Mr. Graham's deceptive comments, which are insulting to thousands of Arizonans who are disgusted with partisan politics.

The reality is Mr. Graham is fearful that his empire is crumbling.

— *James W. Morrison Jr. lives in Tucson.*



Letter to the Editor: After 82 years of voting, the party is over



Posted: Monday, December 28, 2015

Submitted by William Peterson

I'm 82 years old, and I've been voting all my life. I have never been so angry at the state of affairs. I would take out a full page ad in every paper in this country if I could - but I can't afford it! Here's what it would say: We used to have a government of the people, by the people and for the

people. No more. You know what we've got? We've got a government of the Party, by the Party, and for the Party. It is a national disgrace. I used to be a Republican because I did what my parents did, until I started thinking and got a mind of my own. Then I became a Democrat, but I realized they were just as bad. I became an independent. I am my own man. I don't want to be in your party, I just want to vote. You know what they do to me now? They FORCE me to LIE in order to exercise my constitutional right to participate. I have to pretend to be a Democrat, or a Republican just to get my foot in the door. It's about time people take our government back. It is ours, not theirs.

William Peterson

Apache Junction



Arizona Daily Star

Dec 21, 2015

GOP, Democrats have stolen our government

I'm 82 and I've been voting all my life. I have never been so angry at the state of affairs.

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You know what they do to me now? They force me to lie in order to exercise my constitutional right to participate.

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William Peterson
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East Valley Tribune

EastValleyTribune.com

Posted: Monday, December 28, 2015 10:43 am

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DAILY MINER



12/13/2015 5:57:00 AM

Letter: Independents jump through hoops

Arizona has an issue: 30 percent registered Democrat, 30 percent registered Republican, and 40 percent registered Independent or no preference. How dumb is it that 40 percent of registered voters are ineligible to vote in our presidential preference election on March 22? In addition, each of us must change our registration to either Democrat or Republican no later than Feb. 22 in order to be allowed to vote in the March 22 election.

Easy enough to change affiliation as it can all be done online. Once changed to the party of your choice, you can name the person you wish that party's delegates to vote for at their national convention.

So, Independents, please select the party of your choice and make this simple change so you can help select who's going to be on the real ballots. In my own case, I've changed to Democrat so I can vote for Bernie Sanders in the Presidential Preference election in March. Easy enough to change back to Independent once that election is over.

But I consider it silly to have to jump through these hoops. Much prefer open primaries where all reasonable candidates are on a single ballot. Pick the top three from the primary and put them on the final ballot. Past time for the two party system to go away.

George Catt

Kingman

Verde Independent

January 7, 2016

Independents want to be heard

Dear Editor:

Did you know that 1.2 million Arizonans are registered Independents?

This number now represents the largest community of voters in Arizona.

Those are two very important facts, but this third fact is the most alarming: independents cannot vote in the Presidential Preference Election as Independents. Why is this?

Because the Democratic and Republican parties conduct closed Presidential primaries.

I read with interest the letter published on Dec 29 from the chair of the League of Women Voters of Greater Verde Valley. I thank Barbara Litrell for bringing to light the situation Independent voters face in the Presidential Primary, where they are forced to reregister into a political party in order to vote.

I have traveled the state, talking with independent voters who are outraged that they cannot vote for President on March 22. These are primaries that they pay for as taxpayers ... isn't that taxation without representation? As William Peterson from Apache Junction put it, the current situation is one in which "... they force me to lie in order to exercise my constitutional right to participate."

Independent Voters for Arizona is conducting a campaign lobbying the chairs of the Democratic and Republican parties to do the democratic thing --- to open their primaries to independent voters. Over 7,400 independents have sent emails or signed letters to the two chairs. We have activists in 59 cities and towns who are gathering signatures on our open letter to the party chairs.

Independents want to be heard in a true democratic fashion, without being forced to join a party.

I would like to ask Ms. Litrell and the League of Women Voters to join in our efforts and call on chairpersons Tameron and Graham to open the primary to all Arizonans.

Timothy Castro

Phoenix

State Campaign Director, Independent Voters for Arizona

CAMP VERDE BUGLE

1/7/2016 1:44:00 PM

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Timothy Castro

Phoenix

State Campaign Director, Independent Voters for Arizona

The Daily Courier

1/7/2016 6:00:00 AM

Letter: Open primaries

EDITOR:

In an Oct. 24 article, The Daily Courier reported that both the Yavapai County Democratic and Republican chairs were trying to reach out to the 45,000-plus independent voters in the county. In Arizona, independents are the largest voting bloc, outnumbering those registered as either Democrat or Republican.

Arizona independent voters are organizing - not as a party but as a force for political reform. One major reform is opening the presidential primary election to include all registered voters. Currently, we are circulating a letter to the chairmen of the Arizona Democratic and Republican parties asking them to open this important election process. Thousands of Arizonans (Democrats, Republicans and independents) have signed onto this letter.

Yavapai County voters have been gracious and supportive of our efforts. The county Democratic and Republican chairs have a perfect opportunity to reach out to independents by contacting their state leaders in support of open presidential primaries.

Local independents will be meeting at Cuppers in Prescott at 9 a.m. on Saturday, Jan. 9. All interested voters are welcome.

Kim Ames-Wright

Prescott

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Al Bell 2:45 p.m. MST November 4, 2015

Letter: Independents don't have to join GOP to vote



Recently I received a post card from the Arizona GOP. It stated, "you are receiving this post card because independent voters are not allowed to vote in the upcoming Republican Presidential Primary unless your registration is updated."

I have two problems with this. Using the phrase "not allowed" implies the party's hands are tied, but the parties make their own rules and could decide to include independents. Also, it's patently misleading to suggest that an independent need only "update" their registration to be eligible to vote in the presidential primaries.

What the GOP is asking independents do is to re-register as Republicans. There is another way. Rather than be bullied to join a political party, independents are collecting signatures on a petition to the chairs of the Democratic and Republican parties urging them to open their primaries.

If you are concerned about the process in which our presidential primaries will be held on March 22, 2016, you can, too. Independent voters are 37 percent of the Arizona electorate. That means more than 1,191,000 voters and 50 percent of Hispanic voters will be denied a voice unless the parties elect to allow independents to vote. Many other states do.

-- Al Bell, Peoria

Opinion Pieces



ARIZONA CAPITOL TIMES

Your Inside Source for Arizona Politics, Government and Business



Arizona independents are rising and demanding equality

By: Patrick McWhorter - November 19, 2015

At last, a spotlight is on the most important group of voters in Arizona: independents.

A recent study published by the Morrison Institute for Public Policy at ASU focused on the largest group of registered voters in our state, and highlighted one essential fact – their numbers have grown from 11 percent in 1992 to 37 percent today, and they keep growing. This is consistent with national reports, which indicate 43 percent of Americans identify as independents. Voters are fleeing the parties, including a majority of new millennial voters, who refuse to join a party in the first place.

The research showed that not all independents are the same – they have varying ages, backgrounds, and political beliefs. But two things we know for certain: independents are choosing NOT to belong to a political party and they are NOT treated equally under Arizona law.

This should be no surprise to any Arizonan accustomed to gridlock in Congress, partisan squabbles over inconsequential issues, and a widening gap between what the voters want and what our elected representatives deliver. Today's voter sees a broken system that fails to deliver on the promise of democracy. And the growing number of independents is an indication that voters see political parties as part of the problem.

Our state's largest voting group deserves the same treatment and the ability to participate under the same rules as those who choose to join a party – it is one of the most fundamental American values of equal citizenship. However, the reality is that independents are treated differently than party voters, requiring extra steps to vote with an early ballot, for example. Meanwhile, independent candidates face appallingly higher petition signature requirements. This is the largest voter suppression effort in modern times.

And it's working. Data show that independents do not vote in proportions consistent with other voters. This is most notable in the primary elections. While turnout is low among all voters in the primary elections, it is abysmal among independents, only in single digits. This is no surprise when, (1) poor voter education and intentionally confusing rhetoric has left half of independents believing they don't have the right to vote in the state's primary election; (2) the parties in Arizona exclude them altogether from the presidential primary, and (3) some local parties have voted to exclude them from all primaries.

The only answer to this problem offered by those who currently write the rules: "Just join our party and you won't have any of these problems."

That completely defies what the Morrison Institute study revealed through focus groups of independents. These voters do not want to participate in an inherently partisan process which is unrepresentative of their views and which has converted our democracy into a shouting match between small bastions of ideologues whose extreme views produce today's gridlock. The only choices they are offered are Coke or Pepsi, when they would rather have a Dr. Pepper.

Independents want real choices as they cast votes in meaningful elections. The Morrison Institute study found that the vast majority of independents want political reform that moves us away from the toxic system we have today.

Independent voters overwhelmingly support reforming election law so that every candidate runs in the same election, every voter receives the same ballot and thus we truly treat every voter equally, ending the unfairness of the current system.

Furthermore, independents support election reform because they are also taxpayers who are currently footing the bill for primary elections, along with partisan taxpayers, but do not get to participate equally in the same system. Independents are expressing that outrage embedded in our nation's history – no taxation without representation. Shutting independents out of primary elections they pay for is patently unfair.

And independents are tapping another rich vein of American history, heeding the warning of America's first president, George Washington, who said, "The common mischiefs of the spirit of party are sufficient to make it the interest and duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain it."

Independents are rising. The movement is growing. Independent Voters for Arizona was organized last month, and the tide is shifting. People are demanding a system that represents the people. And people are ready to reform a system that treats them unfairly.

That is why the movement for political reform will continue to build in the coming years and defenders of the current system are put on notice: The days are numbered when parties write the rules and snatch democracy from its people. The rise of independents is a sign that the people are taking their democracy back.

Thank you Morrison Institute for shining a light on the rise of independent voters and what it means for the future of our democracy.

— *Patrick McWhorter is Arizona campaign director for Open Primaries.*

December 14, 2015.

Our Turn: Independents, unite and become a force

There are three big reasons why voters register as independents.

A new study of independent voters reports that 67 percent of all Arizona voters think “the two-party system has outlived its usefulness.” Dissatisfaction with the political process runs high.

So we were happy to see an overwhelming majority — upwards of 75 percent of surveyed Democrats, Republicans and independents — want to see independents organize.

“Voters are looking for more options,” the study, commissioned by the Arizona Clean Elections Commission, concluded, “They just don’t know how to access them.”

We couldn’t agree more.

We are independent voter activists in the state, having formed Independent Voters for Arizona (“IV4A”), to give greater voice to and empower this expanding and under-represented constituency.

Independents are organizing, but not into a party — rather, into a force for political change. We’ve opened an office in Phoenix and are reaching out to and speaking with independents statewide for that purpose.

For us, the study is to be applauded as the first such effort in Arizona to examine who we are and why we’re growing so rapidly. It offered some new and important insights, as well as some still limited views of who independents are.

We were proud to be represented at the forum, not just talked about. It allowed us to offer insights based on our own independent-to-independent polling experiences and the perspective from the national organization with which we are affiliated, IndependentVoting.org.

For example, the study uniquely asked members of its focus groups “Why did you become an independent?” This obvious question is typically skipped over in a rush to define independents on the basis of their voting history or ideology.

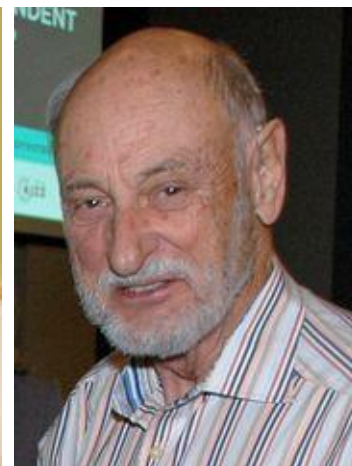
The answers revealed why there is such widespread dissatisfaction with the political process: Independents keenly understand that the current political parties represent the parties’ interests, not the interests of the people.

The parties put ideology over governing, demand loyalty over building new partnerships and trump creative innovation with old ideas.

Our own grass-roots surveys across the state on why people register independent have yielded three top reasons: 1) I want to be able to vote for the best candidate, irrespective of party identification. 2) I want to vote, but I don’t want any party telling me who to vote for and 3) I don’t like the political climate in the state; it is far too partisan.



Kim Ames-Wright



Al Bell

The limitations of the study appeared in places where independents were viewed using the prism of the existing two-party system. For example, much of the study defined independents by their location on a traditional left-center-right continuum. That leaves out a self-defining feature of who independents are.

Cathy Stewart, vice president for national development at IndependentVoting.org, who was invited to present a report from the field at the study’s unveiling, explained that independents “are making a determined move away from that very paradigm — a move away from the political parties and the traditional party pillars — partisanship and ideology.”

“Independents are looking for new ways,” she said, “to get out of the partisan stalemates and create new coalitions and new ways to collaborate on dealing with our most pressing issues.”

In Arizona, we are currently circulating a letter to the chairs of the Democratic and Republican parties asking them to do the right thing, the fair thing: To open the presidential primaries to independents.

Independents, the largest community of voters in the state, are excluded, which makes for a stark statement about party interests vs. public interest. No American should have to join a party to have the right to vote. The thousands of Arizona voters — Democrats, Republicans and independents — who have signed onto the letter are making a simple and powerful appeal for fairness.

Kim Ames-Wright, is a program manager and advocate in the healthcare field. She resides in Prescott.

Al Bell, retired from a career in public and private community planning and lives in Peoria.

