



OCTOBER 2022

## WHO OWNS THE PRIMARIES, CAMPAIGN UPDATES & HOW INDEPENDENTS CAN SAVE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

### October 2022:

### Who owns the primaries, the parties or the people?

There is a growing debate on this very question. It is not an academic debate.

**Who “owns” the primaries determines whether we the people have any shot at decent representation in Congress and our state legislatures.**

When the people own them, as they do in California, Nebraska, Washington and Alaska, you are much more likely to get quality representation. When the parties own them, you are much more likely to get...partisanship. The kind of partisanship that is driving all of us crazy.

We’ve been pushing this conversation to the forefront for 13 years. And we keep pushing. John Opdycke and Chris Cuomo had a conversation on NewsNation. ([Watch Video Here](#)). Who is going to reclaim ownership of the primaries for the people? Independent voters are. Independents are not just free agents, they are change agents.

Jeremy Gruber and Thom Reilly spoke with Ted Simons at PBS about all the ways the parties have grabbed control of our electoral process--including the primaries--and the consequences of that. ([Watch Video Here](#)).

New voices are joining the conversation: billionaire [Mark Cuban](#), The American Enterprise Institute’s [Howard Husock](#), former Texas Senator [Kay Bailey Hutchinson](#), Arizona historian and author [Rob Riel](#), Democrat-turned-Independent [Andrew Yang](#)--to name a few. Diverse Americans insisting that we need to put the American people, not the political parties, in charge of our electoral process.

But there are other voices as well. Democratic Party insiders in Nevada who are blasting local efforts to establish nonpartisan primaries. Republican insiders in states with nonpartisan voter registration who want to change that so they can enact the worst form of closed partisan primaries. It's great when big shots like Mark Cuban start talking about reform. But for every Mark Cuban, there are ten partisan hacks working behind the scenes to entrench partisan control of the primaries. Five state Republican parties – Alabama, Arkansas, Missouri, Tennessee and Texas – have quietly passed resolutions in favor of closed primaries.

**Read pieces by Gruber and Kresky and Opdycke and Hart about the growing efforts to enact closed primaries in 2023.**

This is an exciting and challenging moment. We need to play defense to prevent the enactment of closed primaries. We need to play offense to expand the use of open and nonpartisan primaries. We need to organize independent voters into a force for change and challenge the media narrative that independent voters don't exist. We need to build strong partnerships with other change organizations and leaders who want to dismantle partisan control of our electoral system. And we need to amplify the voice of ordinary Americans who are desperate for something new, something positive, something developmental.

## Campaign Updates: Nevada, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Wyoming

**Nevada:** Nevada's closed primary system currently locks out 600,000 Nevadans but Question 3, on the ballot a week from Tuesday, aims to break open the doors and give these voters full and equal voting rights. If passed, Question 3 would create a nonpartisan, open primary system for the first round of elections and implement ranked choice voting in the general election (like Alaska's new system!). Our friends at Nevada Voters First (including OP Spokesperson Sondra Cosgrove) have been hard at work on the ground to go up against both major parties who have come out strongly against it. We encourage you to reach out to anyone you know in Nevada in the next 10 days and tell them to VOTE YES ON 3 and share the campaign website [HERE](#).

Oklahoma: Oklahomans are paying millions of tax dollars for closed primaries that marginalize party voters and shut out the 20% of voters who are independent entirely. Enter [Oklahoma United](#).

Oklahoma United Founder (and OP National Spokesperson) Margaret Kobos has been hard at work building a movement of Oklahomans from all walks of life who think it's time to let all voters vote for who they want. Last week, Kobos and Oklahoma United hit the Tulsa State Fair to talk with real Oklahomans and the video from the event demonstrates a real hunger for change – [watch full video here](#).



Jeremy Gruber joined Kobos in Tulsa as they both hit the radio waves to clear up the false narrative put out by parties that they own the primaries. You can listen to their full interviews with KRMG Talk Radio [HERE](#) and OK Public Radio [HERE](#).

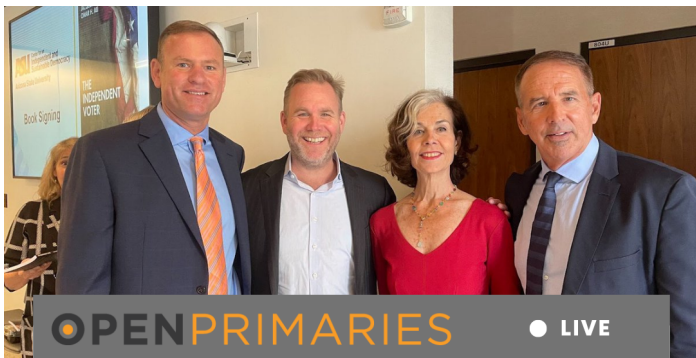
**Pennsylvania:** [BallotPA](#), which is spearheading open primaries legislation in the keystone state, is launching an initiative to mobilize college students across Pennsylvania in support of open primaries. Currently, PA primaries are limited to only registered partisans, incentivizing politicians to campaign to the extremes and shutting out a population of independents that's composed disproportionately of young voters of color. BallotPA is pressuring legislators and raising popular awareness of this crucial but under the radar issue.

Come join their launch event this Sunday, October 30 at 7:30pm. [Students for Open Primaries](#) founder Dariel Rodriguez will be joining Ballot PA Chair David Thornburgh and student leaders from across PA. Join the call [HERE](#).

**Wyoming:** One hundred years ago the voters of Wyoming created primary elections to put Wyomingites in control of their own elections and get rid of the collusion by special interests and party insiders to determine candidates and set political agendas. Gruber lays out in a new op-ed how the primaries have shifted since their inception. The primaries have become (in most cases) the only election that matters in Wyoming. In 2020, 60% of races were uncontested—only 5% of races were competitive. Party leaders and special interests are back at it calling all the shots. This was not the intention the voters had when they created primaries. That’s why it’s time for Wyoming voters to take back control. This week Gruber testified before the Wyoming Legislature’s Joint Corporations, Elections and & Political Subdivisions hearing in support of a new nonpartisan, open primary bill. As he puts it:


*“Nonpartisan, open primaries are about core conservative values and what I believe are American values: fairness and competition.”*

## HOW INDEPENDENTS CAN SAVE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY



**OPENPRIMARIES** ● LIVE

**Virtual Discussion:**  
**How Independent Voters Can Save American Democracy**

WHERE	DATE
ONLINE	Tues 11/1 02:00PM ET
FEATURING	
 <b>Center for an Independent and Sustainable Democracy</b> Arizona State University	Jackie Salit & Thom Reilly (Co-Directors) & John Opdycke (President, Open Primaries)

On Tuesday November 1 at 2pm ET our Virtual Discussion Series will host a brand new discussion: How Independent Voters Can Save American Democracy featuring Jackie Salit (President, IndependentVoting.org) & Thom Reilly (ASU).

Salit and Reilly have written a new book, The Independent Voter and are co-directors of an exciting new academic hub: The Center for an Independent and Sustainable Democracy at Arizona State University.

The Center seeks to study this emerging community of voters, conduct new, innovative research, create a space for dialogue on how best to address the challenges our democracy faces, and examine ways to make a shift to nonpartisan alternatives and governance.