



Happy New Year everyone! The newly formed **Independent Voters of Connecticut** is kicking off the new year with a bang! We have launched **Let Connecticut Vote**, a campaign designed to get an Open Primaries bill introduced by Connecticut lawmakers.

As a mom and an active unaffiliated voter, I value my Constitutional right to vote. Thus, I firmly believe all states must have open primaries to ensure every registered voter has the legal right to participate in every aspect of the voting process.

Semi and closed primaries can be likened to 20th century literacy tests that required "certain" Americans to be able to read and write before they could vote or the payment of a poll tax as a prerequisite to register to vote, which often disenfranchised communities of color.

The bottom line is this, regardless of race, income level, gender, age, or party affiliation, it is time to expand the traditional voting rights agenda and allow all registered voters to participate in the civic engagement process. This allows for an organic democratic process. And for those running for public office, you must actually work to earn the vote of the American people and not assume you will be voted into office because of your party affiliation or name recognition.

So why are we doing this in Connecticut?

IT'S INCLUSIVE

Turnout in primaries is low in many communities within Connecticut - and we need more people engaged if we want the best candidate options.

IT'S RIGHT

Forty-two percent (42%) of Connecticut voters are unaffiliated. Independents outnumber both Democrat and Republican parties. It's not right to exclude more than 900,000 Connecticut registered voters from our local, state and federal primary elections.

IT'S FAIR

Freedom and independence are core values of Connecticut - known as the Constitution State. Because *all* taxpayers pay for elections, it's not fair to force voters who want to be independent/unaffiliated to join a political party just to have their voices heard.

Now is truly a moment when the voice of independent voters, is key. This election season saw somewhat of a political revolt – from the Sanders Revolution where millions of people bumped up against the limits of the political process during the primaries, to the push back against the traditional status quo coalition that Hillary Clinton represented, and even the fact that the voters sent the politically incorrect Donald Trump to the White House. Now 39 percent of the national electorate, independents represent a force of motion crying out for a new kind of politics in this country - the type of politics where all voter voices and their votes matters.

IVOCT plans to shake up the exclusive Connecticut political establishment that disenfranchises over 900,000 registered voters all because they choose to not join a political party. The “land of steady habits” needs to rethink some of their habits regarding the voting process for unaffiliated voters and your participation is key in making open primaries a reality for taxpayers and active voters of Connecticut.

Independents Voters of Connecticut (IVOCT) is a people’s first organization focused on building a collective voice of empowered and informed voters. Please contact me at gwendolynsamuel@gmail.com to find out how you can participate in this important campaign.