



Dear Friends,

Just a week after this very turbulent national election, I delivered a keynote at the Arizona State University (ASU) annual Morrison Institute “State of our State” conference. I closed my remarks about independent voters and the independent movement by reading a few verses from a Leonard Cohen song, “Anthem.” Cohen, the poet/singer/songwriter who died the day before the election, penned this haunting—and to me, very relevant—refrain:

Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack, a crack in everything  
That’s how the light gets in.

Independents, I told the audience, are one of the cracks in everything. And, I explained, our movement wants to bring in the light. This mission—and how to pursue it—is the subject of our bi-annual National Conference of Independents to be held on March 18, 2017 in New York City. I sincerely hope you will join me there. **(To register, go to <http://ConferenceofIndependents.org>)**



How do we do that? How do we bring light to what many feel are dark times in America and the world? What is the particular role of independents—now 43 percent of the country—in sorting out and shaping the political re-alignments that are now underway? What kinds of coalitions can now be built within the independent and reform movements, and with fellow Americans who are Democrats or Republicans? And, how do we understand the voters’ choices this year? Was the shift of independent voters from supporting Barack Obama in 2008 to backing Donald Trump in 2016 an ideological shift from left to right? Or, was it part of a larger change in which left/right/Democrat/Republican categories now mean less than the vertical divide between the haves and the have-nots? These are important questions for independents to engage.

In a little-noticed pre-election poll designed by the feisty Fox News analyst Pat Caddell, he discovered that 67 percent of Americans believe that the most significant divide we face as a country is not Democrat vs. Republican but the American people vs. the elites. The parties may be trying to define the divide on their

terms, but it is getting harder to make that stick. Independents are not at the ideological “center.” But we are at the vortex of this changing paradigm.

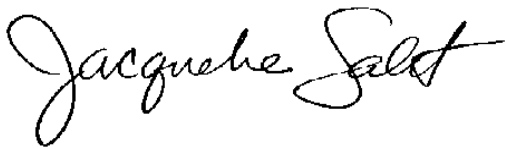
Where do democracy issues like open primaries, election administration and the electoral college—to name a few—fit into this shift? Do third parties and independent candidates provide the tools America needs to re-direct the country? Should we seek out campaigns that are based on winning elections or do we need a strategy for the development of the political culture? Can the two be combined?

The major parties are now reeling from major league conflicts within their respective camps. As Donald Trump assembles a government, as the Democrats’ liberal coalition regroups after its shattering loss, the fault lines inside those parties are more visible than ever. How should independents respond to and organize off of these conflicts? Where do the political and social interests of African Americans, Latinos and other communities of color lie in the post-Obama era? These questions, and others, will shape the agenda for our National Conference on March 18<sup>th</sup>.

Historically, our national conferences have provided a context for independent activists to connect with one another. We have developed tactics and strategies for transferring power from the establishment—most especially the parties—to the people. We have looked at ways to grow our movement and train our leaders. We have educated ourselves about the state of our movement.

We will do all of that and more in March. But, this upcoming conference takes place in the midst of more political uncertainty and more political opportunity than we’ve had since the independent voter rebellions of the 1990’s. I hope you will join me in these important political conversations.

Respectfully,



Jacqueline Salit  
President, IndependentVoting.org

**National Conference of Independents  
Saturday, March 18, 2017  
The Proshansky Auditorium  
CUNY Graduate Center  
365 5th Ave, New York, NY 10016  
Between 34th and 35th St.**

The Conference is FREE but you must register in advance at [HTTP://ConferenceofIndependents.org](http://ConferenceofIndependents.org)

For more information, call Gwen Mandell t at 212-609-2823 (800-288-3201) or send an email to [national@independentvoting.org](mailto:national@independentvoting.org).