

PRESIDENTIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

PREAMBLE: IndependentVoting.org is the country's leading strategy and organizing center for independent activists with a national headquarters in New York City and local activist networks in 40 states. Jackie Salit, co-founder and President, asked leaders in her network to submit questions they'd like to pose to presidential candidates. Below is a composite of their submissions.

QUESTIONS:

1. The Federal Election Commission (FEC) which oversees federal elections is currently made up of three Democrats and three Republicans. Independents staunchly support making the FEC *nonpartisan* rather than *bipartisan*. How would you restructure the FEC to reflect the fact that 45% of Americans are independents?

2. Politicians and political pundits relate to independents as: swing voters, fence sitters, closet Democrats and Republicans, and enigmas. Independents, however, want to be recognized for who they are, respected for what they've done in choosing not to affiliate with a major party, and related to as voters who desire structural reforms to make the political process nonpartisan rather than bipartisan. What is your message to the 43 percent of Americans who self-identify as independents?

3. Poverty, joblessness and violence are on the rise; young people are having difficulty starting careers and making it into the mainstream; police/community relations are polarized. At the same time, we are experiencing a crisis in our democracy. America's rate of voter participation trails that of most developed countries in the world. What do you believe is the connection between solving the democracy crisis and solving the social crisis?

4. Independent voters in over half the states are not able to participate in presidential primaries. However, political parties can decide to open their primaries to allow independents to participate. Would you call upon your national party to direct states to open their primaries to independents in 2016?

5. The issue that brings independents together is political reform, not ideology. Independents don't like partisan control of the electoral system and want sweeping changes, including nonpartisan primaries, fair and impartial redistricting, Initiative and Referendum, reform of the presidential debate process and Same Day Voter Registration, to name a few. These reforms would open up the election process and make it more nonpartisan and inclusive. Are you willing to support this reform agenda? How would you use your candidacy to advance these reforms?

6. Independents believe it is wrong to require a voter to join a political party— or any private organization—in order to vote. Independents have challenged the constitutionality of this practice in the courts, asserting that it is not only undemocratic, but a practice that reinforces hyper-partisanship, the cause for polarization which now paralyzes our governing system. Would you support the principle that no American should be required to join a party as a condition of voting in any election?

7. Gallup reports that between 2001-2007, independents, as a percentage of the electorate, hovered in the low to mid 30 percent range, with a low of 31 percent in 2004 and a high of 39 percent in 2007. That number has steadily increased to a high of 43 percent today. The proportion of the national electorate who self-identify as independents increased by 23 percent from 2008 to the present. Half of voters age 18-24 identify as independent, and more than half of Latinos under the age of 30. Among African Americans age 18-33, 37 percent consider themselves independent. What does this trend towards independence suggest to you?

8. Partisan gridlock and dysfunction at the congressional level has resulted in costly government shutdowns; this has driven the American people's level of trust in the institution to historic lows. As your party's nominee, and as, perhaps, the President-elect, how would you counter the corrosive effects of partisanship in government?

9. Would you support all citizens having the right to initiative and referenda? How do you view the importance of such a right?

10. IndependentVoting.org is the country's leading strategy and organizing center for independent activists across the nation, with a national headquarters in New York City and local activist networks in 40 states. Would you attend meetings with independent activists in our network to learn more about their concerns?

11. How would you transition from the nominee of your party to representing all Americans, including independents, as the President-elect?