



March 26, 2019

## Eleven Million Independent Voters Are Disenfranchising Themselves Time for a Change!

*Reform Elections Now* is strongly against closed primaries.

Since most elections are decided in the primaries, closed primaries disenfranchise independent voters. By the time independents get a chance to vote in the final election, the outcome is usually decided.

At this time, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Florida, Delaware, Kansas, Kentucky, New Mexico, Wyoming and Nebraska (for Federal offices) have pure closed primaries.

In these states, 11,170,807 registered voters (22.1%) of the total cannot vote in the primaries. In New Jersey, the percentage is 41.4%, exceeding both of the major parties. Kansas has 30.4%, while Florida has 23.1% and New York has 22.2%

	Democrats	Republicans	No Party	Total	% No Party
New York	5,757,022	2,683,161	2,404,570	10,844,753	22.2%
New Jersey	2,090,725	1,229,116	2,343,739	5,663,580	41.4%
Florida	4,845,863	4,566,956	3,089,929	13,397,063	23.1%
Maryland	2,150,688	1,017,773	724,015	3,892,476	18.6%
Pennsylvania	4,051,103	3,235,781	1,105,108	8,391,992	13.2%
Delaware	322,014	190,677	158,720	671,411	23.6%
Kansas	428,381	786,719	529,702	1,744,802	30.4%
Kentucky	1,680,761	1,362,094	270,256	3,313,111	8.2%
New Mexico	558,470	370,653	263,225	1,192,348	22.1%
Wyoming	47,125	176,336	36,109	259,570	13.9%
Nebraska	359,423	575,139	245,434	1,179,996	20.8%

Source BallotPedia. Small parties excluded.

While we would like to see closed primaries opened, we would also like to ask people who have registered as independents in these states: **Why are you giving up your right to vote?"**

## Most Independents Actually Lean To One Party or The Other

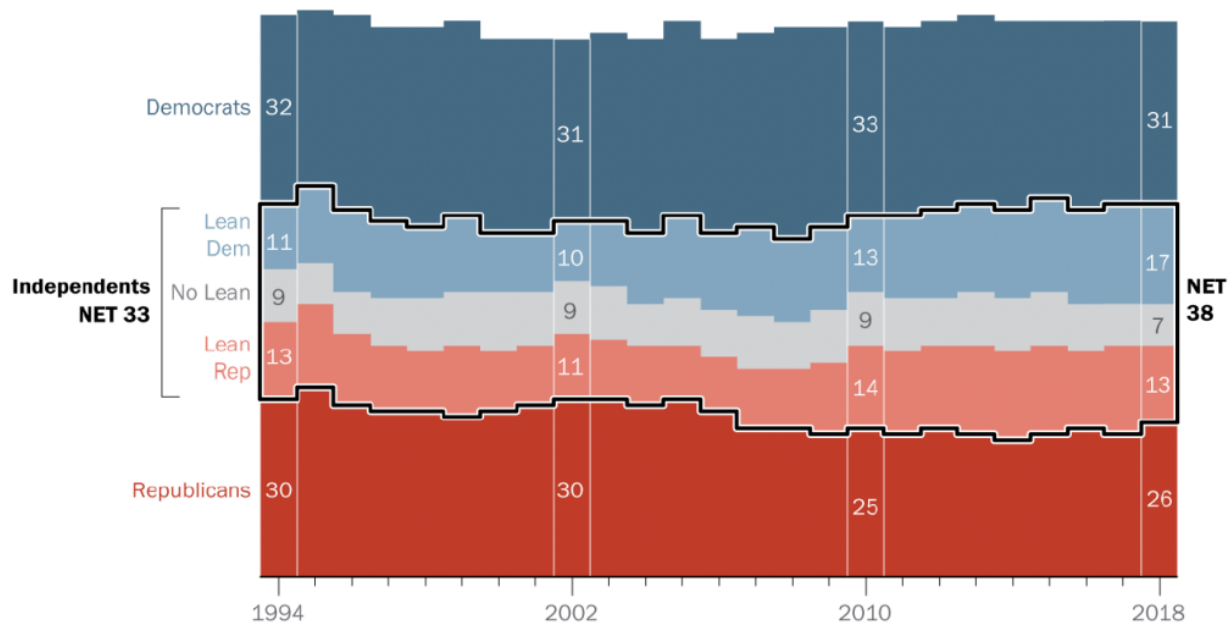
Some people are truly independent. They are real moderates that do not lean in any direction and may not like either party. But most independents actually lean in the direction of one party or the other, and on major issues do not differ substantially from their registered brethren.

According to the Pew Research Center, 38% of Americans are independent. Of those, 17% lean Democratic, 13% lean Republican, and 7% do not lean toward either party.

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### Independents outnumber Republicans and Democrats, but few are truly independent

*% who identify as ...*



Note: Other party/Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

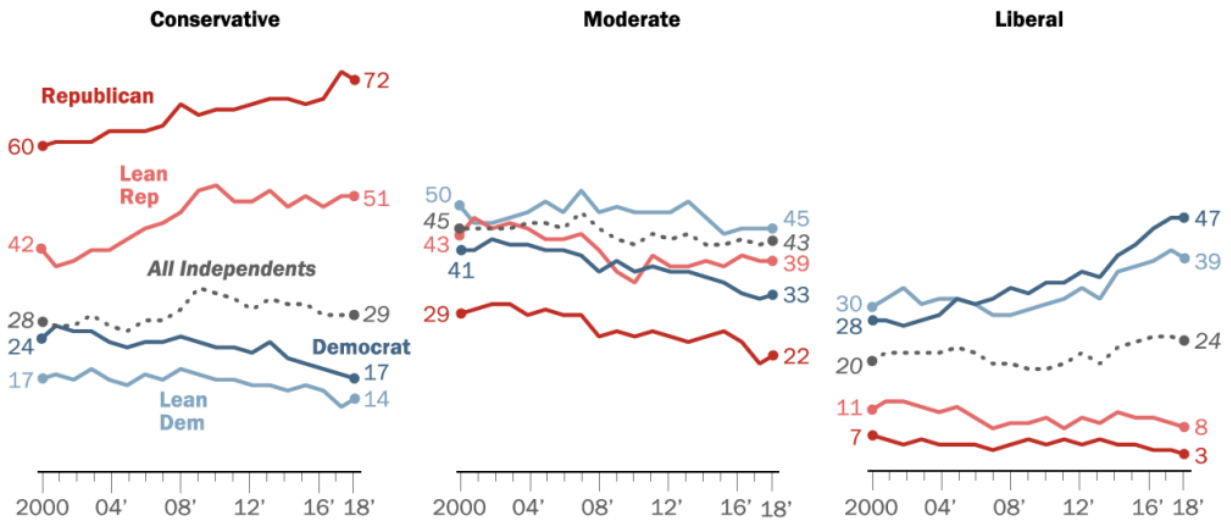
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If one analyzes the views taken by these independents, Republican “leaners” tend to look like moderate Republicans, while Democratic “leaners” tend to look like moderate Democrats.

## Increasing shares of Republicans and GOP leaners describe their views as conservative; more Democrats and Democratic leaners say they are liberal

% who say they are ...



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

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The “leaners” tend to feel much the same way about the opposing party as do their registered brethren. Republican “leaners” do not like the Democratic Party, while Democratic “leaners” do not like the Republican Party.

## Among both partisans and leaners, unfavorable views of the opposing party have increased

% with an *unfavorable* view of the ...



Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

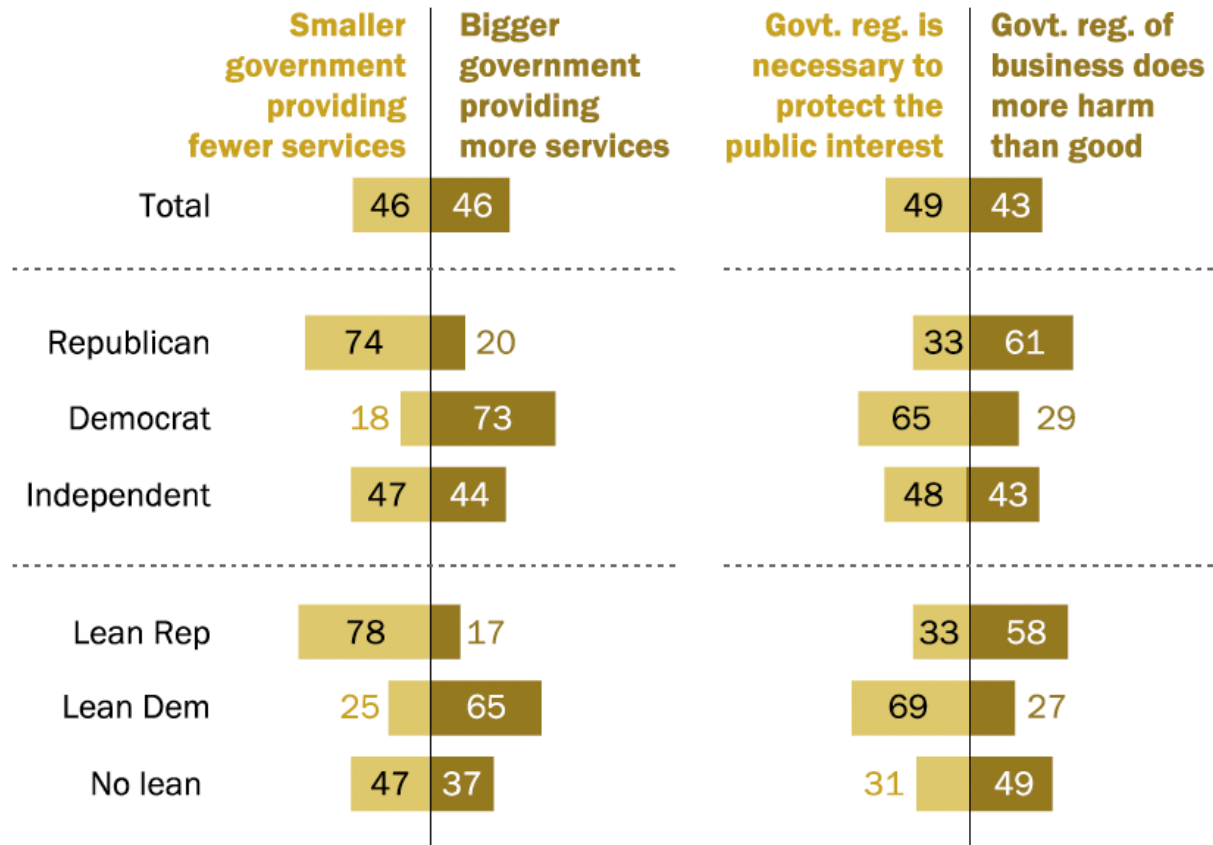
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“Leaners” also tend to reflect their registered brethren on political issues. For example, Republican “leaners” tend to support smaller government and less regulation in much the same proportion as do registered Republicans, while Democratic “leaners” tend to support bigger government and more regulation in much the same proportion as do registered Democrats. The same conditions apply to other political issues.

# Independents divided in opinions about the size of government, government regulation of business

*% who prefer ...*

*% who say ...*



Notes: Don't know responses not shown. For government size, small sample of non-leaning independents [N=93].

Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted April 25-May 1, 2018, and Sept. 18-24, 2018.

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Here is the question we have for the Democratic and Republican “leaners.” If your views and positions closely follow those of your party and if you live in a closed primary state, what is the benefit of being independent? Why do you give up the right to vote in the primary?

## **By Failing to Register with the party to which they lean, independents push these parties to their bases.**

Further, it is not just the independents who suffer, by giving up their right to vote. It is also the parties. We believe a considerable amount of the polarization in politics is caused by Democrats and Republicans who register as independents.

According to Pew, the Republican “leaners” act like moderate Republicans, while the Democratic “leaners” act like moderate Democrats. If these people joined their parties in closed primary states, it is highly likely that they would have pulled their party towards the center. Without these more moderate voters, the parties tend to cater to their more extreme bases.

There was a political earthquake in the 14<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of New York when Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez defeated Congressional leader Joseph Crowley in the Democratic primary. However, AOC received only 15,879 votes and won by only 4,118 votes. In this district, Democrats outnumber Republicans, 6.5:1. There are also 69,504 independents or non-party voters. Let us assume that 80% of these voters “lean” Democrat. If these voters had registered as Democrats and had participated in the primary, a turnout of 7% would have flipped the election.

In the Florida Democratic Gubernatorial primary, the Democratic “leaners” would likely have voted for Graham, a more moderate candidate, over Gillum. If Graham had won the nomination, she would have had an excellent chance of defeating DeSantis.

As we have mentioned, our preference at *Reform Elections Now* would be for these states to open their primaries. We believe that citizens should have a right to vote in primaries. However, we do not believe the politicians in these states will quickly cede their power.

If the two parties in these states tell you they do not want you to be independent, you have two choices. You can sit on your hands, or you can select one of the parties and help to moderate it.

Therefore, if you are an independent voter in one of these states, you should look yourself in the mirror and ask whether staying independent is really in your best interest as well as in the best interest of the party to which you lean and the country as a whole.

If the independent voters in states like New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Florida registered with the parties to which they lean, these parties and the political dialog could become much more moderate and civil.