



## IT'S A SNORE

By the time you read this note, the 2008 presidential primary and caucus season will have begun. What a relief! Finally, the election is in the hands of the voters. So perhaps this is a good moment to pause and think about our election process and some much needed reforms which have been blocked or stalled at the borders of the partisan political domain.

*Oh no, you may be thinking. Not that again! Of course we need political reform – everyone knows that. But these issues just aren't sexy! They have no glamour, no drama, no emotion. Political reform is dry. It's not like money, sex and war, which excite our passions and compel our senses.* Let's be frank. Political reform? It's a snore.

I consider myself a practical person and I think the independent movement is a practical movement. Yes, we have high ideals – if you think wanting a political system that isn't corrupt but is vibrantly democratic falls into the category of "high." To me it's more like "the way it's supposed to be." But I admit it's hard to get there, as even George Washington pointed out. He's crying on the cover because things didn't work

out that way. He held the parties responsible in 1796 and so do the 40% of Americans who call themselves independents today.

For years I thought I could turn political reform into a sexy issue. Unfortunately so many years have passed since I first aspired to this goal that I'm not the "babe" I once was. Acting as a kind of "spokesmodel" for political reform (as in *Take a look behind Door #3 – why, it's Instant Runoff Voting!*) is off the table, at least for me.

But political reform, while not glamorous on the surface, has a kind of inner beauty – and I don't mean that as a joke. It's akin to the infrastructure of a great building, or the ever-changing course of a mighty river, or the awesome engineering of a suspension bridge. The design of a structure dramatically shapes the way things – people, water, cars, life – move through it. The design of a political structure, the flow and function of a constitutional system, shapes the quality and character of the democracy that moves through it. Our electoral "rules and regulations" urgently need some redesign.

Forgive me if that outburst of metaphors was "over the top." In deference to the need to be practical – to

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confront our marketing challenges head on – I return to my earlier judgment on the nature of political reform. *It's a snore*. I decided to take the bull by the horns and create a political reform program called – can you guess? – A SNORE. Here it is.

**Abolish the Electoral College.** Shouldn't the American people elect our president directly?

**Same Day Voter Registration.** You're an American. You're 18 or older. You should be able to show up at the polls and vote.

**Nonpartisan administration of elections.** Bipartisan doesn't equal nonpartisan, especially when 40% of the country doesn't ally with a party. Yet from the Federal Election Commission down to local election supervisors, it's a game for Democrats and Republicans only. We need a new system to regulate elections that takes independents into account. And on that score, let's open up the presidential debates. Democrats and Republicans control the Commission on Presidential Debates and use partisan criteria to keep qualified independents out. *RocktheDebates.org* has been pushing the envelope here. Check it out.

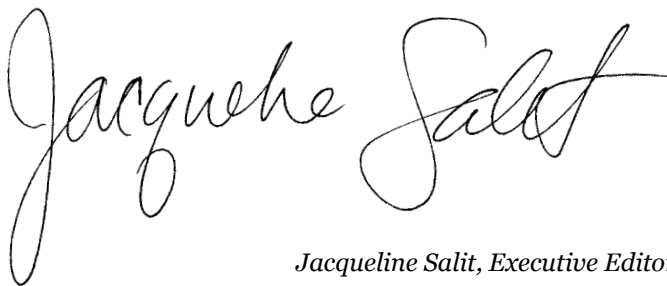
**Open primaries.** Half the states allow independents to vote in party primaries, sometimes known as first round voting. The rest do not. How can we justify a system that allows so many voters to be locked out of the first – and often decisive – round?

**Redistricting reform.** Legislators shouldn't get to pick their voters before the voters pick their legislators. We need a new nonpartisan system for drawing district lines.

**Expand Initiative and Referendum.** Half the states have some form of initiative or popular referendum process giving voters the right to "legislate" directly by putting policy proposals on the ballot. Let's give every voter that right and make sure that those who do have it, retain it.

Okay, there you have it. Political reform? It's A SNORE. In the branding world they call this hanging a lantern on your defects and getting out in front of your problem.

Independents are out in front, no question about that. As to our defects? We're the people who are independent because we don't like joining anything. Except that we're joining together. Go figure. Go vote. And if you're looking for some kicks, go home to your spouse or partner and have a good time.



Jacqueline Salit, Executive Editor

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