

# 2007 SPRING/SUMMER EDITOR'S NOTE



There is a lot of talk these days about the possibility of major independent presidential candidacy in 2008. The speculation about such a run by New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg, for example, is a favorite topic for political writers and prognosticators, and I don't exclude myself from that list. I even bought several domain names including [www.mikebloombergindependentforpresident.org](http://www.mikebloombergindependentforpresident.org). I figure that if he does decide to run, he'll have to call me to claim his website. We don't talk much since my independent friends and I got him elected.

Some days the talk is about Mike. Some days it's about Senator Chuck Hagel. And some days it's about an undeclared fusion ticket made up of a disillusioned (moderate) Democrat and a disillusioned (moderate) Republican who team up as independents to organize all the disillusioned people in America – albeit in a moderate way. Call me simple-minded, but I'm one of those people who find it hard to believe that a major disruption of the two-party paradigm could be construed as moderate under any circumstances: it would be far too radical a departure from the status quo.

I was heartened to read an article by Greg Giroux in *Congressional Quarterly* recently about Unity08, the bipartisan experiment in catalyzing a fusion presidential ticket in 2008. Giroux points out that “the most successful third party candidates have generally not positioned themselves as centrists, however, but instead have staked their claim to issues that the public perceives the party as ignoring – and that don't fit neatly on a liberal-conservative spectrum.” Giroux even managed to find an actual political scientist at the Collage of William and Mary, Ronald Rapoport, who argued this point rather neatly. “So, what is the lesson of the Perot campaign for 2008?” According to Dr. Rapoport, who points to Perot's focus on outsider issues like political reform, economic populism and deficit reduction, “Third party candidates succeed not because of their centrism but because of the rest of their issue agenda, which is not centrist.” Three cheers for Dr. Rapoport. Finally, a political scientist who relies on actual evidence, and not the Beltway's tried and true pursuit of “the political center.”

Indeed, 2008 is shaping up to be anything but the year of the tried and true. The Republican and Democratic primary schedule is being compressed and none of the campaign gurus, even by their own account, can formulate a stable strategy. The field is huge. Bloggers, web based campaigning, and 24-hour cable have limited the impact of traditional media buys. Voter want out of Iraq, but we're still there. An NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll has 66% of Americans saying the country is on the “wrong track.” And 40% of voters say they are independents, rather than Republicans or Democrats.

Does an independent presidential candidate step out into this mix? We don't know. Maybe. Maybe not. Under the auspices of the Committee for a United Independent Party, (full disclosure: I'm CUIP's president) independent voters in 40 states have been building on-the-ground-local organizations based on the premise that a bottom-up movement of independent Americans can shape a major independent candidacy, should it occur, and an independent presidency, if that candidate were to win. As for the major party hopefuls, my colleague and friend Jim Mangia, formerly the national secretary of the Reform Party and currently head of IndependentVoice.org in California, has met with presidential candidates to discuss their relationship to independent voters. He reports that they are feeling the pressure to make their interest in and support for independents more explicit than ever before.

I'm a big fan of historian Joseph S. Ellis and his book *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*. The book opens with the line: “No event in American history which was so improbable at the time has seemed so inevitable in retrospect as the American Revolution.” For all the speculation about an independent presidential bid, a radical electoral revolt led by the non-aligned seems almost unimaginable at the moment. But, as Ellis observes, “the creation of a separate American nation occurred suddenly rather than gradually, in revolutionary rather than evolutionary fashion...” It happened “with dynamic intensity” over a relatively short period of time.

There are too many unpredictables, too many uncertainties, too many “moving parts” to forecast history's hand, in 2008, 2012 or beyond. The key for non-aligned voters is to have their own hand, to be organized sufficiently to shape and reshape America's independent political development.

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