

# Voter Registration Update—Independent Swell



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Are Americans voting with their feet? Starting in 2010, Independent voter registration in America burgeoned. We took a look at the latest data from voter registration files in 12 states with hotly contested statewide races and found the swell of Independent voter registration has continued.

Since the 2012 presidential election, Independent registration has outpaced Democratic and Republican enrollment in 11 of 12 states with competitive statewide elections this November. \* Overall, in these twelve states since 2012:

- Democratic registration decreased by 546,976, or 2.9%;
- Republican registration decreased by 257,519, or 1.7%; and,
- Independent registration increased by 333,291, or 3.2%.

Going back in time, Independent voter registration is up dramatically since 2008, increasing by 17.2% in these twelve red and purple states with competitive gubernatorial or Senate elections this November. Perhaps of some solace to both parties, the surge in Independent enrollment has lessened since 2012—after huge gains between the 2010 and 2012 elections. Nevertheless, the pattern of change in voter registration statistics reflects continuing dissatisfaction with the two parties, as well as younger voters' propensity to eschew party labels.

The dozen states selected each have a statewide election and collect voter registration data by party identification—Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. Kansas, Rhode Island, and West Virginia—states that also have partisan voter registration statistics and statewide elections—have not updated their data since the 2012 election. Hence they have been excluded from this analysis. California and Nevada have also been excluded from this list since the gubernatorial races are noncompetitive.

**Independent voter registration is up since the 2012 presidential election**

## in crucial 2014 states.

In the 18 months since the presidential election of 2012, partisan registration is down, while Independent registration has continued to grow. Democrats shed a little more than half-a-million voters in the dozen states with competitive gubernatorial or Senate elections which record their voter registration by party. Republicans shed about half as much—about one-quarter million voters. However, Republicans started with fewer registered partisans in these key states. Independents continued their rise, adding 333,291 voters to the rolls. In fact, Independents grew their share of the electorate in all but one of these states since 2012.

**Voter Registration Changes 2012-2014**

	Democrat	Republican	Independent
<b>Alaska</b>	-4,337	-4,431	-7,843
<b>Arizona</b>	7,770	9,178	110,640
<b>Colorado</b>	34,844	35,349	171,476
<b>Florida</b>	-197,108	-124,743	44,550
<b>Iowa</b>	-27,839	-26,124	11,110
<b>Kentucky</b>	1,752	36,222	13,861
<b>Louisiana</b>	-52,347	-8,458	8,877
<b>Maine</b>	-9,073	-8,821	-5,275
<b>New Hampshire</b>	-13,584	-11,829	-9,915
<b>New Mexico</b>	498	2,288	14,715
<b>North Carolina</b>	-111,337	-54,881	29,600
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	-176,215	-101,269	-48,505
<b>Total</b>	<b>-546,976</b>	<b>-257,519</b>	<b>333,291</b>

As we look across the states, some of the drop in voter registration is likely due to list maintenance performed by Secretary of State offices around the country after elections. For example, registration declined across the board in Alaska, Maine, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania. But in other states we see voter registration increases among both partisan and non-partisans, though weighted heavily toward the latter. For example, there were marginal increases in Democrats (0.8%) and Republicans (0.8%) in Arizona, but Independent registration grew by 10.8%. The story is similar in Colorado, where Democrats and Republicans grew by about 4% each, but Independent registration soared by 20.6%. And while Kentucky added more Republicans than Independents in raw numbers, the pace of change was double for Independents.

#### Voter Registration Change 2012-2014

	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Alaska	-5.9%	-3.2%	-2.9%
Arizona	0.8%	0.8%	10.8%
Colorado	4.0%	3.9%	20.6%
Florida	-4.1%	-2.9%	1.5%
Iowa	-4.4%	-4.2%	1.6%
Kentucky	0.1%	3.1%	6.3%
Louisiana	-3.7%	-1.0%	1.2%
Maine	-2.9%	-3.3%	-1.5%
New Hampshire	-5.4%	-4.3%	-2.6%
New Mexico	0.1%	0.6%	6.5%
North Carolina	-3.9%	-2.7%	1.7%
Pennsylvania	-4.1%	-3.2%	-4.4%
Total	-2.9%	-1.7%	3.2%

## Independent voter registration has increased dramatically since 2008 in key 2014 states.

Independent voter registration has increased dramatically over the past six years in states whose gubernatorial or Senate races will define the 2014 cycle. Combining enrollment figures from Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania, there are 1.5 million more Independent voters than there were in 2008. At the same time, Democratic registration has fallen by about one million, while Republican registration is virtually unchanged.

Overall, in these twelve states since 2008:

- Democratic registration has decreased by 1,002,351, or 5.2%, and now stands at 18,188,720;
- Republican registration has increased by 125,862, or 0.9%, and now stands at 14,890,336; and,
- Independent registration has increased by 1,591,910, or 17.2%, and now stands at 10,831,995%.

**Voter Registration in 12 States with Competitive Statewide Races, 2008-2014**

	<b>Democrat</b>	<b>Republican</b>	<b>Independent</b>
<b>2008</b>	19,191,071	14,764,474	9,240,085
<b>2010</b>	18,335,912	14,471,920	9,250,030
<b>2012</b>	18,735,696	15,147,855	10,498,704
<b>2014</b>	18,188,720	14,890,336	10,831,995
<b>Change 2008-2014</b>	-1,002,351	125,862	1,591,910
<b>Percent Change</b>	<b>-5.2%</b>	<b>+0.9%</b>	<b>+17.2%</b>

*12 States: Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, & Pennsylvania.*

In six of these states—Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, Maine, and New Hampshire—Independents are now a plurality, outnumbering registered Democrats and registered Republicans. Alaska actually has more Independents than Democrats and Republicans combined. And in three other states, Independents compose about one-quarter of registered voters: Florida, Louisiana, and North Carolina.

**Voter Registration, 2014**

	<b>Democrat</b>	<b>Republican</b>	<b>Independent</b>
<b>Alaska</b>	69,000	132,937	261,090
<b>Arizona</b>	960,701	1,130,170	1,134,243
<b>Colorado</b>	900,874	942,064	1,005,138
<b>Florida</b>	4,624,751	4,138,844	2,997,675
<b>Iowa</b>	600,204	603,319	705,668
<b>Kentucky</b>	1,667,605	1,187,553	233,830
<b>Louisiana</b>	1,376,726	807,311	727,034
<b>Maine</b>	305,920	260,768	356,522
<b>New Hampshire</b>	236,774	261,846	372,009
<b>New Mexico</b>	596,707	398,280	240,213
<b>North Carolina</b>	2,759,356	1,997,369	1,736,524
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	4,090,102	3,029,875	1,062,049
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,188,720</b>	<b>14,890,336</b>	<b>10,831,995</b>

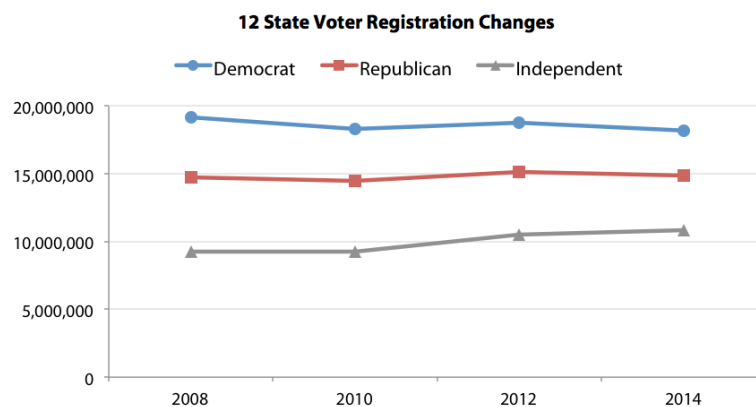
In three states—Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico—Independent registration has increased by more than 30% since 2008. Independent registration surpassed total Democratic or Republican registration recently in both Arizona and Colorado, making Independents the single biggest voting bloc in those states. Democratic registration fell the most in Iowa and New Hampshire, likely peaking in the hotly contested Democratic nominating process in 2008. Republican registration has increased the most in Colorado, Kentucky, and Louisiana—although Independent registration still outpaced Republican registration in all three of those states.

### Voter Registration Changes, 2008-2014

	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Alaska	-10.1%	+5.0%	-0.7%
Arizona	-6.0%	+1.0%	+37.6%
Colorado	+6.9%	+9.8%	+38.5%
Florida	-3.7%	+0.8%	+19.7%
Iowa	-14.1%	+1.8%	-0.9%
Kentucky	+0.3%	+12.7%	+22.5%
Louisiana	-10.8%	+8.6%	+11.2%
Maine	-5.1%	-1.2%	-1.9%
New Hampshire	-16.2%	-6.7%	-6.0%
New Mexico	+0.6%	+6.1%	+31.8%
North Carolina	-3.7%	-0.3%	+24.8%
Pennsylvania	-8.7%	-6.6%	+2.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>-5.2%</b>	<b>+0.9%</b>	<b>+17.2%</b>

The biggest increase in Independent voter registration in these key states occurred between 2010 and 2012.

When tracking voter registration in these key 2014 states over time, it is evident that the increase in Independent voters mainly occurred between the 2010 and 2012 elections. Of the 1,591,910 increase in Independent registration between 2008 and 2014, 78.4% (1,248,674) occurred between 2010 and 2012. The rate of increase in Independent registration between 2010 and 2012 was a rapid 13.5%. By contrast, the majority of the drop in Democratic registration occurred between 2008 and 2010, when Democratic registration fell by 1,002,351. That means that 85% of the total loss in registered Democrats between 2008 and 2014 occurred prior to 2010.



The ranks of Independents are still growing, and they further increased between 2012 and 2014, though at a lower rate of 3.2%. Democratic enrollment grew slightly between 2010 and

2012, but has now returned to the levels seen in the last midterm election.

## **Dissatisfaction with the parties and younger voters eschewing partisan labels is driving the uptick in Independents.**

As Independent voter registration ticked up in the states, national surveys illustrated that party favorability was also falling dramatically. Around the 2008 election, Democratic Party favorability was at 53% and Republican Party favorability was at 41%. By the end of 2013, Democratic favorability fell 11 points to 42% while Republican favorability fell 13 points to 32%.<sup>1</sup> And while Congressional job approval has averaged 33% historically, currently only 13% of Americans approve of Congress—falling precipitously from 39% in early 2009.<sup>2</sup>

These decreases in party and Congressional favorability have coincided with increases in voters identifying as Independents, with some surveys putting the number of self-identified Independents nationally at a record high of 42%.<sup>3</sup> Disproportionately, those gains appear to have come among the Millennial Generation. While more members of all age cohorts self-identify as Independents today than in 2008, the increase among Millennials is double that of the other generations.<sup>4</sup>

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Change 2008 to 2014</b>
<b>Millennials</b>	38%	39%	50%	+11
<b>Generation X</b>	33%	34%	39%	+5
<b>Baby Boomers</b>	30%	31%	37%	+6
<b>Silents</b>	25%	27%	32%	+5

Source: Pew Research Center

Back in 2009, 42% of Millennials approved of Republican leaders in Congress; now only 20% approve. Similarly, 59% of Millennials approved of Democratic leaders in Congress in 2009; now only 32% approve.<sup>5</sup> Increasingly, it appears, Millennials disapprove of their political leaders and are opting not to call themselves members of either party. There is no

doubt that this shift among young people has contributed to the growing ranks of Independents nationwide, and there is little reason to think it won't continue, at least in the near future.

## **Conclusion**

Since the 2012 presidential election, Democratic and Republican registration has fallen marginally, while Independent registration has increased in states with competitive statewide races in 2014. Looking historically, this trend accelerated after the 2010 midterm elections. As voters of all stripes—and particularly younger voters—have become increasingly disillusioned with the two parties, they have eschewed partisan labels. And while Republicans swept into office in 2010 believing they had a mandate, the data paint a picture of increasingly disillusioned voters in red and purple states.

## **Appendix**

### **Voter Registration Data Sources**

#### **Alaska**

- 2008:  
[http://www.elections.alaska.gov/statistics/vi\\_vrs\\_stats\\_party\\_2008.10.12.htm](http://www.elections.alaska.gov/statistics/vi_vrs_stats_party_2008.10.12.htm)
- 2010:  
[http://www.elections.alaska.gov/statistics/vi\\_vrs\\_stats\\_party\\_2010.11.03.htm](http://www.elections.alaska.gov/statistics/vi_vrs_stats_party_2010.11.03.htm)
- 2012:  
[http://www.elections.alaska.gov/statistics/vi\\_vrs\\_stats\\_party\\_2012.10.12.htm](http://www.elections.alaska.gov/statistics/vi_vrs_stats_party_2012.10.12.htm)
- April 2014:  
[http://www.elections.alaska.gov/statistics/vi\\_vrs\\_stats\\_party\\_after\\_LM\\_2014.04.03.htm](http://www.elections.alaska.gov/statistics/vi_vrs_stats_party_after_LM_2014.04.03.htm)

#### **Arizona**

- 2008: <http://www.azsos.gov/election/voterreg/2008-10-22.pdf>;  
<http://www.azsos.gov/election/voterreg/VRcounts2008.htm>
- 2010: <http://www.azsos.gov/election/voterreg/VRcounts2010.htm>;  
<http://www.azsos.gov/election/voterreg/2010-10-22.pdf>
- 2012: <http://www.azsos.gov/election/voterreg/2012-10-30.pdf>;  
<http://www.azsos.gov/election/voterreg/VRcounts2012.htm>
- April 2014: <http://www.azsos.gov/election/voterreg/2014-03-01.pdf>;  
<http://www.azsos.gov/election/voterreg/VRcounts2014.htm>

## Colorado

- 2008: <http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/VoterRegNumbers/2008VoterRegNumbers.html>;  
<http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/VoterRegNumbers/2008/December/PartyAffiliation.pdf>
- 2010: <http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/VoterRegNumbers/2010VoterRegNumbers.html>;  
[http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/VoterRegNumbers/2010/November/VotersByParty\\_Status.pdf](http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/VoterRegNumbers/2010/November/VotersByParty_Status.pdf)
- 2012: <http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/VoterRegNumbers/2012VoterRegNumbers.html>;  
<http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/VoterRegNumbers/2012/December/VotersByPartyStatus.pdf>



- April 2014:  
<http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/VoterRegNumbers/VoterRegNumbers.html>;  
<http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/VoterRegNumbers/2014/March/VotersByPartyStatus.pdf>

#### **Florida**

- 2008: <http://election.dos.state.fl.us/nvra/history.asp>
- 2010: <http://election.dos.state.fl.us/nvra/history.asp>
- 2012: <http://election.dos.state.fl.us/nvra/history.asp>
- April 2014: <http://election.dos.state.fl.us/nvra/history.asp>

#### **Iowa**

- 2008:  
<http://sos.iowa.gov/elections/voterreg/county.html>;  
<http://sos.iowa.gov/elections/pdf/VRStatsArchive/2008/CoNov08.pdf>
- 2010: <http://sos.iowa.gov/elections/voterreg/county.html>  
 - 2010;  
<http://sos.iowa.gov/elections/pdf/VRStatsArchive/2010/CoNov10.pdf>
- 2012: <http://sos.iowa.gov/elections/voterreg/county.html>;  
<http://sos.iowa.gov/elections/pdf/VRStatsArchive/2012/CoNov12.pdf>
- April 2014:  
<http://sos.iowa.gov/elections/voterreg/county.html>;  
<http://sos.iowa.gov/elections/pdf/VRStatsArchive/2014/CoApril14.pdf>

#### **Kentucky**

- 2008:  
<http://elect.ky.gov/SiteCollectionDocuments/Election%20Results/2000-2009/2008/General%20Election/Voter%20Reg%20Stat%20Cong%20Dist%20gen%2008.txt>
- 2010:  
<http://elect.ky.gov/SiteCollectionDocuments/ElectionResults/2010-2019/2010/statcongdistpri10.txt>
- 2012:  
<http://elect.ky.gov/SiteCollectionDocuments/Election%20Results/2010-2019/2012/statcongg.txt>
- April 2014:  
<http://elect.ky.gov/SiteCollectionDocuments/Election%20Statistics/statcnty.txt>

#### Louisiana

- 2008:  
<http://www.sos.la.gov/ElectionsAndVoting/Pages/RegistrationStatisticsStatewide.aspx>;  
[http://electionstatistics.sos.la.gov/Data/Registration\\_Statistics/Statewide/2008\\_1103\\_sta\\_comb.pdf](http://electionstatistics.sos.la.gov/Data/Registration_Statistics/Statewide/2008_1103_sta_comb.pdf)
- 2010:  
<http://www.sos.la.gov/ElectionsAndVoting/Pages/RegistrationStatisticsStatewide.aspx>;  
[http://electionstatistics.sos.la.gov/Data/Registration\\_Statistics/Statewide/2010\\_1101\\_sta\\_comb.pdf](http://electionstatistics.sos.la.gov/Data/Registration_Statistics/Statewide/2010_1101_sta_comb.pdf)
- 2012:  
<http://www.sos.la.gov/ElectionsAndVoting/Pages/RegistrationStatisticsStatewide.aspx>;  
[http://electionstatistics.sos.la.gov/Data/Registration\\_Statistics/Statewide/2012\\_1101\\_sta\\_comb.pdf](http://electionstatistics.sos.la.gov/Data/Registration_Statistics/Statewide/2012_1101_sta_comb.pdf)

- April 2014:  
<http://www.sos.la.gov/ElectionsAndVoting/Pages/RegistrationStatisticsStatewide.aspx>;  
[http://electionstatistics.sos.la.gov/Data/Registration\\_Statistics/Statewide/2014\\_0401\\_sta\\_comb.pdf](http://electionstatistics.sos.la.gov/Data/Registration_Statistics/Statewide/2014_0401_sta_comb.pdf)

## Maine

- 2008:  
<http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/prevregandenroll.htm>  
 ; <http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/2010/20081104r-e-active.pdf>;  
<http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/2010/20080610r-e-inactive.pdf>
- 2010:  
<http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/prevregandenroll.htm>  
 ; <http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/2010/20101102r-e-active.pdf>
- 2012:  
<http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/prevregandenroll.htm>  
 ; <http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/2012/r-e-active.pdf>;  
<http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/2012/r-e-inactive.pdf>
- April 2014: <http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/data.htm>;  
<http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/2014/r-e-active3-13-14.pdf>

## New Hampshire

- 2008: <http://sos.nh.gov/NamesHistory.aspx>;  
<http://nj.gov/state/elections/election-results/2008-voter-registration-summary102008.pdf>
- 2010: <http://sos.nh.gov/NamesHistory.aspx>
- 2012: <http://sos.nh.gov/NamesHistory.aspx>;  
<http://nj.gov/state/elections/2012-results/2012-1025-statewide-voter-regs-summary-district.pdf>
- April 2014: <http://sos.nh.gov/NamesHistory.aspx>

## New Mexico

- 2008:  
[http://www.sos.state.nm.us/Elections\\_Data/2008\\_Voter\\_Registration\\_Data.aspx](http://www.sos.state.nm.us/Elections_Data/2008_Voter_Registration_Data.aspx);  
<http://www.sos.state.nm.us/uploads/FileLinks/09831ac556354351b60da1c7e4f5b3f2/StatewideGen2008.pdf>
- 2010:  
[http://www.sos.state.nm.us/Elections\\_Data/2010\\_Voter\\_Registration\\_Data.aspx](http://www.sos.state.nm.us/Elections_Data/2010_Voter_Registration_Data.aspx);  
<http://www.sos.state.nm.us/uploads/FileLinks/de87e2c0566d4e7780d11d04oddef5bb/StatewideGen2010.pdf>
- 2012:  
[http://www.sos.state.nm.us/Elections\\_Data/2012\\_Voter\\_Registration\\_Data.aspx](http://www.sos.state.nm.us/Elections_Data/2012_Voter_Registration_Data.aspx);  
<http://www.sos.state.nm.us/uploads/FileLinks/2966cef424224c59b1abaf5b30a91116/STATEWIDEOCT312012.PDF>
- April 2014:  
[http://www.sos.state.nm.us/Elections\\_Data/2014-voter-registration-data.aspx](http://www.sos.state.nm.us/Elections_Data/2014-voter-registration-data.aspx);  
[http://www.sos.state.nm.us/uploads/FileLinks/558ca6801ade495195d87cc7f0af418e/STATEWIDE\\_MARCH\\_31\\_2014.PDF](http://www.sos.state.nm.us/uploads/FileLinks/558ca6801ade495195d87cc7f0af418e/STATEWIDE_MARCH_31_2014.PDF)

## North Carolina

- 2008:  
[http://www.app.sboe.state.nc.us/webapps/voter\\_stats/results.aspx?date=11-04-2008](http://www.app.sboe.state.nc.us/webapps/voter_stats/results.aspx?date=11-04-2008)
- 2010:  
[http://www.ncsbe.gov/webapps/voter\\_stats/results.aspx?date=11-06-2010](http://www.ncsbe.gov/webapps/voter_stats/results.aspx?date=11-06-2010)
- 2012:  
[http://www.app.sboe.state.nc.us/webapps/voter\\_stats/results.aspx?date=11-06-2012](http://www.app.sboe.state.nc.us/webapps/voter_stats/results.aspx?date=11-06-2012)

- April 2014:  
[http://www.ncsbe.gov/webapps/voter\\_stats/results.aspx?date=04-05-2014](http://www.ncsbe.gov/webapps/voter_stats/results.aspx?date=04-05-2014)

## Pennsylvania

- 2008: <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=572645&mode=2>
- 2010: <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=572645&mode=2>
- 2012: <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=572645&mode=2>
- April 2014:  
[http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/voter\\_registration\\_statistics/12725](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/voter_registration_statistics/12725)

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## END NOTES

1. Andrew Dugan, “Democratic Party Maintains Favorability Edge Over GOP,” Gallup, Published December 11, 2013, Accessed April 10, 2014. Available at: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/166202/democratic-party-maintains-favorability-edge-gop.aspx>.
2. Jeffrey M. Jones, “Congress Job Approval Starts 2014 at 13%,” Gallup, Published January 14, 2014, Accessed April 10, 2014. Available at: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/166838/congress-job-approval-starts-2014.aspx>.
3. Jeffrey M. Jones, “Record-High 42% of Americans Identify as Independents,” Gallup, Published January 8, 2014, Accessed April 10, 2014. Available at: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/166763/record-high-americans-identify-independents.aspx>.

- 4.** Pew Research Center, "Millennials in Adulthood: Detached from Institutions, Networked with Friends," Released March 2014, Accessed March 7, 2014. Available at:  
<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood/2/#chapter-1-political-trends>.
  
- 5.** Pew Research Center, "Millennials in Adulthood: Detached from Institutions, Networked with Friends," Released March 2014, Accessed March 7, 2014. Available at:  
<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood/2/#chapter-1-political-trends>.