



Break ranks

Who are these people who say they don't recognize their political party but yet refuse to leave it? They're clinging to hope, perhaps, that when Trump's reign concludes, Republican leaders will recover their values and locate their conscience. I can understand they might not ever consider becoming a Democrat, but why not re-register as a non-partisan voter and send a message to the party that it's lost its way? Maybe it's too much trouble or they feel like they'd be giving up their political identity or giving in to the extremists. I really don't know.

What I do know is if a Democratic president behaved even half as badly as Trump, and elected Democrats followed along like lemmings, I'd denounce them and revert to non-partisan status without a qualm. If the Democratic base supported such a leader, I'd denounce them too, whether I was in elected office or just a pundit writing a political column.

Most Republicans seem to silently acquiesce to their party's turn to darkness,

especially elected Republicans in Nevada. The closest thing to a negative comment about Trump I've read came from a story in the Nevada Current about Utah's Senator Mitt Romney's vote to convict Trump during the impeachment trial. Former Nevada Regent Michael Wixom praised Romney, saying "I thought it was wonderful. I support him enthusiastically. It was from the heart, and I agree with him." He then added, "I don't recognize the Republican Party anymore. I'll continue to be a Republican. Whatever that means."

That sort of weak resistance isn't going to change anything. And most prominent Republicans won't even go that far. Instead we see proposals like an initiative petition led by state Senator Ben Kieckhefer to create a "jungle" primary in Nevada where everyone could vote, choosing two candidates to run in the general regardless of which party they're from. He told The Nevada Independent an open primary would give

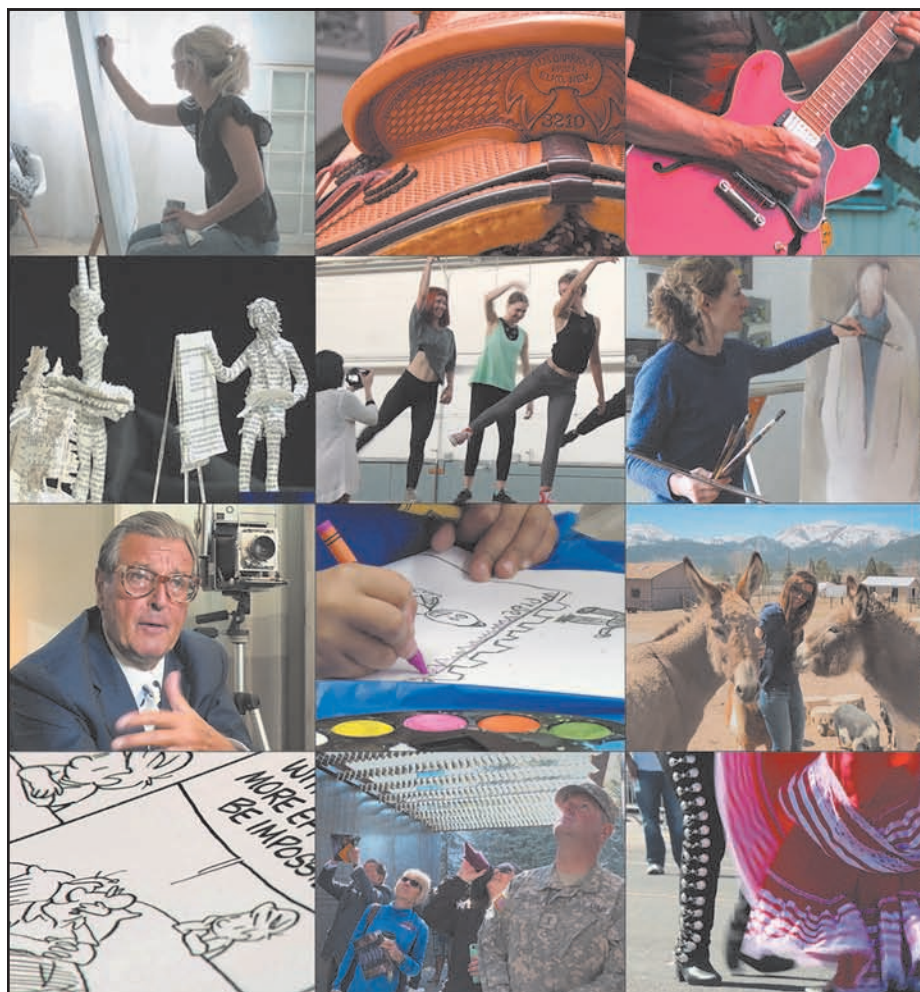
"all voters in the state of Nevada the right to choose who represents them in government." He left out the part about also giving a more moderate Republican like himself a chance at higher office by not having to compete in the existing primary structure where Trump Republicans dominate and are unlikely to support him.

I might be more disposed to believe in the purity of Kieckhefer's motives if he hadn't voted to disenfranchise voters in 2015 when the Legislature decided voters of one party could decide the entire election in the primary if no candidate from another party filed for an office, effectively taking away the right to choose their representative from everyone else. And I might be more sympathetic to Kieckhefer if he also supported a non-partisan redistricting commission to redraw legislative districts after a census instead of allowing politicians to choose their own voters, creating "safe" seats which

discourage competition. And I would definitely have more respect for his efforts if he uttered a single public word of censure against his President, the leader of his party, whose childish, petty words and dangerous actions thoroughly disgrace and weaken our country every single day.

I'm as discouraged about politics as I've ever been and ashamed of our President and all who back him without a murmur of dissent. At least Romney took a principled public stand, knowing he would open himself up to a vengeful President and his raging acolytes. I know history will not look kindly on any of them, but we will all pay for these lost years. We are all diminished by their acquiescence to the cult of Trump.

Remaining in the Republican party "whatever that means" and offering silent resistance is aiding and abetting the destruction of our democracy. That's what being a Republican means these days. □



aRTEffects

Watch the **PRODUCER'S SPECIAL**
on Sunday, March 8 at 5:30 PM

Stream at [PBSReno.org](https://www.pbsreno.org) and the PBS Video app



PBS Reno