

Boston Sunday Globe

Ideas

JANUARY 22, 2006

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AND...

Will Smith exposed, Mark Newgarden's unfunny pages, and more **E3,5**

Ideas online

In "State of Independents," Dave Denison considers the largest voting bloc in Massachusetts politics—and it's not Democrats. Why do so many Commonwealth voters register as independents? And given their numbers, could an independent candidate win the Massachusetts governorship, as has happened in neighboring Maine and Connecticut? Share your views on a message board by visiting www.boston.com/ideas

STATE OF

Everyone knows Massachusetts isn't a Republican state. But if you think it's a Democratic state, think again.

BY DAVE DENISON



INDEPENDENTS

IN DECEMBER, at a law office in downtown Portland, Maine, two successful businessmen met to talk politics. The host was Angus King, who served two terms as governor of Maine in the 1990s and is now back at work in the private sector. The visitor was Christy Mihos, former president and CEO of Christy's Markets, who had driven up from his Cape Cod home to ask King one of the most intriguing questions in American politics today: Who needs political parties?

King didn't. When he ran as an independent in 1994, he beat Democrat Joe Brennan, a former governor and member of Congress, and Republican Susan Collins, who later became a US senator. He was reelected in 1998 by a wide margin, the same year Jesse Ventura became governor of Minnesota. Connecticut elected former Congressman Lowell Weicker as an independent governor in 1990. And, as King pointed out to Mihos that day, the trail had already been blazed for him in Maine by Jim Longley, who won the governorship as an independent in 1974.

If an independent candidate can win in Maine, Connecticut, and Minnesota, why not Massachusetts?

Massachusetts has no such precedent in the past century. And Mihos, a **INDEPENDENTS, E4**

Dave Denison, former editor of Commonwealth magazine, is a freelance writer living in Arlington.



GREG KLEE/GLOBE STAFF PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

Under the microscope

Recent revelations of fraud have caused some editors of scientific journals to rethink their responsibilities. But can journal editors be muckrakers? | BY PETER DIZIKES

EARLIER THIS month, the journal Science formally retracted two papers by South Korean scientist Hwang Woo Suk and his colleagues, whose claims about creating stem cell lines from cloned human embryos were revealed to be false. In December, The New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) declared that a report it published in 2000 on the painkiller Vioxx contained "inaccuracies" due to incomplete data on potential side effects. And on Friday, the NEJM issued an "expression of concern" that two cancer-research studies it published in 2001 and 2004 appeared to contain misleading evidence—just days after the British medical journal The Lancet made its own announcement that a 2005 study from the same Norwegian-based research team included fabricated data. **JOURNALS, E5**

Peter Dizikes is a writer living in Arlington. He frequently writes about science and technology.