

# Politicians: Jill Stein

By H. Graph Desino, adapted by Newsela staff on 10.04.16

Word Count **827**



Jill Stein

**Synopsis:** Green Party presidential nominee Jill Stein is a physician, author and activist. Born in Chicago, she became interested in environmental issues when she noticed that there was a connection between her patients' illnesses and where they lived. She has campaigned for several local and state-level offices, including two unsuccessful bids for Massachusetts governor and another presidential run, also for the Green Party, in 2012. She lives in Lexington, Massachusetts, with her husband, and has two grown sons.

## Early Life And Education

Jill Ellen Stein was born in Chicago, Illinois, on May 14, 1950, the third of four children. Her parents were Gladys and Joseph Stein, both descendants of Russian immigrants. She grew up in the nearby suburb of Highland Park and was raised Jewish.

As a child, she was fascinated by the natural world and would catch butterflies, frogs and fish to study under her microscope. She was an excellent student and developed a passion for music. She would eventually go on to play guitar and sing in a folk band called Somebody's Sister.

Stein began her first year at Harvard College in 1969. She graduated with high honors four years later in 1973, after studying anthropology, sociology and psychology. She then went on to Harvard Medical School, where she graduated in 1979.

## **Medical Career And Introduction To Politics**

Stein was a doctor for 25 years, taught medicine at Harvard and worked at health clinics. She married surgeon Rick Rohrer in 1981, and they raised two sons, Noah and Ben.

Over time, Stein grew interested in the connection between her patients' health and their environment. Her introduction to environmental activism came in 1998, when she fought to tighten pollution-related regulations for coal plants in Massachusetts. She testified before various groups and governmental bodies about the toxic health effects of pollution. She also advocated for the passage of a campaign finance reform bill that tightened rules about how candidates could raise money. The Massachusetts state legislature later repealed the law, and Stein, then a Democrat, saw this as a betrayal.

In 2000, she co-wrote "In Harm's Way: Toxic Threats to Child Development." The report described how chemicals in the environment, such as pesticides, can harm brain development in children. It won international recognition and was translated into four languages. She co-authored a similar report, "Environmental Threats to Healthy Aging," in 2009.

In 2002, Stein was approached by the Massachusetts Green-Rainbow Party, which asked her to run for governor even though she did not belong to the party. After some consideration, she accepted. Though she would ultimately lose to future Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, the race would be important in launching her political career.

## **State And Presidential Campaigns**

Backed by her party, Stein went on to run for several other elected offices, including Massachusetts state secretary in 2006 and another bid for governor in 2010. Though she failed in these attempts, she did win a seat in Lexington's town government twice.

On October 24, 2011, Stein announced her first presidential campaign. She won the Green Party nomination the following summer. Stein campaigned on the promise of a "Green New Deal," a package of green energy and sustainability programs aimed at creating jobs and halting climate change, the heating up of the Earth.

According to the rules set by the Commission on Presidential Debates, a candidate needs to receive the support of 15 percent of voters in polls nationally to participate. The debates are on television and millions of people watch them. Stein failed to gain enough support, and was not invited to the debates. In protest, Stein tried to gain access to the second 2012 presidential debate and was arrested.

In the election, Stein won about 0.4 percent of the popular vote, or about 470,000 individual ballots. Third parties such as the Greens have historically floundered in the United States, due in part to financial problems and the difficulty of getting on state ballots for president. Every state has different requirements.

## **Onward To 2016**

Undeterred by her loss, Stein announced she would run for president again in 2016, and won the Green nomination in June 2015. Her vice presidential pick was human rights advocate Ajamu Baraka.

As the 2016 race progressed, it became clear that Democratic candidate Senator Bernie Sanders would not become his party's presidential nominee. In response, Stein reached out to Sanders' supporters — and to the Vermont senator himself. Though Sanders would go on to urge voters not to support third parties like the Greens, Stein has received some support from frustrated Democrats unwilling to vote for Hillary Clinton.

As in 2012, Stein failed to qualify for the 2016 presidential debates. She and Libertarian presidential candidate Gary Johnson, who was also not invited to the debates, filed a lawsuit against the Commission on Presidential Debates, saying they had been unfairly excluded. The case was dismissed in August 2016.

As of late September 2016, Stein's name was set to appear on the ballot in 45 states.