

## League of Young Voters' Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

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What are the three biggest issues Maine faces over the next four years?

1. **Jumpstarting our stalled economy.** 56 is a bad number for Maine. The Maine economy created 56 net new jobs in the last decade, and 56% of the increase in our incomes in the three-year period from 2006 through 2008 was from transfer payments . . . government checks, welfare payments and the like. These numbers describe an economy that is insufficiently productive, one that's in real trouble. It costs too much to live and to do business in Maine, and we must lower these costs – the price of electricity and energy, the price of health care, and the prices we pay for public services -- so that we can attract investment from within and outside of Maine. That is the only way that we will create jobs and opportunities, especially for our young people, and the only way that we will generate the tax revenue to support all the things we want and need to do as a society.

2. **Reforming education.** A strong education system is critical to Maine's future and I want every Maine child, no matter where he or she lives in our state, to have an equal opportunity to receive a quality education. In our P-12 systems today we see declining enrollments and escalating costs. We are paying too much and receiving too little. Too many students are graduating without sufficient knowledge and skills, and not enough of Maine's young people go on to some form of post-secondary education. I want to reform our education system so that it fosters better education at lower costs and rewards innovation and outcomes. I also want to maximize the value of our college and university assets by merging our two systems of higher education into one, making sure that we organize higher education around the needs of students, taxpayers and 21st century employers.

3. **Protecting our natural environment and quality of life.** Whether we were born here or chose to move here, Maine is a special, unique place for each one of us, and an integral part our lives here is our natural environment, caring and safe communities, and a strong civic culture. As we develop a new way forward for Maine – reforming and restructuring our economy, government, and education system – one of our greatest challenges will be to retain and to protect the essence of what is special about our state.

Pick two of Maine's greatest natural resources. Describe your vision for how those resources might best foster economic growth AND be conserved for future generations.

1. **Our coast and the Gulf of Maine.** The Gulf of Maine and our thousands of miles of coastline are one of our greatest and most unique natural resources. While our groundfish stocks are in the process of rebuilding, our lobster fishery remains one of the world's best-managed and most sustainable fisheries. In a world that will be desperately seeking more sources of protein, the Gulf of Maine can assume an increasingly larger role in preserving our way of life and our coastal communities.

As we look to expand markets for the bounty from the Gulf of Maine and to develop more value-added processing here in Maine, we must maintain the stringent laws and regulations that govern development along our coast, allowing it to remain such an attraction for tourism and recreation.

**2. Our forests. Maine's forests are another one of our great natural resources. As we have done so many times in the past, I believe we can strike a balance between protecting these vast forest lands, including special wilderness areas, and encouraging multiple use of them, such as sustainable wood harvesting and recreation.**

What approach will you take toward Maine's growing immigrant and refugee population? What policies would you enact to support these new communities?

**Lawful immigration has been a core strength of our nation and our economy for hundreds of years. My grandparents were immigrants, and we are a nation of immigrants. My grandfather came to this country as a political refugee at age 12, alone and penniless and unable to speak English. He spent years as a peddler walking back and forth between Bangor and Calais before he was able to open a small business in my hometown of Bangor. Together with the children of millions of other brave and determined immigrants, I am indebted to this country and to the State of Maine for the opportunities that he found in Bangor and that I have found in my life.**

**Maine is now home to several immigrant and refugee populations seeking the same opportunities my grandfather found. When you see the string of Somali-owned businesses opening up along Lisbon St. in Lewiston, you can't help but to say to yourself, "Hey, this is the way it's supposed to work." I have long believed that immigration is one of the great pillars of economic growth in Maine and in America. As the state with the oldest and whitest population in America, Maine should welcome enterprising immigrants and draw inspiration from refugees, many who have escaped untold horrors, who have come here seeking the freedom and opportunity we too often take for granted.**

**My approach to Maine's growing immigrant and refugee population will be to offer them respect and encouragement as they create their new lives in Maine and to help them take their rightful place among the immigrant families from which so many of us came. I will pay close attention to their needs in the areas of education, employment and family reunification.**

What role does government have in creating jobs? What jobs do you think we should be trying to create? What resources do you see as necessary to accomplish this goal?

**I have said this for more than a year, and I will repeat it here: Despite what other candidates tell you, governors don't create jobs. What governors and governments can do is create the conditions in which people and businesses will invest, prosper and create new jobs. We haven't done that in Maine; in fact, we have done just the opposite. We have created barriers that discourage Maine businesses from expanding and other businesses from locating here. We must transform our economy by cutting the cost of living and doing business in Maine. We can do this by lowering the cost of 1) electricity, 2) healthcare, and 3) government. Once we have done that, we can start investing in education and in our competitive advantages – our people, our quality places, our natural resources and our strategic location.**

Augusta has been committed to only dealing with one side of the budget: by cutting expenses. Are you open to raising revenue? If so, in what ways?

**As we grapple with chronic budget shortfalls, push to lower our costs and strive to make needed investments in Maine's competitive advantages, it is clear that the budget process needs to be totally reformed. For example, we spend more each year on tax expenditures – money that we would otherwise receive if not for tax breaks, tax credits and other incentives – than we do on the state's operating budget. Yet, tax expenditures do not go through the same scrutiny and appropriations process each year that**

**operating expenses do. I want to zero-base the entire, unified annual state budget, including both operating expenses and tax expenditures, as well as a separate budget for capital spending.**

**First, we must restore the confidence of Maine people in the ability of government to live within its means – not through furloughs, across-the-board cuts and borrowing gimmicks (as in the last biennial budget), but by making structural changes in Maine government. Once we have our costs under control, Mainers will be poised to engage in a conversation about tax reform, and this time it cannot be simply incremental. We will need to undertake a substantial reform and restructuring of Maine’s tax system. With the defeat in June of the legislature’s most recent effort at incremental tax reform, we are back to square one. We have one of the highest marginal income tax rates in America, one of the narrowest sales tax bases and a property tax structure that is crushing many Maine communities and homeowners.**

**We need to examine whether our estate and capital gains taxes are driving people and their assets out of Maine. We will need to decide whether the local property tax is the right funding source for supporting K-12 education, or whether we need to examine alternatives. And we will need to figure out ways to maximize the percentage of their incomes that Maine people can keep for themselves.**

**I will not make promises that I am not certain that I can keep, and so I have not made any promises to any groups about spending levels and raising or cutting taxes. The job of governing Maine is more complex than that and demands honest leadership.**

Appointing agency heads is one of the most important jobs the governor has. What qualities are you looking for in state department commissioners? How will you choose the next commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection, for example?

**I am an Independent. I don’t have cronies, and I will not be staffing my administration with my political pals. I will appoint commissioners who are experienced and competent in their fields – people of vision, courage and integrity. I will look for men and women with both leadership and management skills, who are committed to good customer service and who have no competing political agenda. I will consult with key stakeholders in my search for the most capable commissioners.**

**We need fresh ideas in Maine to turn around our economy and to create the conditions for Mainers to thrive and prosper. We cannot do that by retaining the same folks who got us into this mess in the first place.**

**The commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection will be one of the most important positions in my administration. In addition to the qualities I have outlined above, the next DEP commissioner will have a strong understanding of the science behind our environmental laws and regulations, a deep appreciation and respect for Maine’s environmental ethic, and an ability to work with both the environmental community and the business community to build consensus around the development and application of environmental regulations.**

If a bill supporting same-sex marriage came across your desk, would you sign it into law? If yes, what would you do to further the cause of same-sex marriage? If no, why are you opposed to same-sex marriage?

**I support marriage equality for all Mainers. I think that it is a matter of human dignity, privacy, and equal rights under the law. The law should not interfere with any particular church's decision about whom to marry or not, but I believe that so long as marriage is a term that has legal and tax implications, all couples should be entitled to marriage as a legal right. I do not believe that government should make**

**rules about religion, and I do not believe that religion should make rules about government. I believe in the separation of church and state.**

**I would sign a marriage equality bill if it came before me in the Blaine House and I support the Maine Human Rights Act, which was reaffirmed by voters in 2005 and legally bans discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. If another marriage equality bill comes to the legislature or to the voters, I will not hesitate to use the influence of the Governor's office to advocate for it, right from the start.**

Please describe how the government of Maine can keep its youth from leaving the state and attract new young people to move here?

**We can do a better job of keeping our youth from leaving and attracting young people to come here by creating economic opportunities. We have enormous advantages in terms of our natural environment, recreational opportunities and quality of life, but we simply do not have the enough jobs and careers to keep young people here. We must provide greater educational opportunities in those areas where the jobs of the future will come from, and we must continue to promote and support growth clusters around the creative economy and industries related to our natural resources and our other competitive advantages.**

What will you do to address Maine's health care concerns and help Mainers without coverage? What role does Dirigo Health play in your plan? Do you support a single payer system?

**I do not support a single-payer, taxpayer financed healthcare system. Indeed, I think the old arguments around single payer vs. private insurers miss the point.**

**The important issue is not so much about who pays, but rather about what we pay for; by failing to focus enough on the importance of keeping people healthy, we find ourselves today in a situation where 60% of all of our health care dollars is spent on treating illnesses that were preventable. My Maine Wellness plan will replace Dirigo (see more at Cutler 2010.com) and will provide essential health care services for all Maine citizens at a cost that we can afford and that can be sustained. We will focus on keeping people healthy, so that we are not just paying for costly procedures after people get sick.**

**The new federal law provides an extraordinary opportunity for us to innovate with healthcare delivery organized around Maine's not-for-profit hospitals and community health centers -- not around health insurance companies -- and with rewards and incentives for consumers' healthy lifestyles and caregivers' cost-effective performance. Maine Wellness will establish a statewide accountable care organization (ACO) within which Maine citizens will have a choice of providers and will have a direct relationship with their provider that will not be mediated by an insurance company.**

**Lower health care costs will be a big part of the turnaround in the Maine economy under my Administration, easing the burden of crushing premiums and creating jobs and opportunities for Maine workers.**

What is your vision for public transit in Maine?

**I strongly support an expansion of cost-effective transportation alternatives such as commuter lanes, local bus service, and bicycle lanes. New bus services, bike routes, and sidewalks along existing roads can typically all be obtained for less than one tenth of the cost of road widening. The goal should be moving more people at less cost - not simply building more highways. To get there, we'll need to be more**

**strategic and flexible in how we plan and fund our transportation investments, and pursue a new transportation policy that's both environmentally AND fiscally responsible.**

What actions will you take to improve labor conditions in Maine?

**I will insist that our labor and workplace laws are strictly enforced, and I will work day and night to grow our economy so that Maine businesses can offer competitive wages and benefits.**

What are your top three priorities regarding public education?

**1. Cost Effectiveness. We simply cannot sustain the high cost of public education in Maine at a time of declining enrollments, and our dependence on the property tax is crippling many small communities, especially along the coast, which do not have the tax base to adequately support public education. We need to (a) bring down the cost of education through greater use of shared resources (not forced consolidation), (b) examine reforms in our tax structure, and (c) reward the best teachers and keep them in our systems.**

**2. Quality through Innovation. I support the creation of public charter schools and charter districts as a way to spur innovation. Our current education system and the teachers who practice within it are kept in a straightjacket by union contracts and by education bureaucracies that promote the status quo and prevents real reform.**

**I also believe that educators and teams of educators who demonstrate their ability to improve student achievement ought to be rewarded for their efforts. Recognition for growth in student success should not look only to student test scores nor should rewards be limited to pay. My plan will reward successful collaboration and support opportunities for school leadership and targeted professional development.**

**3. Equality. I will not rest until every Maine child, regardless of where he or she lives in Maine, has an equal opportunity to learn and succeed. Today that is not the case, as has been documented by test scores, dropout rates and other key measures.**

In what ways will you improve the quality, affordability, and accessibility of Maine's pre-kindergarten through college public education system?

**In addition to the steps outlined above, I will seek a merger of Maine's two systems of higher education, the universities and community colleges, so that we are organized to succeed rather than to fail, so that our resources can be used optimally and so that we can keep our costs from escalating out of the reach of Maine students. As soon as possible, we need to reverse the pattern of disinvestment in public education that has become deeply rooted over the past 35 years.**

What action (if any) will you take to ensure that Mainers with developmental disabilities would get the proper services that they require? What is your stance on budget cuts for community support programs and shared living programs for this population?

**I will do everything in my power to ensure that Mainers with developmental disabilities and their families get the quality services they need in the most effective manner. But, as I answered to a previous question, I will not make promises that I am not certain that I can keep, and so I have not made any promises to any groups about spending levels and raising or cutting taxes. The job of governing Maine is more complex than that and demands honest leadership.**