

Libby Mitchell
Democratic Gubernatorial Candidate

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

1. Jobs – so people can afford to live in Maine
2. Energy independence
3. Quality of life – so skilled workers want to live in Maine

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. (Required)

1. Rivers – This is a resource that was smelly and dirty a generation ago, and now is a great resource. I want to connect Maine communities with trails along rivers. It will get people outdoors, keep people healthy and active, encourage community, and encourage an appreciation of the need to conserve Maine's natural resources.
2. Farms and fields – I want to conserve Maine's heritage of farms and open rural land by encouraging local food programs. Maine people can eat healthier, and jobs can be created on farms, at the same time that open space is preserved, and the landscape of Maine can remain.

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

1. I will welcome and help them locate in Maine. Most of our families came to America as legal immigrants at one point or another. This is how our state and country were built, and a key piece of how Maine can grow its population. Maine's immigrants today are part of the future Maine economy.
2. All immigrants in our history have needed help and community support to learn the language, get jobs, and educate their children. I propose the same – to help immigrants with language skills, job training, and education. Some of this takes public money, but the most important thing is to mobilize the business and volunteer community to mentor and help out.

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? (Required)

1. People create jobs. Government helps by supporting people – by giving them access to a quality education; by creating a “culture of entrepreneurship” in our schools and society; by maintaining reasonable costs for health care and energy and taxes; and by helping business people to network, get financing, and the infrastructure

(buildings, power, water, sewer and a skilled and knowledgeable workforce.)

2. Sustainable jobs – jobs that fit Maine’s people, natural resources, and competitive advantage. The green economy is a natural fit. We will build on our research knowledge base while helping our historical industry meet the new challenges of today’s innovation based economy.
3. I am committed to giving sustainable economic development the resources that it needs. As evidence, just this month I submitted a \$99 million bond issue to support green jobs in Maine this session; this saves the state money in the long-term and creates jobs in the short-term.

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? (Required)

1. No responsible public official can take a “pledge” to never raise revenues, and I have never done so.
2. I would consider raising revenues if several conditions are met:
 - All available government, including municipal and county, efficiency savings have been exhausted (which is not yet the case – I give Governor Baldacci credit for his efforts in this area)
 - The service to be funded is essential for health and safety, or for the development of Maine’s future economy
 - The revenue source does not harm Maine’s economic competitiveness, and if possible encourages healthier lifestyles or a greener economy.

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? (Required)

1. Qualities – technical expertise, the ability to think creatively, administrative skill, courage. I’m looking for best thinking from commissioners, not politics; as governor, I can handle the politics.
2. I will solicit ideas for names from people in the field, then will seek the best, including those from the private sector, academia and the non-for-profit sectors to serve a term or two in government. Values matter as well: the next Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection, for example, must share my commitment to protecting our natural resources.

If a bill supporting same-sex marriage came across your desk, would you sign it into law?
(Required)

Yes. As Senate President, I worked diligently to ensure the passage of marriage equality this past session.

If yes, what would you do to further the cause of same-sex marriage? If no, why are you opposed to same-sex marriage? (Required)

1. Work with allies in the short run to establish equal benefit and partnership rights.
2. In the longer run, promote dialogue. This is a big cultural change. It will require new understanding and thinking, and that takes continued communication. I will not back down from promoting equality.

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

I am fortunate in that all four of my children have left Maine for a time, and all have been able to come back to find fulfilling and well-paying jobs, and to be able to raise a family if they wish.

My experience – and the experiences of my peers whose children have not been so lucky – tells me that this is the single most important issue for Maine’s future. We need to have a state that provides opportunity, quality of life, and hope for young people.

This issue goes beyond a typical “three-point plan.” It requires a commitment at the highest level of government, a commitment that must encompass every agency and activity of state government. If I am governor, I will make that commitment.

Given the uncertainty surrounding the health care debate in Washington, 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? (Required)

1. Whatever happens in Washington, we in Maine will still have to work to provide affordable health care to everyone, young and old, healthy and sick. I was proud to lead the efforts in Maine to prevent denial of coverage due to pre-existing conditions, and other measures to better regulate the insurance industry. Maine is ahead of the curve.

As Governor, I will take stronger action to control health costs. The current health insurance rate increase proposals will destroy Maine if they are allowed to continue. If insurance companies continue to

propose these kinds of increases, I will look into setting up a health cost regulatory board similar to the Public Utilities Commission. This cannot go on.

2. Dirigo Health can serve as Maine's "public option." In the early 90s, when Maine's workers compensation system was in a similar cost inflation spiral as health care is today, I helped craft legislation to set up the Maine Employers' Mutual Insurance Company (MEMIC). It was our "public option" in workers compensation. As a result of MEMIC's activities, workplace injuries have declined 30% in Maine, and our costs have gone from among the highest to close to the national average. That is where Dirigo must be headed.
3. I think our national leaders should look closely at a single payer system. It seems to provide better care at a lower cost to other countries around us. But I do not think that Maine can realistically set up a single payer system on its own.

What is your vision for public transit in Maine? (Required)

1. Maine needs low-cost public transportation connections to Boston and the world beyond. That is essential for our economy.
2. Within Maine, our rural and dispersed population is more suitable to small buses and vans than typical urban bus systems. I will work to promote decentralized, low-cost public transit.

Federal subsidies for rail in Maine (e.g. the Downeaster) have been persistently uncertain. Are you committed to Maine's Amtrak link? Where do you see Maine's rail system at the end of your term? How will Maine make up any shortfall in federal funding? (Required)

1. I think the connection of Boston to Portland is of critical importance to our economy, and I will work to ensure that it continues. Extensions will be evaluated relative to the amount of state subsidy needed per rider, and their potential impact on future economic development.

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

1. I'm taking action now by promoting a bill that allows workers to stay home from their jobs when they are sick. What can be a more basic right than that? I have supported minimum wage and other basic worker rights all of my life, and will not stop once I am governor.

How do you see Maine fitting into President Obama's plan for increased renewable energy? (Required)

1. The Governor and Legislature are already setting the stage for Maine to be a producer and distributor of wind power, tidal power, and other green energy sources. I support these efforts, as my \$99 million green jobs bond demonstrates.

What are your top three priorities regarding public education? (Required)

1. Increase the graduation rate
2. Raise the aspirations of Maine students
3. Reduce the paperwork burden, and support the people who dedicate their careers to working in the classroom

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

1. I am committed to increasing the number of Mainers with degrees beyond high school to the New England average in the next 20 years, the goal set by the Compact for Higher Education. Specifically, I want to work with the Community College and University to greatly expand its online and distance offerings.

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? (Required)

1. People with disabilities, and their families and friends and teachers, work hard every day in Maine to integrate themselves into our communities and workplaces. I applaud and support these efforts, and hope we can do more. At the same time, all of us need to look at the ways we deliver care to the developmentally disabled. We need to increase our efficiency and productivity in this area, as we must in all areas of human services and all areas of government, so that care can be available to all in the future – and not a “lottery” where some families win, and others lose out. As governor, I would work with social service agencies to create the future human services delivery system for Maine.

What are your thoughts on Maine's home rule law? (Required)

1. As a long-time Vassalboro selectwoman, I think the rule is fine. But the reality is that Vassalboro and all communities in Maine will have to deliver more services regionally, and I will push this effort forward as governor.