

# Questions for Congressional Candidates

**Your name:** Chellie Pingree

**Your home address:** 12 Mills Street, North Haven

**Your email address:** Chellie@pingree.com

**Your phone number:** 207-773-0155

**Your website:** www.chelliepingree.com

**Other blog/social media sites you use:**

<http://dirigoblue.com/user/chelliepingree>

<http://dailykos.com/user/Chellie%20Pingree>

<http://flickr.com/chelliepingree>

<http://youtube.com/chelliepingree>

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Chellie-Pingree/7536934917?ref=ts>

## **As an incumbent, what have your biggest lessons been over the past two years?**

I have learned a lot over these past two years, but in so many ways, what I learned as a State Senator still applies today – to be effective, you have to be able to work with both parties and all different types of people, and you have to be willing and able to talk and work with people with whom you might only have one or two points of agreement. I am proud to say that my experiences in Maine prepared me well in this regard, even in these challenging and highly partisan times.

One important lesson that is perhaps more unique to Washington is that sometimes our biggest challenges are within my own party. The Democrats have had a large and diverse group of lawmakers over these last two years and it has sometimes been challenging, and even disappointing, to struggle with reaching consensus with that group. On critical issues like health care reform or funding for the war in Afghanistan, I've sometimes found myself pushing hard on members of my own party to do what I believe is the right thing.

Finally, I've learned that sometimes the most good I can do for Maine is by rattling the cage of my own government or big corporations. As a Member of Congress I work hard on important legislative solutions, like passing the Fair Elections Now bill, which is basically "clean elections" for federal lawmakers, but sometimes I can do a lot of good for families, veterans and seniors by firing off a letter or making a phone call when the wheels of government have ground to a halt for all the wrong reasons. A good example of this is when a woman who had worked in the billing department at the VA hospital at Togus came to me to say that Anthem was using some fine print to deny claims for veterans' health care. I went straight to the President of Anthem here in Maine and told him to stop denying the claims. Anthem relented and has started paying back the \$500,000 in claims that they had previously denied.

## **What do you think are the 3 biggest issues Maine and the country faces over the next two years?**

1. My top priority is protecting and creating Maine jobs. In Congress, I fought to end tax breaks for companies that ship our jobs overseas and I support moving that money into job creation here at home. Bringing jobs back and improving our economy in Maine starts with helping small businesses. I heard local business owners loud and clear, pushing my own party to require lenders to increase lending to small business and access to capital in order to protect and grow jobs. Now, Maine sees more small business loans, which has led to growth from \$177 million in new lending. And I fought to pass a recovery bill that cut taxes for 95% of Maine families and protected jobs of hundreds of local police officers, fire fighters and teachers.

I also wrote legislation that directed the Department of Defense to turn over the land at the former Brunswick Naval Air Station at no-cost or low-cost to the community so it can be redeveloped. The recent news that a composite civilian aircraft manufacturer is going to set up shop at the former BNAS is a sign that the redevelopment strategy for that area is working.

2. People talk to me about health care more than any other issue. I often say that if it's not the first concern people mention to me, it's definitely the second – that is, pretty much everyone talks to me about it. This year Congress passed and the President signed a major reform of our health care system. I don't believe the reform went far enough and we can still do much to improve it—but it's a start and a step in the right direction – the status quo of skyrocketing prices and uncertain coverage is unacceptable. The reform law will prevent insurance companies from cancelling policies when you get sick or refusing coverage because of preexisting conditions and allow children to be covered under their parent's policy until they are 26. The law also requires full coverage of many preventative care procedures.

3. We are at an historic moment – we are beginning to make real investments in energy technologies that will both stimulate the growth of a green economy and protect the environment. America can build a home-grown solution to our energy problems that that will create good paying manufacturing jobs right here in Maine that can't be exported, while reducing our dependence on oil. Maine is perfectly positioned to lead this new clean energy revolution, which is why I have fought for programs that promote onshore and offshore wind, tidal power and biomass energy in Maine. With some of the oldest houses in the country and an overwhelming dependence on home heating oil, staying warm can be a real struggle for many Maine families. That's why I have worked to bring programs to Maine that help homeowners reduce their heating bills through affordable energy efficiency improvements.

**Do you support same-sex marriage? (please answer yes or no) If yes, what will you do to further the cause? If no, why do you oppose same-sex marriage?**

Yes, I have been a vocal proponent of same-sex marriage, and I am proud to live in a state that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identification. I am proud of my record on these issues. During my time as a State Senator I cosponsored and voted for legislation to prohibit discrimination based upon sexual orientation (LD 246, 4/13/93, 5/6/93; LD 1116, 5/7/97); I voted to legalize same-sex marriage (LD 1017, 3/26/97), and; I voted to ensure civil rights of members of the LGBT community (LD 2239, 4/3/00). Of course, I still strongly hold all these beliefs today and Congress should pass legislation comparable to our laws in Maine, such as the Employment Non-Discrimination Act that includes gender identity within its protections. I also believe that the U.S. military's ban on gay and lesbian personnel, known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," should be lifted immediately and that those service members should be afforded the same honors and benefits for their service as every other member of the armed forces.

**Do you support the wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq? If so, what does "victory" look like? If not, how will you influence foreign policy to end those conflicts?**

I have long been a passionate opponent of the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. As a member of Congress I've fought to stop the wasteful spending and bring our troops home. The \$7 billion a month we are spending in Afghanistan can better be spent here in this country, reducing the deficit and creating jobs. Even though Democratic leaders, including the President, urged me to vote for supplemental funding for the Afghanistan war, twice I have said no. In Congress, I led efforts to stop the funding and demand that the Administration present a concrete timeline and plan for withdrawal.

Leaving will be complicated, but staying only continues the tragic loss of our soldiers, Iraqi citizens, and almost unthinkable amounts of money.

I also believe that while the debate continues whether we can "win" the war instead of how best to withdraw our forces from Iraq and Afghanistan with the least amount of damage, they are irresponsibly prolonging this disaster. Instead, they should be tackling the hard debate of what needs to be done next.

**What policies should we enact federally to reduce our dependency on foreign oil and stem the tide of climate change? Given the federal government's reluctance to act on this issue, what will you do to ensure these policies are enacted by the next Congress?**

We are beginning to make real investments in energy technologies that will both stimulate the growth of a green economy and protect the environment. Investing in these economic incentives will reduce our energy consumption and end our dependence on fossil fuels, especially imported foreign oil, which harms our economy and our environment and threatens our national security.

Ending our dependence on fossil fuel does not have to pit the environment against the economy – in fact, I think the transition to clean, renewable energy presents a real opportunity for Maine to strengthen its economy. People and businesses all over Maine are already undertaking groundbreaking research on energy solutions like wind blade efficiency and composite materials. It is this type of clean energy job creation that I will continue to advocate for in Washington.

H.R. 2454, the American Clean Energy and Security Act, which passed the House on June 26, 2009, makes a strong commitment to halting climate change and reducing carbon emissions, increases our electricity standards and invests significant resources in clean energy job growth. I am proud to have supported this important bill, which will help us break our dependence on foreign oil and make us energy self-sufficient, and will create new jobs in Maine.

**What policies do you believe need to be enacted to support Maine's growing immigrant and refugee population? What's your take on the national immigration debate? Do you support a pathway to citizenship?**

I favor creating a path to citizenship that allows undocumented immigrants to come forward and begin the process of permanent residency and then legal citizenship and fixing the current immigration problem with comprehensive immigration reform legislation. We all know that our immigration system is broken, and Washington hasn't done enough to fix it – this will be an important topic for our federal government to address in the coming years. That's why I am a proud original sponsor of H.R. 4321, the Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America's Security and Prosperity (CIR ASAP) Act. This bill will deter illegal immigration and improve border security, while at the same time promoting family unity, protecting the civil rights of all individuals, and providing economic opportunity. This bill includes components of other critical pieces of immigration legislation that I am cosponsoring, including H.R. 1751, the American Dream Act, which provides a pathway to legalization for hardworking students who were brought here illegally as children and have grown up as productive members of their communities, and H.R. 1024, the Uniting American Families Act, which would provide same-sex partners of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents the same immigration benefits afforded to legal spouses of U.S. permanent residents.