

# Questions for State Representative Candidates

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What do you think are the 3 biggest issues Maine faces over the next four years?

1. Budget Crisis – this is not over.
2. Energy Costs
3. Good Jobs

How will you represent *all Portlanders*, including the traditionally marginalized members of our community (for example, the homeless, the poor, those with mental or physical disabilities)?

“That which you do to the least of me, you do to me.” ~ Love Jesus

It is not enough to donate to charity, we must be advocating for policies that lift individuals and families out of poverty. It’s the difference between giving someone fish and teaching them how to fish. While in office, I stood up as the only person in my committee, and the only person to speak on the floor of the House in support of immigrant voting rights at the state house. During difficult budget crises, I worked to restore a significant amount of revenue sharing, general assistance and educational funding for our schools. In addition, I was largely responsible for restoring funding to an important sexual assault suicide hotline that reduces suicides in sexual assault victims while also transitioning victims to more cost-efficient services. My committee also worked to fund a veterans service officer for Portland, ensuring countless veterans (including homeless veterans) get the benefits they have earned and deserve – again with the goal of lifting them out of poverty and addressing any physical or psychological challenges they face as a result of their service to our country. I look forward to the opportunity to continue fighting for policies that adequately address the needs of our most vulnerable communities.

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

In the first session of the 124<sup>th</sup> Legislature, I was the only person to speak up in our caucuses and ask the question, “When are we going to talk about revenue generation?” Throughout the 124<sup>th</sup>, a small group of us in the House worked to find ways to raise revenue and fought (sadly, unsuccessfully) for the right to vote on revenue increases. The Governor had made it clear he would veto any increases in fees or taxes, leaving us in a frustrating position: either fight to restore the most critical services, hold your nose and vote for the revised budget, OR vote against the budget and watch the Governor’s across the board 10% cuts take effect. It was a Sophie’s Choice. It is also why we must be careful in who we send to the Blaine House next year.

I have introduced placeholder legislation for next year for a “Millionaire’s Tax” designed to create a tax bracket at a higher income level allowing us to capture more income from folks who earn significantly more money than the rest of Maine people. I would also like to see us review our corporate tax credits to ensure our tax investments are encouraging job growth and that those employees are fairly paid with

benefits. Finally, I was supportive of a sales tax increase with a sunset to help balance the budget – as Gov. McKernan did in the 90s. I would continue to support and fight for it to ensure we do not undercut our social safety net or critical investments in our roads, K-12 and higher education.

There has been persistent uncertainty regarding federal subsidies for Rail in Maine (specifically the Downeaster). Are you committed to Maine's Amtrak link? How would the state make up any short fall in federal funding for Amtrak?

I continue to support the existing Amtrak line, as well as its expansion north. I was very supportive of our work to preserve the Aroostook railroad line, too, which we did through smart bond investments. I believe bonds would be a smart use of public funds to support Amtrak funding.

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 voted for it, I spoke passionately about it on the Maine House floor, and I knocked on doors. In fact, I wasn't at the polls shaking hands last November b/c I was checking people in at the Portland canvass headquarters! I was heartbroken when we lost; however, I am looking forward to continuing the fight.

What policies do you believe need to be enacted to support Maine's growing immigrant and refugee population?

First, I believe we need to do a better job at educating people about our immigrant and refugee communities. There is sadly a lot of negative sentiment toward them. People use the word, "They" and their eyes look in the direction of Kennedy Park as they either talk about how the refugees are 1. taking our jobs or 2. taking our services. (They can't win for losing.) I would be happy to work with the League on better community education so that we can reduce racism and increase opportunities for our communities to integrate. Certainly, I worked on immigrant voting rights and would be open to new ideas.

How can the government of Maine keep our youth from leaving and attract new youth to the State?

We worked hard collectively to pass the Opportunity Maine Program. More needs to be done to ensure students are taking advantage of that. I worked with Opportunity Maine and the League to pass legislation designed to streamline the process for enrollment, but we need to be pressuring our agencies to stop pretending it will go away and to actually promote it.

I have been speaking with students, though, about the need to self-advocate. When budget cuts happen, countless groups come to the state house to protest cuts to the budgets. Time and again, I look for college students and parents of college students protesting those cuts, too. Too often students go to the Board of Trustees, by which point it is too late.

We also need to be making critical investments in industries that attract talent. I believe Maine has done a remarkable job over the last two years of transforming its energy policies. Many of those reforms are beginning to attract new businesses, significant research and development, etc. Prof. Daniel Martinez of USM recently was awarded a \$175,000 grant to develop undergraduate curriculum centered around energy and climate policy. Young people have resoundingly noted in polls and studies that they are interested in working in the areas of environmental protection, climate mitigation and energy policy. By investing in an industry area such as this, we are capitalizing on our youth's natural inclination to work in this industry while also laying the foundation for an economic boom filled with well paid jobs that require

both skills and intellect.

How would you improve access to healthcare in Maine? What steps would you take to improve Dirigo Health? Do you support single payer healthcare?

First, I strongly support single-payer health care and deeply oppose the rate increases Anthem has been putting out here in Maine. In fact, the latter rather justifies the former. The critical problem with Dirigo Health has been centered around how it is funded. It's hard to fund a program dependent on a payment from an industry that refuses to pay. In other words, it's hard to run a program whose funding is an average of two years behind schedule. The Maine Legislature changed the way we fund Dirigo so that it has a dedicated source of revenue allowing the board to plan its budget accordingly. We are almost in the black, at which point Dirigo Health will be able to open its rolls again to new members. (Yea!)

Overlaying this process is the new bill that passed the US Congress and was signed into law nationally. The way that law was written puts Maine's existing Dirigo Health in a very good position to both receive federal funds, but also to increase access for Maine people to quality, affordable health care. The great thing about Dirigo is that it has great value in comparison to its market competitors AND it includes prevention treatment which is far more cost effective.

Contrary to popular belief, Dirigo Health has not been a "failure," and the challenges it has had have stemmed entirely from its former "partner," Anthem. If you defund something, it doesn't work. It's been a brilliant PR strategy for demonstrating that "socialism" doesn't work, but if one deconstructs the circumstances, Dirigo Health has great promise. And I look forward to expanding health care access in the short term through Dirigo Health, and in the long-term through a single-payer system that gets corporate interests out of private health care decisions.