

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?

A need for increased revenue; Sound energy and transportation policy; Provide support for health and social services

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)?

As someone who lives in the Arts District and works in the Business District, whose daily commute consists of a 1 mile walk along Congress St., I've perceived an increase in homelessness and poverty in Portland over the last two years. I believe that if the legislature can commit to finding new revenue, we can begin to rebuild programs that have suffered from budget cuts, with an ultimate goal of expanding such social service programs. In many ways, the city of Portland acts as a service center for the whole state. Communities that are not set up with the resources to meet the needs of the homeless, for instance, tend to deliver those marginalized community members to Portland, where the perception is that resources are available. Given this dynamic, the Legislature ought to fully recognize Portland, and the other major cities that similarly provide social services, as service centers, and prioritize resources for social services accordingly.

Pick two of Maine's greatest natural resources and describe your vision for how those resources can be utilized in fostering economic stability/growth and at the same time judiciously conserved for future generations.

It is hard to choose, but because they seem so naturally fitting within a sustainable energy plan, I'll choose sun and wind. My vision of a sustainable energy plan for Maine would include investing first in large-scale conservation by super-insulating homes and buildings. Once heating costs were reduced by this method, energy needs could be augmented by smaller wind and solar projects, with less impact on forests, habitats, and families living in rural communities than large-scale projects. In this type of decentralized energy grid model, sun and wind become natural resources that provide for manufacturing jobs of solar panels and small-scale turbines; promote development of small business in this industry; and are recycled by providing energy to our Maine 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?

It has been frustrating to see education and social service programs suffer as a result of year after year budget cuts. Now more than ever, I believe Maine's residents throughout the state

are witnessing these effects on an everyday level. If Maine hopes to regain strength coming out of this recession, and see education, health, and social service programs prosper, we need to become serious about opening revenue streams to make up for recent shortfalls. The legislature will likely revisit tax reform in upcoming sessions. I would advocate for an equitable income tax structure, which would provide revenue without affecting those who are already financially overburdened. In a comprehensive tax package, I would also look at separating meals & lodging taxation, and raising the lodging portion (a tax we can afford to raise without losing tourist attraction); and examining possibilities for luxury taxation, as well as some entertainment taxation that would affect those most capable of paying back into the system.

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 am committed to keeping Maine's Amtrak line open. It is a great resource, and will, over the course of many years, become a universally preferred method of travel to Boston than by car. The link from Boston to Portland, is the first step in a comprehensive system of rail transit for the state of Maine. Unfortunately, the federal subsidies perpetually hang in the balance, with the threat of being cut every so often. One way to prepare for a worst case situation, would be to establish a reserve account to fund Amtrak should federal funding dissolve. We could fund it initially with a one or two cent per gallon increase to the state gasoline tax. Should federal funding dry up, we would be better positioned to compensate funding, but if federal subsidies continued, the reserve funds could be used toward rail maintenance or rail line expansion for the next step in Maine's rail grid, such as a link between Portland and Lewiston/Auburn.

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 want to work closely with lgbtq rights organizations to determine the best strategy to further the cause of equal marriage rights. Following the November 2009 election, and the repeal of same-sex marriage by the passage of Question 1, it would seem that we need to work incrementally toward an eventual (and inevitable) reintroduction of marriage equality legislation. The ability of special interest groups to influence election outcome, has never been more thoroughly illustrated than in Question 1's fate this past November. With that in mind, the incremental steps toward reintroduction would likely include preparation for a repeal campaign, and finding ways to curb the influence of special interest groups. I would also be happy to sponsor or co-sponsor marriage equality legislation and work with fellow legislators to ensure its passage, at the right time.

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

Through my work on the issue of non-citizen voting on the Portland Charter Commission, I was able to work closely with leaders of Portland's immigrant communities, and I gained insight into the concerns of immigrant families. Most important is to provide resources for education at all levels, particularly in English as a second language, and in adult-ed programs. These programs aid new Maine residents in gaining the cultural and technical skills necessary to succeed in a new community, as well as provide for expediting the cumbersome citizenship process in many cases. I am also actively following the petition initiative in Portland to extend voting rights to non-citizens, as I believe extending the vote would be a very effective, systemic solution to many more immediate concerns of immigrant communities. Given the momentum surrounding

the issue over the course of the last two years (beginning at the state level, and continuing at the municipal level), I believe there is room for revisiting this issue in the legislature at the right time.

How would you improve labor conditions in Maine?

In today's job market, where an employer can exert some authority over its employees given the competition for available jobs, it is important that we protect workers from unfair working conditions, and protect working families from rigid employer demands. I would be interested in helping to advance implementation of policies currently proposed by labor unions in Maine, such as mandatory paid sick time, so that employees are not left financially burdened after missing work due to illness; paid family medical leave, so that an employee can take time from work to care for a sick family member without having to worry about lack of a pay check or loss of a job; and programs that protect the striking worker by disallowing for hiring of temporary replacement workers, for instance.

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

Opportunity Maine has been a step in the right direction, allowing educational loan subsidies for college graduates that remain in-state. The program could be expanded to include out of state graduates so that students that grew up in Maine but went to colleges out of state can return to live and work in Maine and benefit from the same subsidies as students that attended in-state schools. In the long-term, we should find ways to create living wage jobs. One way to do so is by providing tax credits to small & middle size businesses that tie employee income to living wage indexes.

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

I support single payer, universal healthcare 100%. I believe single payer is the ultimate goal, and would like to see it implemented at the state level, since the practicality of implementation at the federal level seems light years away. It will be interesting to see how the recently passed federal level health reform package will play out when it is fully implemented, and whether provisions will remain in the legislation that prevent states from implementing single payer at the state level (a frightening possibility). In the meantime, Maine should work to open revenue to fund Dirigo so that it is open and affordable to new enrollees, and rebuild cost savings into the program. The state should also take an active role in preventative care health programs.