

How would you shape Maine as our next Governor?

Page 1: Help us understand your position on topics important to all Mainers.

Q1 Please state your name.

Mark Eves

Page 2: PLANNING

Q2 What will you do to encourage towns to plan proactively and for the long term, understanding that the environment and rural character are fragile and can be damaged before people take notice?

It is extremely important that towns across the state are encouraged to develop long term plans for smart growth that both support their economic needs and protect the wonderful rural character of our communities and Maine's incredible natural resources. Grow Smart and other statewide organizations have stepped in to support communities to proactively build smart plans for growth. To proactively plan for the long term, towns can benefit from technical assistance to support them to effectively build successful plans that have community buy-in and engagement. But even more importantly, towns need predictability and an understanding of what sources of funding and investment in infrastructure will be available from the state. Over the last eight years, towns have faced a great deal of uncertainty, making it harder to plan long-term. Funding for revenue sharing and schools are threatened every two years, investments in infrastructure like affordable housing for seniors are put on hold, and bipartisan support for land conservation projects is ignored. As Governor, I will work to build a working relationship with towns across the state and to provide more certainty for towns to encourage them to plan long term. I will provide predictable and reliable funding for towns through revenue sharing, fund our schools at 55 percent, encourage sustainable farming and aquaculture practices that maintain the ecological integrity of our natural areas, release the \$15 million affordable senior housing bond, introduce new bonding for affordable housing and restore funding for the Land for Maine's Future Program. I will also make it a priority of my Department of Economic and Community Development to work with statewide organizations like Grow Smart and the Maine Development Foundation to support local towns in their efforts to develop long-term plans for smart growth and to revitalize their downtowns.

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Q3 What could you, as Governor, do to support and encourage the kind of community level localism and ruralism that is succeeding in some Maine communities today? (Generally, localism supports local production and consumption of goods, local control of government, and promotion of local culture and local identity. Ruralism is the rural equivalent of new urbanism: creating walkable communities with a range of housing and job types.)

I am pleased by the level of engagement across the state to support community level localism and ruralism. Localism and ruralism are successful because they are bottom up strategies. These efforts need to be fostered and supported by the next Governor. To start, I would support investments in infrastructure that will help make communities more livable such as supporting the expansion of broadband and affordable housing opportunities. When I was Speaker, Senator Burns and I successfully passed a senior affordable housing bond. We included language in the final bill requiring four of the new affordable housing facilities be built in counties with less than one hundred thousand residents. Ensuring funding for infrastructure projects reaches rural Maine is critical for the success of efforts by local residents to create the communities that they want. In addition, I will support and promote the growth of Maine's traditional industries of farming and fisheries. Maine's working farms are a critical part of Maine's rural economy. More and more young people are showing an interest in farming and the local food movement in Maine is burgeoning, providing incredible opportunity for strengthening our rural communities in Maine. As Governor I will support expanding the Farms for the Future Programs to ensure that farms are able to access the support that they need to be viable and succeed. I support adding aquaculture projects to the Farms for the Future Programs. When I was Speaker, I was the lead sponsor on a Marine Economy Bond that successfully passed and established a capital grants program that is currently supporting capital equipment or infrastructure projects within the marine economy that assist traditional fisheries, aquaculture and other seafood-related businesses to grow, become profitable and create jobs and/or advance the standards and practices of these industries. We must continue to identify ways to support our traditional fisheries and our growing aquaculture industry to access capital to invest in key infrastructure projects, such as processing and distribution. These investments will help to support our working waterfronts up and down the coast. Lastly, I would visit communities to hear directly from local leaders and residents about how localism and ruralism is succeeding, what is preventing communities from reaching their goals, and how they think the state can partner with them to reach their goals. The best way to support localism and ruralism is to listen and learn from the communities. This movement has been successful because it is being driven by the bottom up, not driven from the top down.

Page 3: THE RURAL ECONOMY

Q4 How will your policies support regrowth of Maine's downtowns so that their heritage, unique rural character and economic value is safeguarded?

Maine's vibrant downtowns are an important economic driver for our state, providing important revenues for our municipalities, attracting young professionals and entrepreneurs and welcoming visitors. From Biddeford to Dover-Foxcroft to Belfast, I have been so impressed by the work that towns are already engaged in to rebuild and revitalize their downtowns in a way that protects their heritage and unique character. Programs like Maine's Historic Preservation Tax Credit are essential tools to help towns to protect and revitalize older buildings and to maintain their heritage. I have always supported and will continue to support Maine's Historic Preservation Tax Credit that builds off the credit at the federal level. The most successful revitalization efforts are driven by local leaders who can establish long-term success by fostering and demonstrating community involvement and commitment to their projects. As Governor, I would partner with organizations like Grow Smart, Maine Development Foundation to ensure that my administration was playing an active role in providing direction and technical assistance to ensure municipalities, large and small and in all corners of the state, can lead successful efforts to revitalize their downtowns. Under my leadership, the Department of Economic and Community Development would once again make supporting municipalities across the state to revitalize their downtowns a priority.

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Q5 How will your policy/action support a shift in focus for growth in our rural areas, such as the recent example in the Katahdin Region?

When I traveled across the state as speaker of the house on my jobs tour, I heard repeatedly from every employer I spoke with that the number one issue facing their industry was finding skilled workers. Maine has struggled to regain the jobs lost during the Great Recession. The rural parts of our state have been left behind. I believe a strong plan to generate growth in rural areas must focus on making the we have a trained workforce to meet the needs of employers in those regions of the state. I have traveled the state talking to employers, workers, and community leaders about the need for a regional jobs plan that is tailored to the unique needs, assets, and opportunities of each region of the state. Through a bipartisan effort and partnerships with private industry, I helped create the first-of-its-kind logging training program that helped young students learn a skill and make a livable wage. Today, three community colleges in the northern part of the state all operate the program (Eastern Maine Community College, Washington County Community College, and Northern Maine Community College). We need a statewide assessment to determine what the workforce needs, and where opportunities are by industry and align our vocational, community college and four-year degree programs with them. This will include traditional industries and trades and will also include innovative programming that will prepare students for the jobs of the future – IT, computer science, coding, and engineering. We must provide the opportunities for students to learn about and get engaged in a trade of their choosing. Maine has 27 career and technical education centers that help prepare students for successful careers while they earn their diploma. These vocational training programs can be aligned with industry needs and regions of the state that would employ new graduates. Recent studies even show that students who graduate from a vocational program are more likely to attend college than their peers who do not participate in vocational program. To achieve this, I'll create a cabinet-level position that leads the effort between the Department of Education and the Department of Labor, facilitated by private industry to ensure training, credential and degree programs are meeting workforce needs.

Page 4: TRANSPORTATION

Q6 Maine is a rural state, which makes efficient public transportation challenging. However, the lack of it makes it more difficult for many people to find and keep jobs and access affordable housing. What will you do to encourage funding and development of more transit solutions both in our rural and urban areas?

As Speaker of the House, I supported making strategic investments in public transportation in Maine. Increasing funding for public transportation was one of the top goals of the Aging Initiative that Senator Burns and I led in partnership with the Maine Council on Aging. Legislation proposed by Transportation Committee Chair Andrew McLean would have increased funding to build upon the existing transit systems in Maine in order to meet the recommendations of the Department of Transportations Strategic Plan. The legislation invested in support for volunteer driver networks, implemented a voucher program for older adults and people with disabilities, and expanded services through existing regional transportation providers. While creating efficient public transportation is extremely challenging, we can do more to support and expand services. In addition to Representative McLean's legislation, I also believe we need to make public investments in passenger rail to better connect us with the regional economy and reduce our climate impact. Once again, I think it is important that we take a regional approach to ensure that we fully understand the existing infrastructure and the existing gaps so that we can make strategic investments that meet the needs of each region.

Q7 What is your plan for sustainable funding to maintain/repair our transportation system to shift away from the current over-reliance on gas tax and general fund bonds each year?

As Governor, I will continue to support bonding and I will support an increase in the gas tax to help maintain and repair. It was extremely short-sighted to pass legislation that no longer allowed the state to index the gas tax to inflation. Over the long-term, I think we need to look at other funding models like Oregon's pay-per-mile driving fees.

Page 5: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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Q8 People-to-people connections are increasingly identified as a key determinant of individual health as well as successful community engagement. How would you encourage both our aging population and other Mainers to create connections within their community?

During my Senior Listening Tour, I heard from community members across the state who worried about the isolation of their elderly neighbors, friends and family members who were living alone, some who were homebound and others who weren't. Preventing isolation was an important focus of the Maine Aging Initiative. Communities and towns are leading efforts to provide more opportunities for fostering people-to-people engagement. AARP has worked to make Maine a national leader in supporting towns to develop plans to become Aging Friendly Communities. Maine Health Access Foundation is providing grants to local non-profits that are encouraging connections between seniors and other community members through their Thrive in Place initiative. These programs take different approaches to maintaining connections between seniors and others including coordinating volunteer transportation services by community providers to help seniors get to appointments, creating opportunities for social gatherings and events, creating programs to check in on homebound seniors, helping with home repairs and so many other great programming. The state should be partnering with these successful community organizations to help them build upon their successes. I would start by implementing one of the recommendations from my senior listening tour to establish a fund to provide small grants to augment community volunteer efforts that are successfully preventing isolation for seniors and taking other steps to build age friendly communities.

Q9 Broadband infrastructure is critical to Maine's economic future and the personal well being of Mainers. Who should determine access to the internet – communities or companies?

Expanding access broadband across the state will be a priority for my administration. Communities, not companies, should be determining access to the internet for their residents and local businesses. Parts of rural Maine still have either no or very slow access to internet and other parts of Maine could benefit from upgrades in their infrastructure. The state must partner with these communities to support them to increase their access to the internet by providing technical assistance to those who want help negotiating with Internet Services Providers to upgrade or expand services in their area and by increasing the funds available for building broadband infrastructure in unserved or underserved areas. I will support passing a general fund obligation bond that provides the municipal and regional investment that we need to reach universal high-speed broadband across the state.

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Q10 What are the pillars of your energy policy? How will you prioritize energy efficiency? How do you define renewable energy and what role will it play in your energy policy? Please touch on transmission as well as production and usage of energy.

As Governor, I will implement a comprehensive energy plan to transition our state to clean energy alternatives and make ourselves less dependent on fossil fuels. Maine has a real opportunity to be a leader in developing clean, renewable energy -- creating good jobs in our state and making our environment cleaner and our energy infrastructure more resilient. There have been so many lost opportunities over the last eight years and as Governor, I would make building a strong clean energy economy a priority. My energy policy will focus on: 1) passing comprehensive solar legislation that produces a stable environment for growth in residential, commercial and community solar; 2) encouraging the University of Maine's project to build off-shore wind and continuing to support the procurement of properly sited wind projects; 3) supporting the development of more efficient use of wood energy; and 4) increasing energy efficiency by investing in the incredibly successful programs supported and operated through the Efficiency Maine Trust and launching programs to retrofit and repair Maine's aging housing stock in all our communities, creating jobs and helping people save money and energy. The state has the potential to improve the efficiency, reliability and functioning of our energy distribution network through distributed generation such as microgrids and smart grids. The state can learn from the success of the pilot project in Boothbay Harbor led by GridSolar that upgraded its power grid not through the traditional upgrade of existing power lines but through distributed generation which brought together a variety of power generation resources like solar power, backup generator units, battery storage and other sources. In 2009, the legislature passed the smart grid policy framework. Boothbay Harbor's project was built in 2013. As Governor, I will work with key stakeholders to develop and implement a comprehensive policy to improve the efficiency and reliability of our energy distribution network which will include supporting the development of smart grid.

Page 7: SCHOOL FUNDING AND TAXATION

Q11 What are your thoughts on the pros and cons of using property tax dollars as a basis for school funding. What are other options and how would they shape Maine's development patterns and our economy?

It's inexcusable that children's educational opportunities are determined by where they live. Every child deserves a quality education, regardless of their zip code. The people of Maine voted multiple times to increase state funding for our schools. In 2016, they even told us how to pay for it when they passed another initiative to create a 3% surcharge on the wealthiest 2% of households. I supported this initiative. When the state doesn't do its job to fund local schools, districts are forced to cut educational programs and raise regressive property taxes that cost low-income and elderly Mainers the most. As Governor, I'll fight to make sure we finally fund 55% of education costs so that towns have more funds to use to provide property tax relief for seniors and low-income Mainers and to fund local programs.

Page 8: GOVERNANCE

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Q12 GrowSmart Maine facilitates people working together to reach better solutions for their communities. What will your administration do to build an effective relationship with the Legislature that listens and responds to the differing voices of Maine communities?

When I was Speaker of the House, I traveled the state for two separate tours – a statewide Jobs Tour and a statewide Senior Listening Tour. I think it is incredibly important that leaders from Augusta get out of the State House to meet directly with leaders and residents in their communities. Local legislators from both parties were always invited to participate. When we got in rooms together outside of Augusta and provided a forum for a variety of community leaders to talk about the opportunities and challenges they face, we could talk honestly with one another and often find common ground to identify ways that the state could help to address challenges at the local level. As Governor, I want to spend as much time as possible outside of the State House hearing from different community leaders from across the state, including local farmers, local elected officials, small business owners, workers and many more people who have a stake in improving the health of their communities. I would invite my legislative colleagues from both parties to join me in this work and be ready to listen and learn from people across the state so that we can start to identify ways in which the state can foster and support our communities to thrive.

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Q13 Thanks for taking GrowSmart Maine's survey! We'll be sure to get your answers out to our members and friends right away. If you have anything more you'd like to tell us, feel free to send us a file as shown below. Thanks again.

Respondent skipped this question
