

While the Second Regular Session of the Legislature does not commence until Wednesday, January 7th, and as summer is winding down and schools are re-opening, we are sending a reminder that Cloture will be upon us in just three weeks! This means any new legislation we and our clients wish to submit for consideration to the Maine Legislature must be submitted by the bill's sponsor fully drafted to the Revisor's Office by 4 pm on Friday, September 26th. Unlike the First Regular Session of the two-year legislative cycle, the shorter second session requires every legislative request to be supported by at least six members of the Legislative Council before it is drafted by the Revisor's Office as a Legislative Document (LD) and considered by the full Legislature. The only exception to this are bills from the Administration.

The Legislative Council, consisting of the presiding officers and the leaders of each of the four partisan caucuses in each chamber, will consider all proposed bill titles on Thursday, October 23rd. The Council will only have bill titles and brief summaries of each bill before them when determining which proposals should move forward. Some bills may be tabled for a future meeting, but most will be voted in or out.

Traditionally, most bill requests are voted out in this first vetting process, but lawmakers have the right to formally appeal this decision and present their reasoning in-person at the next Council meeting on Thursday, November 20th. Again, some might be tabled, but most will be voted either in or out at this meeting.

One should also be aware that over 400 bills were carried over from this past year's sessions. That large volume of legislation may keep legislative leaders from wanting to approve too many new bill requests. The Preti team will communicate with legislative leadership before the first Council meeting to explain why our clients' bills should be included in the upcoming session or conversely why certain bills should not be included in the upcoming session. The time period between Cloture and that first meeting is the most important time to be speaking with the decision makers in order to ensure any legislative proposal makes it through the process successfully.

Gubernatorial Campaigns

Governor Janet Mills will be in her final year in office in January. We will mention her political future below, but this means that many candidates are announcing their interest in becoming Maine's next Governor.

Republican Primary

On the Republican side, there are a small number who have filed with the Maine Ethics Commission to raise funds, and a slightly larger number who have announced their interest. Some are doing the latter through "exploratory committees," which allows them to raise funds without having to officially file. This is true for both parties.

Among those who have announced or signaled interest are Maria Aguilo, Jonathan Bush, Ken Capron, Bobby Charles, David Jones, Jim Libby, Laurel Libby, Garrett Mason, Owen McCarthy,

Ben Midgley, Shawn Moody, Steven Sheppard, and Robert Wessels.

Moody ran against Janet Mills in her first gubernatorial race in 2018 and is a well-known business owner of Moody's Collision Centers throughout the state. He has not yet officially announced that he is running.

Mason, now a lobbyist, but a past leader in the Republican Senate caucus, has also not yet announced, but has signaled interest and ran in the Republican primary for the office in 2018.

Jim Libby is a current state senator who ran in the Republican primary for Governor in 2002. He has filed with the Secretary of State's office and with the Ethics Commission as a "clean elections" candidate. This severely limits his ability to raise funds.

Bush is a cousin of President George W. Bush who now lives in Maine. He is raising money and expressed his interest but has not filed or officially announced.

Aguilo, Capron, Charles, Jones, McCarthy, Midgley, Sheppard, and Wessels have officially filed but are mostly unknown and most have raised very little money. The exceptions to this are Charles, Jones, and McCarthy, but all three are significantly below the four Democrats who are realistic contenders.

Charles served in the Reagan administration and is actively working to be seen as the candidate most like Trump. McCarthy is a tech entrepreneur with an impressive education, and Jones is a realtor from Southern Maine.

Laurel Libby has neither filed with the Maine Ethics Commission, nor expressed particular interest. But if her name is included in a poll of likely Republican voters, she receives more support than any other candidate. She is a current state representative who has proven her fundraising ability through the Dinner Table PAC. If one were to Google her name, one would see how she has gained her recent prominence. If she runs, Trump will likely endorse her.

Democratic Primary

There are fewer Democrats running for governor, but several are recognizable names with a real chance of winning.

The Democrats who have filed with the Maine Ethics Commission so far are Shenna Bellows, Jason Cherry, Troy Jackson, Angus S. King III, Ken Pinet, and Hannah Pingree. Cherry and Pinet are unknown and have raised no money.

Bellows is the current Secretary of State, ran a state-wide U.S. Senate race against Susan Collins, and has served as a state senator.

Jackson has served as a state representative, the Senate President, and has run for the CD2 seat, losing the Democratic primary in 2014 to State Senator Emily Cain, who then lost to Republican

Bruce Poliquin.

King is, of course, the son of Maine's current U.S. Senator, Angus King. Because of this, he polled well in the earliest poll among likely Democratic primary voters. King is an energy business entrepreneur.

Pingree is the daughter of Congresswoman Chellie Pingree. She also served in the Maine House of Representatives and was the Speaker of the House. More recently, she served as the Director of the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF).

Jackson and King have each raised over \$400,000. Jackson is supported by the unions and took part in a joint event with U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders and newly announced U.S. Senate candidate Graham Platner at the Cross Insurance Arena in Portland on Labor Day. King is raising money with help from his father's most loyal supporters.

Bellows and Pingree have each raised over \$500,000. They and Jackson have a great deal of fundraising experience, although Pingree probably has the most access to high end donors. Pingree also has the support of Governor Mills. Jackson is actively complaining about Mills at his campaign events.

There is at least one prominent potential candidate who is considering running. Dr. Nirav Shah is the former Director of the Maine CDC and Principal Deputy Director of the U.S. CDC. He is currently a visiting professor at Colby College. He became very popular and beloved throughout Maine for his calm and sometimes humorous demeanor at his daily updates during the COVID pandemic.

Unenrolled Candidates

There are three "unenrolled" or independent candidates for governor who have filed to raise funds. They are Sen. Rick Bennett, John Glowa, and Alex Murchison. Glowa has run unsuccessfully in a race for state representative as a Democrat. His only issue of concern is the need to protect wolves, which he believes are back in Maine, but no wildlife biologist agrees. Murchison is completely unknown. Neither have raised any money.

Senator Bennett is a different story. He is a currently serving state senator who very recently unenrolled from the Republican party. He has been a lifelong moderate Republican who would stand no chance of winning a Republican primary.

He previously served as a state representative and state senator, serving as Senate President for one year when the Senate was evenly divided. The Senate President the previous year was then Senator, later Congressman and gubernatorial candidate, Mike Michaud.

He may have a real opportunity to become the next Governor and makes what could have otherwise been a relatively easy win for the Democratic primary winner, much more complicated

and difficult. He will only get the votes of the tiny minority of self-consciously moderate and traditional Republicans but will give disaffected independents and Democrats a comfortable place to land. He has raised over \$200,000.

U.S. Senate Race

Republican U.S. Senator Susan Collins is running for re-election in 2026. She is unpopular among some Republican voters due to her frequent public splits with President Trump and her caucus when her vote is not needed in order for an appointment or policy to pass. She is unpopular with Democrats because of her frequent votes with her Republican caucus when her vote is needed. She is unpopular with "independents" because they lean one way or the other on all these votes. However, she is favored to win re-election.

Republicans in Maine know she is the best bet in terms of Republicans retaining the seat and the majority in the Senate, although she may not be needed for the latter in 2026. The "independents" who always vote for Republican candidates know this as well. In addition, there have always been enough Democrats and other independents who believe it is better to have a moderate in the U.S. Senate speaking against her party, who have carried her to victory in every election.

Polling is consistently showing her to be more unpopular than she has ever been, so there is an opportunity to defeat her, but it will be an extremely expensive and very difficult race for her and her foremost Democratic challenger.

There are two irrelevant Republican primary challengers, Daniel Smeriglio, and Carmen Calabrese.

There is one potentially interesting unenrolled (independent) candidate. Phillip Rench is a former senior engineer at SpaceX. He may be able to raise funds due to his tech contacts. There is no evidence he is raising his public profile, but he could be a spoiler.

There are currently six candidates who have filed to run in the Democratic primary. They are, Natasha Alcalá, David Costello, Tucker Favreau, Andrea LaFlamme, Graham Platner, and Jordan Wood. All but one of these are mostly irrelevant.

Wood is working very hard to raise money and his profile and has experience as a congressional staffer but is not generating any visible excitement. Costello is only known as the Democrat who ran against Angus King in his last U.S. Senate race and came in third with almost no Democratic Party support.

Governor Mills is very likely to enter the race and is the first choice for the U.S. Senate Democratic Campaign Committee. She announced in recent days that she will announce her decision in November. Her age (77) will be an issue, as will a lack of union support in the Democratic primary. However, Collins is 72 and King is 81, not to mention the advanced age of Trump.

Of the currently declared candidates, one could argue that only Platner is a serious contender in the race against Collins, and in a primary against Mills. Platner was recruited through the unions and

followers of U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders, who held a rally in support of Platner and Gubernatorial candidate Troy Jackson on Labor Day in Portland. Platner is a U.S. Marine and Army veteran and is now an oyster farmer. His profile is similar to Congressman Golden and may be very attractive across the political spectrum.

The only other possible U.S. Senate candidate to our knowledge is Dan Kleban of Freeport. Dan and his brother are the founders and owners of the very successful Maine Beer Company.

U.S. House of Representatives Race

In CD1, Congresswoman Chellie Pingree is running for re-election, and she has no serious challengers, as of yet.

In CD2, Congressman Jared Golden is running for re-election against former Republican Governor Paul LePage. As CD2 is a national battleground district, having voted for President Trump in the last three elections, it is being heavily targeted by Republicans. However, Congressman Golden's moderate politics have played well in CD2, and he has found a way to win in each of the last four elections.

Current State Auditor Matt Dunlap is considering a primary challenge to Congressman Golden. Dunlap served as a state representative from Old Town and as a very popular Secretary of State for 8 years. He would run to the left of Golden and the national Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee fully supports Golden.

Preti is actively engaged with many of the relevant campaigns and attending fundraisers with candidates and the partisan caucuses in the Legislature. We are monitoring the legislative committees that are starting to discuss the carry-over bills within their respective delegations, and the various legislative and gubernatorial task forces that continue to meet.

Please reach out to the Preti team with any questions about the upcoming session, campaigns, fundraisers or other matters of importance to you.

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