

Maine Focus Group – June 26, 2025

We spoke with three Maine groups that are crucial to bring together and form a winning coalition for Susan Collins in 2026:

- ***Ticket splitters** – A group of Left-of-center voters who generally dislike Trump’s personality and leadership style. Repeatedly, these voters emphasize that they vote for the candidate, not the party. Style and tone matters to these voters — they want to vote for a polite, polished candidate.*
- ***Collins favorable** – A center-right group, but with some democrats and independents. Most of these individuals self-identify as moderate. 75% had a “somewhat favorable” opinion of Collins.*
- ***Low-prop Trump voter** – These are Trump voters, more-so than traditional Republicans. More than any group in any state, they expressed that they only vote in Presidential elections.*

Topline Summary: All three Maine focus groups showed a willingness to vote for Susan Collins, but for different reasons. Ticket Splitters want her to stand up against Trump, the low-turnout Trump voters want her to back Trump’s agenda, and her most favorable supporters want her to put Maine first (“Maine jobs, housing, and infrastructure”).

The winning strategy is to drive negative opinions of the Democratic candidate and remind voters of the good things they say that Collins has done for Maine. Most voters found reasons why Collins will be the best option in November. Across all three groups, voters commented that Collins has powerful committee assignments, is pro-job growth, and brings their tax dollars back home to Maine.

Top issue: Rarely did two voters within the same group give the same answer. Here’s what various Maine voters said their top issue is: *“foreign policy, national debt, NATO, the economy, Trump’s appointees, WWII, inflation, border, medicare, affordable housing, food quality, political division, popular election of Senators, media bias.”*

This is a stark contrast to the conversations in Georgia and Michigan, where voters quickly coalesced around “economy/inflation” or “border/immigration” as the top issue. In Maine, the economy was not everyone’s top issue, but it was “a top issue” and it’s a unifying message that brings voters together without alienating any faction.

In June, we conducted polling of 2,000 Maine voters that further supports this messaging. 71% of likely voters said they were more likely to vote for a candidate “who pledges to prioritize American workers by bringing back jobs and investment to the United States” and 89% are more likely to “elect a candidate who will prioritize reducing inflation and lowering the cost of living for Americans.”

Collins has a winning opportunity to unify these three groups with a campaign message focused on bringing good jobs to Maine and making life affordable. This is “Maine First.”

Quotes on the Economy:

- “Nobody is looking out for the working poor.”
- “I think there is a disconnect between Wall Street and the growth of our 401k’s and with Main Street and the cost of housing and inflation.”
- **Person 1:** “The last time things worked well was in the 90’s before the great recession.” **Person 2:** “Before NAFTA!” ****GROUP LAUGHTER****

Voter ID: This was perhaps the one issue of near universal agreement among all three groups. They support Voter ID. For voters, it’s just common sense — they have to show ID for everything else in life.

Ranked-Choice Voting: Ticket Splitters most favored ranked-choice voting, but support was not universal. Others in this group said “it can be confusing.” In the other two groups, respondents were more likely to say that “it should be one person, one vote” and they don’t want to vote for a candidate they don’t like.

Absentee Ballots: Maine focus groups elicited the least strong reactions to this topic so far — there were not polarizing or strong opinions. Some like absentee ballots for convenience. Others like voting on Election Day because it’s a nice community event and good tradition.

Protecting Women’s Sports: The “low prop” and “Collins favorable” groups are with Trump and conservatives on this issue, and they disapprove of how Janet Mills has handled it in the state. The “low prop” voters said they were unlikely to vote in 2026, but their passion and intensity on this issue could be used to motivate them to show up and vote, especially if Mills is on the ballot.

Among ticket-splitters, views were mixed, but a majority backed Mills over Trump on this issue. Many of them defended her by saying she is “following Maine law.” Those in the group who had concerns over boys in girls sports, discussed the issue carefully, and said it’s “a matter of competing rights of two different protected groups.”

Susan Collins: Among all three groups, Collins is viewed as a career politician who has been in the Senate for a long time. However, there is also a perception that she is hardworking, independent at times, and focused on bringing tax dollars back to Maine. Some voters specifically mentioned the good things she had done for them and the

industries they worked in. Universally, she is seen as the Republican who can win statewide.

Janet Mills: Mills is the current governor of Maine and is term-limited. She is perceived as the frontrunner for the Democratic nomination if she were to run for Senate. The ticket-splitters have an overall positive view of Mills, and about half would make her their first pick on the ranked-choice ballot. They say “Mills does what is right for the state,” “Mills stands up for what she believes,” and “Mills stands up to both sides.” Ticket-splitters back Mills over Trump on the women’s sports issue.

In contrast, Mills was extremely unpopular with the other two focus groups, making Collins the de facto better candidate in their minds. Mills would likely drive up turnout among low-prop Trump voters, who expressed an unwillingness to vote in non-presidential elections. These Trump voters would hate for Mills to be their Senator.

Jordan Wood: A former Hill staffer for Rep. Katie Porter (D-CA) and a declared candidate for Maine’s Senate seat. Among all groups, there was ZERO name ID for this candidate.

Philip Rench: A former SpaceX engineer and registered independent running for Senate. Among all groups, there was ZERO name ID for this candidate. In ranked-choice voting, the low-prop Trump voters were most willing to put Rench as a second choice on their ballot, doing anything to avoid voting for a Democrat.

Governors Race in 2026: Across groups, there was more energy when discussing this race and it’s clear that Maine voters feel it’s the race that most impacts them. Ticket-splitters said that “taxes” and “jobs” would be their top issue for this race. Low-prop Trump voters detest Janet Mills and expressed interest in seeing who would replace her — this is important, as most of these voters said they only vote in Presidential years. An exciting gubernatorial race may help turn out Trump voters.

