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Critical Insights on Maine[™] Fall 2018 Tracking Poll – Voters' Views About the Issues Facing the State of Maine

Full Report Available [Here](#)

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Portland, Maine Critical Insights, a non-partisan Maine-based market research and polling firm, has just released the fall 2018 edition of its ***Critical Insights on Maine***[™] tracking poll. The semi-annual survey, now in its 22nd year, garners insights from more than 600 registered voters in Maine on a number of issues affecting them.

The latest edition of the survey prompted Bob Domine, the President of Critical Insights, to observe that:

Leading up to a crucial mid-term election, we see a dramatic split in the state's electorate. This split is revealed in attitudes towards our governor, opinions about the direction of the state and the nation, and in feelings about the quality of our political discourse. The din of political discord is making it difficult for those seeking office to hear their constituents' concerns and focus on the issues that truly affect them.

While partisans are pointing the finger at one-another, the issues that Maine voters care about – healthcare and the general state of the economy – may not be receiving the attention or action they deserve.

Our fall tracking poll detected a significant decline in the approval rating of Senator Collins. This decline is clearly tied to her vote for Brett Kavanaugh. It is likely symbolic of the polarizing discord that has gained a chokehold on our political process, rather than a fundamental shift in the Senator's long-term favorable rating.

Most Pressing Issues Facing Maine – Healthcare Tops the List

The latest edition of the survey indicates that healthcare (24%), unemployment (16%), the overall condition of the economy (12%), taxation (11%), and the opioid crisis (8%) are the most common concerns among Mainers.

Concern about healthcare in particular spiked over the summer (24% of voters cited it as their top concern this fall, compared to only 11% in the spring 2018 wave).

Voters are Divided in their Views Toward the State-of-the-State and Nation

Voters remain split in their perceptions of the state's overall direction. One out of four feel Maine is headed in the right direction (25%). At the same time, just as many believe it is on the wrong track (30%).

- Voters are most likely to place credit – and blame – on Governor LePage for the direction of the state: those who say the state is headed in the right direction are most likely to say LePage is the driving factor behind that. He is also the most common reason why Mainers believe the state is on the wrong track.
- Almost three out of ten Mainers believe the nation as a whole is headed in the *right direction* (27%). That represents a slight increase since the spring, but remains in line with the overall average since President Trump was elected. Another four in ten Mainers believe the nation is on the *wrong track* (43%). This represents a notable improvement since the spring, when 53% believed the country was on the *wrong track*.

Mainers Express Concern about a Profound Lack of Political Civility – The Great Divide

Mainers overwhelmingly believe the tone of political discussion in the state is poor.

- Eight out of ten voters in Maine believe the way people talk about politics in the state is *very* (33%) or *somewhat* (47%) negative. Only one out of ten describe the state of political discourse as positive (10%).
- Almost seven out of ten feel the overall tone and level of civility in politics has declined over the past several years (66%), with only 8% claiming to have seen an improvement.
- By a two-to-one margin, Mainers believe the way the Democrats (62%) AND Republicans (59%) talk about politics *crosses a line*. Only one out of four believe the way Democrats (23%) or Republicans (27%) talk about politics *stays within acceptable boundaries*.

The Pot and the Kettle?

Perhaps predictably, Mainers tend to place the blame for this lack of civility on the other political party.

- While half of Democrats believe their party members *stay within acceptable boundaries* of political discourse (49%), just 7% of Republicans feel that way about Democrats.
- On the other hand, four out of ten Republicans believe their party members tend to *stay within acceptable boundaries* (43%), compared to just 15% of Democrats.

Collins's Approval Rating Slips – a Victim of The Great Divide?

Likely a result of her pivotal vote in Brett Kavanaugh's appointment to the Supreme Court, Senator Collins's overall approval rating has declined to 51% this fall (from 58% last year), and her disapproval rating has grown from 28% to 36% (the highest level since we began tracking it in 2013).

- The Senator's approval among women in particular has declined in the past year (from 59% to 48%).
- In contrast, approval ratings of most other policy makers have held remarkably steady:
 - Half of voters approve of Senator King's performance in office (52%, vs. 53% last fall);
 - Four out of ten voters approve of the way Governor LePage is handling his job as governor (40%, vs. 41% last fall), and one out of three continue to approve of the state legislature's performance (33% vs. 35%);
 - Roughly four out of ten constituents approve of the way Representatives Pingree (43% vs. 44%) and Poliquin (36% in 2018 vs. 30% in 2017) are doing their jobs.

Citizen Initiatives – Mainers' Attitudes About How We Govern Ourselves.

The fall wave of Critical Insights on Maine gauged views toward the citizen initiative process, which allows the state's residents to create laws without the action of the legislature.

- Overall, slightly more than half of Mainers support the state's citizen initiative process (54%), including 29% who *strongly* support the process. One out of five are opposed to citizen initiatives (20%).
- Notably, 26% of voters in Maine feel they do not know enough to support or oppose the process.
 - Democrats (67%) are more likely than Republicans (40%) to support the citizen initiative process.

***** **Method** *****

The fall 2018 Critical Insights on Maine Tracking Poll was conducted in October of 2018. It includes 600 completed surveys with registered voters (half surveyed by phone; half surveyed online). There is a +/- 4 percentage point sampling error at the 95% confidence level. Complete results will be posted at www.CriticalInsights.com. Click on “Critical Insights on Maine” at the top of the home page.

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***** **About Critical Insights** *****

Critical Insights is a non-partisan marketing research firm dedicated to providing creative qualitative and quantitative research services to the public sector and to private business. Along with Digital Research and dpa, Critical Insights is one of the three research brands operating under the Digital Research Group umbrella.

Critical Insights on Maine™ is a semi-annual tracking poll that was launched in 1996. It is conducted as a public service to Maine residents, businesses, and governmental decision-makers. As an omnibus survey, **Critical Insights on Maine™** offers in-state organizations a convenient way to pose their own proprietary questions to Mainers, twice each year.

For more information on Critical Insights and its research services, please contact us directly at 207-772-4011 or by emailing Info@Criticalinsights.com.