

Print Edition

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The American Dispatch #2: Maine

BY WHO TARGETS ME • FULL DISCLOSURE • 2 OCTOBER 2026

Meta & Google political ad spend in Maine
- 30th Aug 2026 to 28th Sep 2026 #

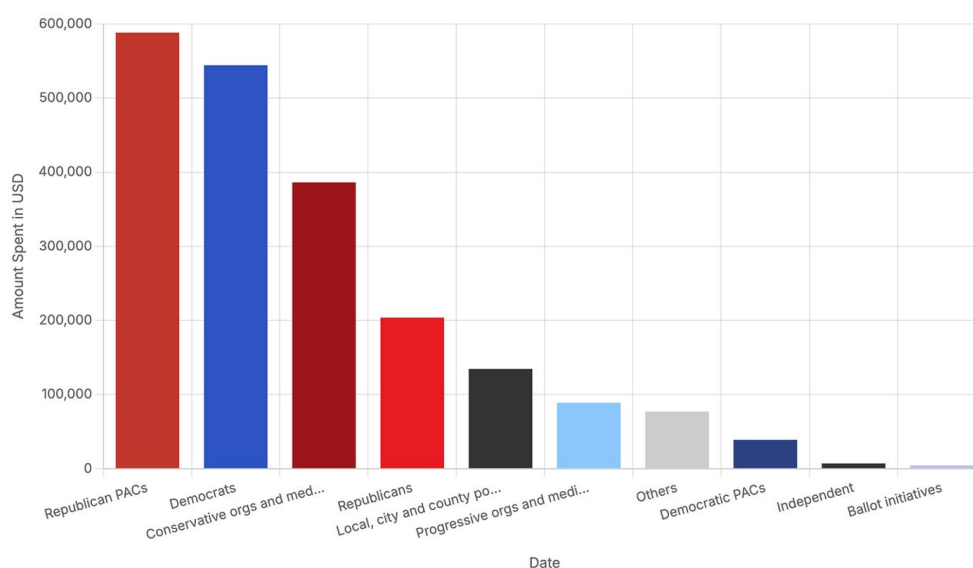


Chart by Who Targets Me © 2026. Reproduction only with express permission. Please [contact us](#) if you want to use this data

Digital ad spending in Maine shows the Troy Jackson, the Democratic spending plenty more than Susan Collins, but ultimately being overwhelmed by the depth and breadth of ads from Republican PACs and groups.

Here's Steve Jacobs with our second Midterms 2026 letter from America.

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Election Day 2026 (cue over-the-top CNN graphics) in America is a month away and those following know the Senate race in Maine certainly has not been boring.

Maine is small - only 1.4 million residents (versus 40 million in California and 31 million in Texas) - but their Senators bring exactly the same

number of votes to the floor as those of any other state. If the Republicans can hold the seat, the chances of them holding the Senate (a prospect that's very much in the balance) increase substantially. This is a key race.

Five-term incumbent Susan Collins (meaning she's been in office for 30 years), an infamously moderate Republican who nonetheless votes in line with President Trump's positions 96% of the time, is fighting for her political survival in a very anti-incumbent and anti-MAGA environment.

But that's less than half the story.

The field around Collins has shifted dramatically these past few months. First, she was challenged by Graham Platner, an emerging Democratic left-wing superstar who ultimately went supernova after a series of revelations, first about a history of troublesome posts on Reddit, then a Nazi tattoo, then reports of extramarital sexting, and finally credible allegations of sexual assault, blew up his candidacy.

Throughout and despite these revelations and allegations, polls consistently showed Platner leading Collins, causing him to resist pressure to suspend his campaign. Finally the heat got too hot and he agreed to step aside on July 8. The Maine Democratic party, having learned from the mistakes of the national party after Biden suspended his candidacy for reelection in 2024, quickly called a state party convention where Troy Jackson – a logger and state legislator – won the nomination on July 25.

Since then, Susan Collins's chances have steadily improved, to the extent that The New York Times recently reported Collins has a three-point lead in their most recent poll.

Can political digital ad spending in the state explain some of that story?

First, the numbers.

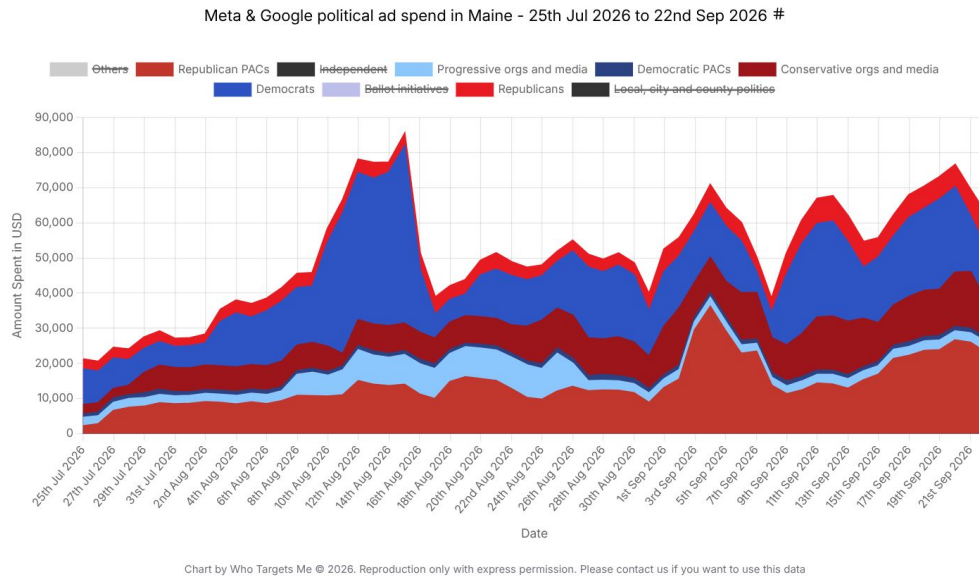
Since July 26 (the day after Jackson became the Democratic nominee), the biggest spender in the state is Troy Jackson's campaign, buying nearly \$700,000 worth of advertising across Meta and Google. Susan Collins's campaign, on the other hand, has spent just over \$100,000 in that time period.

So how does such a big (negative) disparity help Collins close the gap?

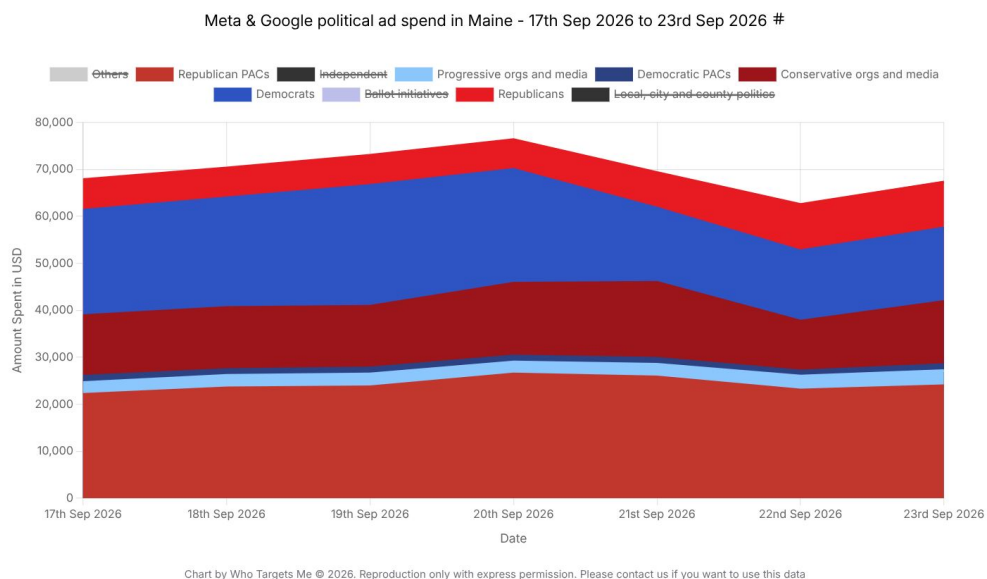
Well, this is American politics we're talking about, where the loudest voices are often (perhaps even usually) nothing like the official, recognized ones (mainly candidates and parties) you'd want them to be.

Among the 20 biggest spenders in our Trends data on digital political ads in Maine, there are at least 11 Republican-leaning PACs and media organizations which have spent a combined \$1.1 million to support Collins's candidacy and to attack Jackson's. The Democratic challenger, meanwhile, has so far benefitted from just \$18,500 worth of ads paid for by the national Democratic party (and most of those haven't helped him at all, being focused on national issues and Senate candidates in other states.)

Adding that all up, that's a total of \$1.2 million of ad spending supporting Collins (or attacking Jackson) and only \$718,000 in favor of the Democrat.



And if you zoom into the more recent time period, Jackson's spending seems to be dipping while the combined spending of the Republican PACs is building up. Just look at the share of spending chart below and marvel at how little blue there is compared to the various shades of red (covering Republican candidates, Republican PACs, and conservative orgs and pro-Republican media outlets.)



Whether this dip in spending is due to a change of strategy on the part of the Jackson campaign, or simply a lack of funds, the result is the same – Maine voters are more likely to see messages about their incumbent Senator than her opponent.

What are the campaigns saying?

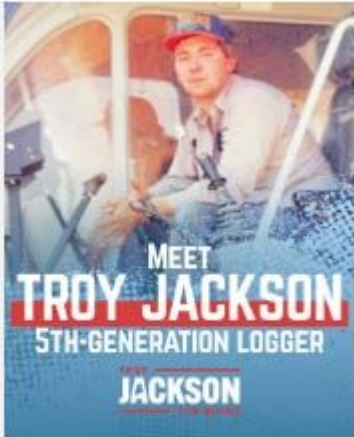
Let's look first at the Jackson campaign. Understandably, given his late entry to the campaign, he has to try to make up for lost time. He's flooded the Meta and Google airwaves with ads promoting his extremely Maine

biography while also following closely the Democratic Party's focus on costs and affordability.


Troy Jackson
 Sponsored • Paid for by Troy Jackson for Maine

It was a terrible feeling as a parent. I'd work 80 hours a week in the woods and there still wouldn't be enough at the end of the week. That lit a fire in me to make things right for working people.

The people in power aren't suddenly going to make it easy for us, so I've been fighting back: protect Social Security and Medicare, cut taxes, and fight for working people.




JACKSONFORMAI
 Fighting for Working...

Learn More

JACKSONFORMAI
 Learn

Likely reflecting the amount of funding support the Jackson campaign is receiving from the national party, very few of these ads ask for money. The goal is earning quick name recognition and persuasion around these wider themes

But that recent spending shift I mentioned above? This is down to the fact that the Jackson campaign has just pulled down all his biography-focused ads and is going on the attack.

The ad below – highlighting recent reporting from *ProPublica* about an FBI inquiry into Susan Collins's questionable relationship with a defense contractor who donated to her campaign – is currently the Jackson campaign's biggest investment on Meta and it's been seen close to a million times.



Troy Jackson

Sponsored • Paid for by Troy Jackson for Maine

This is corruption of the highest order. Susan Collins delivered millions in taxpayer dollars for a corrupt donor bankrolling her campaign, and then Donald Trump helped her cover it up. No wonder she voted with him 96% of the time and has rubberstamped his agenda to hurt Maine.

Susan Collins doesn't care that we're losing our health care, that ICE is killing people on the streets, and that we've been dragged into a pointless war — as long as her donors get their contracts and her coffers get filled.

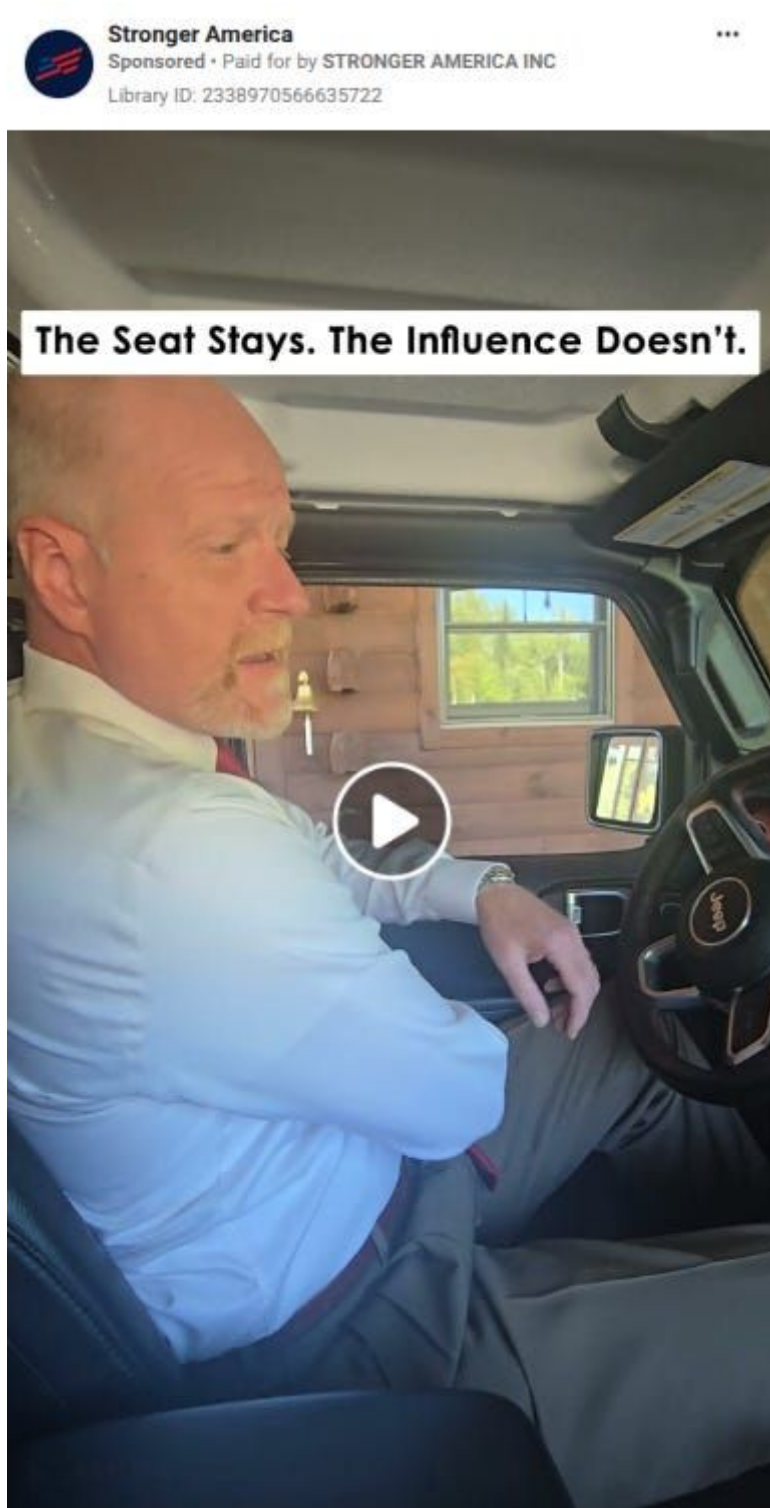
We deserve answers about every contract and every conversation that Collins and her team facilitated on the backs of taxpayers. The jig is up.



On the other end of the political spectrum, the two biggest Republican aligned PAC spenders – Stronger America and One Nation – are trying to do as much as possible to influence the outcome while avoiding looking “political” at all.

Stronger America’s video ads feature a range of everyman types talking from behind the wheel of their car or factory floor. Their message is non-partisan by design – they talk about the importance of maintaining seniority and influence in the Senate, an argument that supports voting for the 30 year incumbent. They frame Susan Collins’s long tenure as a good thing that’s not worth throwing away.

Thanks to a more than \$40,000 investment, the ad below has also been seen more than a million times.



One Nation, on the other hand, presents themselves as an advocacy group asking people to take action by calling their Senator (Susan Collins of course). But they're not asking people to call her office to try to change her mind on anything. Instead, they're asking for people to call her to say, in effect, "keep up the good work."


One Nation
 Sponsored • Paid for by One Nation

Senator Susan Collins is fighting to make sure Maine veterans have the housing, mental healthcare & support they have earned.

 Call & tell Sen. Collins to keep fighting for our veterans: 202-224-2523



Sen. Susan Collins
will **never** stop fighting for Maine veterans.

ONENATIONAMERICA.ORG
Sen. Collins fights for our veterans
Call today: 202-224-2523

Call today: 202-224-2523



Sen. Collins
has delivered millions in new funding...

ONENATIONAMERICA.ORG
Delivering millions in funding
Call today: 202-224-2523

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One Nation has spent around \$70,000 promoting the ad above to voters in Maine. And it is one of literally dozens of similar ads.

Summing up:

The easy explanation for Collins's current lead in the polls is her long incumbency and name recognition, being up against a late-arriving newcomer. Supporting those fundamentals, the PACs boosting her candidacy are spending heavily, and pitching themselves towards the types of independently-minded voters who have repeatedly re-elected a Republican in a generally blue state.

Jackson, on the other hand, is following the playbook for a more typical candidate. He's fluffing his own resume and going on the attack against Collins which, while necessary, can deter that pool of independent voters tempted to switch back to what they know at the last minute.

If Jackson's going to fight back, he's going to need to take a careful look at his strategy, and highlight the role of the wider Republican Party falling in behind "independently minded" Senator Susan Collins.

If you're hungry for more, take a look at Trends, our data platform tracking over 150,000 advertisers around the world (including over 50,000 in the US alone). Trends lets you explore ad activity at the national, party, state and individual page levels, and our new keyword explorers track how people are using specific topics, just like we've done for data centers above.

Explore Trends here (some features require an account):

<https://trends.whotargets.me>