

Eliot Cutler statement

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I ran for governor four years ago because I believed that I had ideas, skills and experience that could help move Maine forward. Ours was a positive, issues-based campaign where we treated Maine voters like adults.

Despite all the polls, pundits and partisan naysayers, we almost made it.

Four years later – after more continuous economic decline and more bitterly divisive politics in Augusta – I saw another chance to make a difference. And I have tried as before to run a positive campaign and to approach Maine voters as adult citizens in a free and open democracy.

When I conceded to Paul LePage on the morning after the 2010 election, I said that I believed that “we had stuck a dagger in the heart of negative campaigning in the State of Maine.”

I believed that we had beaten back the politics of fear.

I was wrong.

Indeed, the politics of fear and negative ads have returned with a vengeance beyond my imagining. This 2014 campaign is locked in the grip of fear – fear that one of my opponents will be reelected, or fear that the other will take his place. These fears have been fueled and amplified by more than \$10 million in attack ads and mailings, financed by special interest PACs that don’t give a damn about Maine’s future, but care only whether the winner has a D or an R after their name.

I have talked about my vision for Maine’s future and my plans and strategies for rebuilding our economy and creating jobs. I have stressed the importance of having a governor with the requisite skills and experience, one who is unbought and unbossed, one who will owe no obligation to anyone other than the people of Maine. And I have sought to instill courage in Maine voters and to restore confidence in ourselves and our future.

I am confident and hopeful, but I am also a realist. While I have been gratified by the number of voters who have switched their allegiances to me, particularly following the debates, and by the passionate support of voters whom I have met in recent days from all over Maine, I must also acknowledge the gripping fear that is driving many voters – including many who wish that I would become governor – instead to back one of my opponents with a strategic vote against the other.

I truly believe in democracy and in the ultimate authority of voters to vote for whomever they want for whatever reason, and I don’t think that *any* voter – whether a supporter of mine or not – *now needs or ever has needed* my permission or my blessing to vote for one of my opponents.



Nonetheless, I do want to reiterate this morning the simple statement that I first made in Yarmouth many months ago: Anyone who has supported me – but who now worries that I can not win and is thereby compelled by their fears or their conscience to vote instead for Mr. LePage or Mr. Michaud – should do so.

For those voters who have been seized with anxiety and who don't want fear to become an indelible hallmark of politics in Maine I have a single request: Regardless of whether you vote for me or someone else, please join me in supporting the proposed citizens' initiative on ranked choice voting and sign a petition at the polls on November 4 to bring ranked choice voting to a vote of the people in a referendum.

I long ago proposed that we reform our electoral process, and I directly proposed to my opponents many months ago that Maine adopt it in time for this campaign. Whatever the outcome of this race, the RCV initiative campaign will have my whole-hearted support. RCV will put the brakes on negative campaigning and ensure that future governors lead and govern with the support of a majority of Maine voters, without ignoring the will of those who may have supported other candidates.

As we enter the closing days of this campaign, I ask my supporters simply to vote their consciences.

Some will vote for Mike Michaud. Some will vote for Paul LePage. And some will stick with me.

I am not standing down, and neither should those voters whose consciences compel them to cast a vote for me, for their hopes and not their fears, as they share my optimism for a rewarding Election Day. I am proud and grateful to have their support.

These voters know that the voting booth is still a place to rebel against convention and to reclaim independence, to defy political partisanship, to demand change, and to send a message that the old ways aren't working.

These voters want and deserve a better and different choice in this election. They should be able to vote for a candidate who is hostage to no ideology, left or right, or to any special interests.

These voters want the policies and ideas that we have advanced to be embraced by a wider circle over time, and they want an independent political movement to gather strength and grow here and beyond Maine's borders.

So I say to Maine voters, if you want to support my idea to cut property taxes, reform revenue sharing and invest in education with the knowledge of how we will pay for that investment, vote for me.

If you want the two parties to stop fighting and to start solving Maine's problems, vote for me.



If you are sick and tired of hedge fund billionaires buying your elections and want to get money out of politics, vote for me.

I've always told voters that I won't sugarcoat anything, and I'm not going to start now. We have a steep hill to climb in the next few days.

I am a realist about my chances, but I'll be damned if I will kowtow to party politics and allow a bunch of polls to drown out the voices of thousands of Maine people who believe that standing for principles, ideals and ideas makes you an American, not a spoiler.

Campaigning for public office in this great state is a privilege, and I am deeply grateful to the people of Maine for twice allowing me this opportunity.

I got into this race because I believe that Mainers deserve a choice beyond what isn't working now and what didn't work before. I still do, and I will continue to offer that choice.

I trust Maine voters to do what they think is right. Like me, they love this state, and I am confident that their independent nature and common sense will lead them to make the right choices for themselves and for Maine.