Introduction

To look ahead, we have three distinguished and accomplished citizens who combine busy professional careers with very active participation in Maine public life. Two are attorneys, one is a college professor.

Amy Fried is the college professor. She holds a B.A. degree from San Francisco State University and a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota, and has taught at the University of Maine since 1997, where she is my colleague in the Political Science Department. Her specialty is public opinion and polling. Amy is the author of Pathways to Polling, a highly regarded examination of the polling profession in the United States. Her biweekly column on Maine politics and government in the Bangor Daily News enjoys a large statewide audience. Amy is the recipient of several distinguished awards recognizing her contributions to both scholarship and public service.

Ken Fredette practices law in Newport ME and is the Republican Leader in the Maine House of Representatives, where he serves in his second term. Ken holds three degrees from the University of Maine System, including the Muskie School of Public Service and the University of Maine School of Law, as well as a master’s degree from Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government. Ken has worked as a political consultant at the state and national levels, having aided in the political campaigns of former Maine Governor John McKernan and former U.S. Senator Bob Dole. Closer to home, he has served on the Board of Appeals in the town of Newport and coaches soccer in Regional School Unit 19.

Cynthia Dill is a practicing attorney in the Portland firm of Troubh Heisler. She holds a B.A. from the University of Vermont and a law degree from Northeastern University. She has served in both Maine’s local and state governments, including terms on the Cape Elizabeth Town Council, in the Maine House of Representatives, and in the Maine Senate; and was the Democratic Party nominee for the United States Senate in 2012. Cynthia has been active in furthering the legal interests of disabled persons, having won a major award for this work in 2009. She also leads a project to expand high-speed Internet service to Maine’s rural areas.

Previous speakers in the series have examined the causes and consequences of the present-day dysfunction in our politics. We asked our panelists to consider the political prospects in Maine and Washington, going forward. “Do you see us continuing along the present trajectory, improving or worsening? Why? And what will it take to alter the current trajectory?” Our first speaker is Amy Fried. (K.P.)
Prof. Amy Fried
Some Positive Signs in Maine

I want to start by thanking Dick Barringer and Ken Palmer for organizing this series, as well as the sponsors and attendees for supporting it. Having listened to all the talks, I’ve been struck by what an excellent series it’s been; and it’s going to live on as I recommend it to my friends and colleagues, and assign some of the lectures to my classes. Yes, there will be a quiz afterward!

I’ve already used some of the material, in particular the lecture by Barney Frank. Frank spoke about when he first came to Congress and couldn’t be open about his sexuality. Then he became the first out-member of Congress and the first married gay person in the Congress. Now, “being gay is more highly approved by the American people than being a member of the Congress!” I told this story when discussing with the class Congressman Michael Michaud’s recent decision to reveal his sexual orientation, a step that certainly would have been impossible not long ago. It’s something that reveals the kind of change that both Maine and the U.S. as a whole have experienced.

The distinguished speakers before me have laid out a parade of horribles, mostly concerning our national politics; and identified some important problems that deserve our attention. One is the redistricting of U.S. House seats to make them safe and secure; as a result, the most extreme candidate tends to win the primary and then election to the House. Some of those members – and this seems to be more typical of Republicans right now – tend to be disciplined or intimidated by national groups that will go into a race and fund their primary election opponent. So, individuals and organizations with very deep pockets are having an impact. Another theme has been the more general place of money in politics and the difficulty in regulating it, given U.S. Supreme Court decisions such as Citizens United.

Besides these serious problems, we’ve also heard a lot about bipartisanship as a Maine tradition. There were some really remarkable stories from Gov. Ken Curtis, Libby Mitchell, and Peter Mills about the way that Maine people have governed themselves in the past; and that’s what most Americans and Mainers care about. They care about government being able to do things, to make decisions that improve their lives; they want to see solutions. That’s what’s been undermined in Washington. The Congress has obviously been very ineffective; and while the House stood out in the last month, the Senate has had its own problems with the huge increase in the number of filibusters. Tom Allen, George Mitchell, and Angus King all talked about this as an important matter.

I could say more about what’s wrong today, and why. I might talk about the difficulty that our own citizens often have, dealing with conflict and debate; the need to teach people how to differ civilly and to debate productively; and how civics education should emphasize this. But I want today to focus on some more positive signs in Maine and glimmers of hope for the nation’s future.

Maine has plenty of issues, of course: healthcare costs, an aging of population, slow economic growth, all kinds of things; but we still have a lot going for us. Unlike what unfolded in Washington, Maine avoided a government shutdown this past spring. As imperfect as this state budget was, by general agreement – no matter one’s ideology or partisan position – it got passed and we managed to do something.

Second, most debates in Maine politics continue to be conducted with civility and mutual respect. Nationally, as we see more name-calling, polarization, and a degree of nastiness, there remains much civility and respect here. Some may think of a particular exception, of course; but it’s much better here than what we are seeing nationally.

A third Maine advantage is that the moderate center has been preserved here. We have U.S. Senator Susan Collins, who will be coming up for re-election and has no primary challenger at present. In this time in U.S. history, that’s pretty remarkable. In a lot of other states, a center-right Republican like Susan Collins would have been “primaried” from the right; and there would have been a lot of money placed behind her challenger. Perhaps there is no one willing to do it; but sometimes people just come out of the woodwork, as we’ve seen in other states.

There may now be a bit of a swing back towards moderation in the nation. This was seen in some of the most recent elections – as, Chris Christie’s victory in New Jersey, and the moderate-left Democrat Terry McAuliffe winning the governorship of Virginia. In Alabama there was an election primary where the more business-oriented and conservative Republican won over a Tea Party candidate. So, there’s a bit of a moderate swing going on. Still, Susan Collins’ not having a primary challenger shows that...
there’s something different happening here.

Fourth, Maine has shown a continuing commitment to citizen participation by restoring same-day voter registration in 2011, after it was repealed by the Republican Legislature and governor. You can look around the country and see many states where voting has been similarly restricted in various ways. Maine people were able to come together and bring back same-day registration; and stand for a very important tradition in Maine, citizen involvement and voting. We still tend to be in the top five nationally for voting turnout in every election, and often in the top three.

Several other things are important, going forward in Maine. Maine has steadily seen its recent immigrant population incorporated into community and political life. I have a son who runs cross-country track. About two years ago, after one of his races, he said to me, “Look at the top ten runners standing there. Three of their names are Mohammed.” They were all from Lewiston, which has a lot of Somali immigrants. Just the other day, the Lewiston boys’ cross-country team won the Class A State Championship. This is a way of being involved in community, through sports.

There are lots of shopkeepers from immigrant communities in Maine. In Portland, Pious Ali was just elected to the School Board. This is a new sort of thing, with these African immigrant groups. They have been around for a while; but these communities are at a kind of tipping point now, as their members become better incorporated and more a part of Maine. Immigrants are important, because they add a lot of entrepreneurial energy; they add youth; and they make Maine more attractive to people from outside the state – especially young people who might stay and build lives and careers here.

A final way in which Maine is doing well is that, at least in some places, we’re seeing a renewed commitment to, “Yes.” There are still quite a lot of cases of “nimby-ism,” where people say, “Not in my back yard, thank you! We don’t want this kind of development.” In Bangor, where I’ve lived for 16 years, there’s been a continual saying of “Yes.” The downtown has come back, and the waterfront has been redeveloped.

This all came about from citizen engagement, from citizen groups going out and getting things done, starting with the big American Folk Festival and a commitment to doing new things. Certainly, there are plenty of towns that are lagging, and their downtowns, not doing well; but in many places things are starting and moving along, even outside the more economically vibrant, southern part of Maine.

In Bangor, the initial success has been built by the citizens, themselves; on new people getting involved once they saw some festivals, some other things working. Bangor built a new civic center, restored our library, and created new kinds of festivals. One festival organizer was just elected to the City Council; and we elected a 22 year-old to the council. Former U.S. Senator William Cohen might have been just about that age when he was first elected to the City Council; and former Governor John Baldacci wasn’t too far behind. We in Bangor have this tradition of bringing in young people who then grow politically.

I don’t want to sound Pollyanna-ish, because it’s not as if everything in Maine is perfect. A negative right now is that if you look at polling, there is widespread support for expanding healthcare in Maine through Medicaid; but it is currently blocked in Augusta. This is a case where people could get to saying “Yes,” if we could just figure out a way to work together. It may not be the traditional Medicaid, it may be some variant. There are many different state models out there, and it’s an issue where we could be getting to “Yes.” We could be governing just as our legislators proved themselves able to do back in the spring, in passing the state budget.

Overall, then, Maine has some problems; but there are a lot of things we have going for ourselves, as well. It’s certainly much better than what we see down in Washington, DC. Thank you very much. (Applause)

Rep. Ken Fredette

It’s About Relationships & a Budget

It’s great to be back here. I spent five years at the University of Southern Maine, and I want particularly to recognize Dick Barringer. When I graduated from the Muskie School, it was still a young idea; it was very exciting and energetic; and Dick has been a great friend ever since. We certainly want to recognize him for the great work he’s done here, and as a friend.

I currently serve as the Republican Leader in the Maine House of Representatives. Before you take this job, you may want to know what you’re getting into. Every time there’s a problem, you end up being one of five people in the room trying to decide how to deal with it. You typically will have the Governor and the Democratic and Republican leaders in the House and the Senate. You end up being very, very busy!

We saw a very tough time in the Legislature this past year. Some thought we should put a bill in to sell the Blaine House. There were bills to take away the Governor’s pension. The Governor at times has been less than
delicate in some of the words that he uses. A lot of this has been driven by politics and the upcoming gubernatorial election. That’s made it difficult, but I believe the system will survive and prosper.

The U.S. and Maine constitutions have long been able to adapt to the times and the changes in our society. You had FDR, the eternal president elected four times; and then we finally figured, “Maybe we ought to put this amendment in that says a president can only be there for two terms.” Our system has the ability to adapt to the problems that we face over time.

“The legislature is all about developing relationships. That’s what may be lacking at the federal level today. People there never get to know who their colleagues are.”

– Ken Fredette

There’s a big problem now in Washington DC. We’ve had a continuing resolution for a budget for the last five years. We don’t have a federal budget, and that’s a big problem. We avoided it here in Maine; we passed a budget, though it was a tough vote. The Governor actually vetoed the budget and it took a two-thirds vote to override it. Republicans were on board with that. I supported the budget, but it was a tough thing to do. There were things in it that we didn’t like, but I didn’t believe in shutting down state government. I just didn’t think that was the way to move Maine forward.

In my first session, the 125th Legislature, I served on the Appropriations Committee, where I had the opportunity to work with Representative John Martin of Eagle Lake, a legend in Maine politics and government. I really enjoyed serving with someone who, first, is a Democrat; and, second, had been in the legislature for almost 50 years. I learned a lot from him in two years. We developed a very good working relationship; and that’s really what the legislature is about, developing those relationships. I think that’s what may be lacking at the federal level today. People are so worried about raising money or getting back home to campaign that they never get to know who their colleagues are. I believe that’s something that’s going to change over time.

Now, if we’re going to ask, “What’s the trajectory going forward? What has changed in the last 5 or 10 years?” It’s these little gadgets right here (holding up a smartphone)! Everyone has got one of these in their pocket, and you are constantly plugged in. Maybe you’re getting a text from some group that you belong to, or from some-body who’s got this issue or that. Technology has fundamentally changed where we are, and where we’re going.

I expect that there’s only going to be increased political uses of technology. It’s used to raise money. It’s used to mobilize people to vote. It’s used to gather signatures. It’s used to help others gather more signatures. Technology has fundamentally changed both where we are and where we’re going; and, I believe, in a good way. There’s this book called, The World Is Flat,\(^\text{34}\) and it’s about having the ability, whether you’re rich or poor, to have access to information, knowledge, and technology; and that has made the world flatter.

The other thing that concerns me here in Maine is this last election cycle. We have 151 members in the House of Representatives. If you decide to run for the House as a “clean-election” candidate, you get a district with 8,500 people and, under the current system, $4,500 to run your campaign for the Legislature. In this last election cycle, there were some House races where $70,000 was spent. If you’re getting $4,500 as a clean-election candidate – and maybe your opponent is a clean-election candidate getting $4,500 – but through independent expenditures another $65,000 is thrown into your race, how does your opponent deal with that?

There was a race here in Scarborough where $40,000 to $50,000 was spent. In Bangor, $500,000 was spent in a State Senate race. In 1994 I worked for (State Republican Chairman) Rick Bennett’s congressional campaign, when he ran against John Baldacci who later became our governor. We raised and spent $75,000 in that race for the whole 2nd District; and now we are talking about a State Senate race with a half a million dollars spent. In a recent special election on the coast for a State Senate seat, a hundred thousand dollars was spent on each side. That’s a lot of money. It’s impossible for someone like me to go out and raise a hundred thousand dollars for a State Senate race.

Money and the influence of independent expenditures are fundamentally changing the game here in Maine and nationally. You have these different organizations now – 503’s, or whatever you call them – that get hundreds of millions of dollars in them, and they can decide whether or not they want to spend it against you. That’s a very tough thing to fight against. It’s going to change the way we go forward. I do believe the system can adapt, however; inevitably, there will be some reforms, and we will continue to be a great society, nonetheless.

Finally, here in Maine and nationally, the role of independent, nonprofit organizations and their influence on the body politic have grown significantly, and very quickly. Three of them – the Maine People’s Alliance, the Maine Heritage Policy Center, and the Natural Resources Council of Maine – have amassed large email lists. They have massive abilities to reach out to people and say,

“Ken Fredette is in your district and LD 416 is coming up; you need to call Ken Fredette and tell him to vote in favor of LD 416.” Or it might be, “We’re doing a fund raising campaign; Ken Fredette is a big supporter of the natural environment, and we need you to send some money to Ken Fredette.” Going forward, I believe the influence of these independent organizations, using new technologies, will only grow in Maine; and it’s both a good thing and a bad thing.

In the end, this is all about democracy. Whether it’s about technology or money, this is all about democracy; and it’s all about us as individuals being part of the system and being engaged. If we all just sit back and allow it to happen, then we’ve permitted it. If we want to regulate it, we can pass laws, rules, and regulations to deal with it. Ultimately, it’s our democracy. We need to be responsible and accountable for it. The system we have is obviously a great system. Does it need some reform? It obviously does; and we are the reformers. I am, and you are. If there needs to be some change, then we need to do that as individuals. Thank you. (Applause)

Cynthia Dill, J.D.

On Wealth & Income Inequality

There’s something very familiar about coming in last! It feels very comfortable for me; I have experience.

I would first like to thank our hosts Ken Palmer, Dick Barringer, Dean McDonnell, and President Kalikow. Thank you very much; and thanks to all of you who have been attending and listening on the air. I, too, have been really enjoying the series and learned a lot. It’s an honor to be a part of it.

Since I am last, I’m going to give you my conclusion at the very start: America’s biggest challenge is that we are becoming a plutocracy, one that controls the government; and the government is prisoner to this plutocracy. We’re caught up in a cycle of wealth’s having undue influence on our politics; and our politics then being the slave to those who are wealthy.

Abraham Lincoln was the person who said that America is about government “By the People, and For the People.” There are people in government who govern, and there are those who are governed, like us. Right now, the people who govern need exorbitant amounts of money to win elections.

In the 2012 election cycle – according to Jonah Hahn, writing for the Harvard Political Review – $6.2 billion was spent, overall. The average United States Senate race cost $10.5 million; and in 79 percent of those races, it was the person with the most money who won. For the U.S. House of Representatives, the average campaign cost was $1.7 million; and 94 percent of the candidates with the most money won. Today we have a system where, in order to get to Congress, you need to raise and spend very large sums of money – in a society where the median income of an American family was $51,000 in 2012.

“We are becoming a plutocracy; and the government is prisoner to this plutocracy. We’re caught up in a cycle of wealth’s having undue influence on our politics; and our politics then being the slave to those who are wealthy.”

– Cynthia Dill

Where does all this money come from? It comes from the one percent that we often hear about. We have a growing income inequality; and in the 2012 elections, .000063 percent of the American people gave almost 80 percent of the money. $240 million was contributed by super-PACs; and 196 people associated with these super-PACs gave the overwhelming majority of it. Elections that cost exorbitant amounts have to get that money from somewhere, and it is coming from a very small group of people and organizations.

This means that our political agenda is unfortunately serving those who have the money to sponsor the campaigns. The New York Times recently reported that Congressman Andy Barr (R., Kentucky) had received $150,000 from various financial institutions in his first six months on the job; and was sponsor of a bill to remove a rule that would result in a $500 million dollar tax break to banks. This is just one example that those who govern are governing for a very small group of people and not for the rest of us; not for the majority of us. In my view, unless we have a democracy where we’re equally invested, where our representation is for the most part on a level playing field, we’re not going to have a government that is “By the People and For the People.

Unfortunately, this system that I describe – of gov-


erning costing a lot of money, and looking to wealthy people to support this – is worsened because the agenda serves the wealthy. In September 2013, the *New York Times* published an article under the headline, “The Rich Get Richer Through the Recovery,” and the statistics are staggering. The top one percent of earners took more than 20 percent of all income in 2012, the highest it’s been since 1913. The top ten percent took home more than half of the total income in 2012, again breaking all records. Finally, this statistic was staggering: the top one percent of income earners in the country captured 95 percent of all income gains since the Great Recession of 2007-08.

“The narrative in Maine has been dominated by the same voices for so long; they’re good voices, but we need to have some new voices. I hope some of the thought-makers and opinion leaders in Maine will cede a bit of their ground to a new generation.”
– Cynthia Dill

This cycle – of politics costing so much, and its being a slave to those who have so much – is the problem. (Or at least one of them. I would add that we have a media that is biased toward the wealthy and elite class. The next time you open the *Portland Press Herald*, see if there are any women who are offering opinions about politics; count how many are identified as experts.) For all the while, older men in the audience who might be millionaires, I’m not suggesting there’s anything necessarily wrong with this. We just need to be aware that there’s this very small group of people in our society who are funding government, and who are setting the public agenda. Until we shake that up, until we have a more diverse government, one that’s truly reflective of the population, one that can truly represent Americans, we are not going to change.

That’s why I am so pleased to see people like Cong. Mike Michaud come out and say, “Yes, I’m gay. Why does that matter?” It doesn’t matter, except that it’s good that gay Americans can look to somebody in leadership who is like them, and is forging a path to a more diverse government that will serve all of the people, instead of just this small minority. I believe that until We, the People, are similarly invested, similarly represented, and have a similar opportunity to fully engage in the government, we’re going to have the problems that we have today. As Ken Fredette and Amy Fried said earlier, it’s all about us; and there are some promising signs on the horizon.

First, there’s the question of whether we want to have publicly financed campaigns. There have been bills kicking around in Congress for a while. In Maine we have publicly financed elections, and there are problems with it because there are leadership PACs and there’s still private money; but publicly financed campaigns give people opportunities to run for office. We could have a constitutional amendment of some sort, a legislative reform. We could have primaries that are not partisan. There are various things that we can do to get at what is ailing us as Americans; we need to take action.

People have to stop whining about partisan bickering. How many of you pull up in front of the TV and watch football every Sunday and maybe Thursday nights. It’s one of the most violent sports, and we cheer, “Go Patriots.” If you’re at a hockey game and a fight breaks out, it’s the best moment of the whole game! Americans generally like competitive sports, we like challenges. I believe a robust public debate is a wonderful thing. I like a spirited exchange, I like it when there’s argument. But when it comes to sports and politics, we as Americans expect that the rules are fair and the playing field is level. We need to get back to a political system that isn’t so out-of-whack, where a small minority of people have undue influence to get people elected, and then have an agenda that serves only the few and not the many.

I thank you very much for your time and for your engagement. Just being in this series is really inspiring, to see so many people looking to make positive changes. It’s great to serve in a state like Maine. Amy pointed out so many good things; one good thing I would add is that income inequality and disparity in Maine are among the lowest in the nation. We don’t have huge gaps in income, so there are opportunities for us to be equally invested and equally engaged. I urge you all to continue your engagement, and I thank you again. (Applause)

Q & A

Question: Amy, in the 2010 gubernatorial election, there was a good deal of talk about “the nationalization” of a conservative agenda on the Republican side, on issues of taxation, public debt, education, labor unions and so on. There was a great deal of money poured into our own gubernatorial election from out-of-state, conservative sources. Do you look for this kind of nationalization of the campaign agenda and finance to grow in 2014?

Fried: There’s going to be quite a lot of money in the next campaign. There will be money in the governor’s
race; there will be a lot of money in the 2nd Congressional District race; and certainly in some of these State legislative races that Ken Fredette talked about. In terms of the ideological swing, it’s a bit of a pendulum; and things have moved back a bit from the high point of 2010, in terms of conservativism and the Tea Party movement. That’s on a bit of a downswing right now; but we will definitely see money set new records.

**Question:** Ken, you mentioned the last race for the Senate in Bangor, where a half million dollars was spent, much of it from out-of-state. Do you see this continuing to grow in Maine, where many people will be excluded from thinking about running for the legislature? And what, if anything, can we do about it?

**FREDETTE:** I do think it’s going to continue; and the reason is that people have started to figure out just how much power state government actually has. It used to be that everything was focused on the federal government. We wanted to do everything federally, and didn’t really pay much attention to state government. Even with Medicaid expansion—though it was passed federally, each of the states now has to decide whether and how they are going to do it. That’s just one example of how much power state legislatures now have.

Now, the political parties have figured out that there are districts in Portland that Republicans aren’t going to win, and there are districts up in the 2nd Congressional District that Democrats aren’t going to win. So, everyone focuses on those races that might be considered “toss-up,” or “swing” seats. That’s why you have a half a million dollars spent in a Senate race, or $70,000 spent on a House race, because it’s one of those “swing” seats. There are 435 members of Congress, and Maine’s 2nd Congressional District is one of less than 30 districts nationwide that are considered swing seats. That’s why you’re going to see a huge amount of money spent in the 2nd District. There are good candidates on both sides, and you’re going to see records easily set in that race.

**Question:** Cynthia, you were on the ballot in 2012 when the Republicans lost control of both branches of the Maine legislature, after they had been having quite a good time for themselves. The apparent Democratic Party strategy in 2012 was to run against Governor LePage and his agenda, with little statewide policy platform of its own. How important will it be in 2014 for the Democrats to present a positive program, as opposed to simply running against Paul LePage?

**DILL:** I think a positive platform is always very important. I would disagree a bit that the Democrats didn’t have a policy agenda to run on in 2012. Clearly, running against Paul LePage was important and probably won the day; but Democrats generally ran on a platform of healthcare expansion; economic prosperity for the middle class; and undoing what Republicans did in 2010 to cut income taxes without paying for it, to cause big gaps in the budget; to change health insurance laws that made it more expensive for rural Maine, to take funds away from Head Start, and other things. There was a policy agenda; but in the upcoming elections, Democrats will have to have a positive platform. It will be about jobs, about healthcare, and about education. Those are the things that people generally care about, and the Democrats will do well.

**Question:** There’s been a great centralization of power to Washington in recent decades. In light of the gridlock in Washington today, do you see any possibility of a reversal in this? Of a renewed emphasis on state policy-making? Of efforts by some members of Congress to devolve more responsibilities to the states? If so, could this mean a rebirth of federalism?

**DILL:** I don’t think so. We’re living now in a global economy. As Ken mentioned, technology breaks down all kinds of barriers, and that’s why people here are giving contributions to candidates in California, and you have organizations like Emily’s List. Everything is more complex and bigger today; and by necessity, the federal government is playing a bigger, not a smaller role.

**FRIED:** I’m seeing a little bit of a pushback nationally. I wrote during the government shutdown in Washington that, ultimately, what is going to stop it is the business community. The business community did not want to see a debt default, which would have been absolutely horrific for the national and global economies; they are tired of seeing the mess in Washington. You’re starting to see the rise of solidly conservative groups saying, “We’re not going to support some of the challengers we have in the past, who are trying to get rid of Republican incumbents for their being willing to compromise.

Mainers on the whole will think about Maine state policy. We’re a very pragmatic state, and people don’t want to see Washington-style gridlock coming to our state. If it came here, there would be a lot of pushback.

**Question:** Amy, you refer to a greater level of civility and less extremism in Maine politics. How do you explain this? Could it be due to the relative homogeneity of the state? Extremism is often associated with fear, particularly with fear of “the other.” How do you explain the relative absence of it here in Maine?

**FRIED:** I don’t know if it’s from the homogeneity. Ken Palmer has written about this, the civic culture of Maine,
and our long history of civility in politics. It gives incentive to people running for office not to be uncivil, because there is such a reaction to it when it happens. We still have the glaring exception, but it generally applies. Our young people have it, as well. I think of the students in my classes who want to have spirited debate; they are fine with having friends who disagree with them. We see the president of the college Democrats and the president of the college Republicans being close friends; that doesn’t happen everywhere. So much of Maine is small towns and relatively small cities; people know each other. We have talked about Congress persons not knowing each other; well, citizens in Maine know each other, and I think that keeps the level of civility higher.

**Question:** I’m old enough to remember the day when former House Speaker John Martin of Eagle Lake traveled to the university campuses (and elsewhere), recruiting young people to run for the Legislature. This was a very shrewd and successful strategy on his part. Does anyone have thoughts on the new generation of Mainers, and their level of civic engagement and involvement in politics?

**DILL:** Since I came here in 1989, we’ve been hearing from some wonderful people; but they’re the same people. We hear from the same economists, the same political scientists. The narrative in Maine has been dominated by the same voices for so long; they’re good voices, but I think we need to have some new voices. In order for young people to become engaged, they have to hear from their contemporaries – joining the narrative, collecting ideas, and presenting them on the airwaves and in the newspapers, so that people of a different generation are being informed by their own generation. I hope that some of the thought-makers and opinion leaders in Maine will cede a bit of their ground to a new generation.

**FREDETTE:** The reality is that both parties have to work hard, to go out and find young people willing to run for the Legislature. I have a 19 year old, and the reality is that young people today have first of all to make the decision about going to college, to a community college, or whatnot. What’s the cost of that? How am I going to pay for it? Then, how am I going to find a job? If I have a significant other, how am I going to get married, provide for a home, and raise a family? I think all these decisions are far more complex today than they were when I was a young person. The opportunity for civic engagement becomes far less available, because all of those things along with today’s electronics put far more pressure on young people to pursue other interests. It’s not that they don’t want to engage; it’s just the world we live in today, it’s the reality.

**FRIED:** I see students today who do engage; but they engage around certain issues or in reaction to certain candidates. Last year there was a huge amount of involvement in the marriage equality issue. It is really important to ask people to be involved. Former House Speaker John Martin of Eagle Lake offered a good model in his efforts, decades ago, to recruit college students to run for the Legislature. We know from looking at voting studies that one of the things that gets people to vote who don’t have a history of voting is someone talking to them about an issue and encouraging them to vote. There are things that the political parties and various other organizations could do to make a difference in getting young people involved.

**DILL:** I taught politics and government for a number of years. At the beginning of each course, students would be, like, “Ugh!” Then I would say, “We’re going to work on a political campaign, and you’re going to have to vote!” And I could just see this flowering of so many minds throughout the course of the class. When they actually find out, “Oh, this is going to be on the ballot, this is one side of the issue, this is the other, this is how I register to vote, this is how I go vote” – once people get involved, they realize how exhilarating and satisfying it is to be a good, civic citizen.

**Question:** If there were a single piece of legislation or constitutional amendment that might help correct the current partisan gridlock in Washington, what would it be?

**FRIED:** It would be something related to campaign finance. Right now, our ability to do anything about it is limited by the Supreme Court. We need a new court right now, or a constitutional amendment to limit money in politics.

**DILL:** Another fix would be an amendment of the Senate rules to repeal or reform the filibuster; but I agree, the top priority would be around campaign finance.

**FREDETTE:** My experience in the Legislature is that the fundamental issue in every session is the budget; and what’s lacking now is the ability of Congress to pass a budget. They pass what’s called a continuing resolution, which means we’re going to fund it for just another three, six, or nine months. They never have to make decisions,
which means they bear no real accountability for policy. When we pass a budget at the state level, even when it’s a difficult budget, it is a policy document; it is a budget, but it’s also a policy document. I think an easy fix at the federal level would be to say, “You have got to pass a budget.” That means you’re going to have to come together, one way or another, and address spending issues. Not having to do that has created the gridlock.

Question: Amy, James Madison’s view of the U.S. Constitution and its separation of powers was that “Ambition would counteract ambition,” and this would prevent tyranny from emerging. Are the forces that caused the federal shutdown potentially tyrannical?

Fried: I don’t know that I would call them tyrannical; but I love James Madison and that paper, Federalist No. 51. Madison also says that you can’t always depend on that; that there will be lapses from time to time. We’re at a time now where things have gone so far downhill that I see some counter-reaction, and there may be growing pushback.

Shutting the government down was just ridiculous. Even some of the people who were involved now think it was not the best thing to do – although others still say that it was good strategy, it’s what should have been done. It did quite a lot of damage, however, to the standing of the Republican Party, in the public eye. Their polling numbers are low. President Obama’s approval rating has gone down, as well; but it’s still far higher than the Republican Party. Mitch McConnell, the Senate Minority Leader has said, “It’s just not happening again.” There’s now that kind of counter-reaction.

FREDETTE: I thought it was a bad strategy. The state shutdown of government, in the administration of Gov. John McKernan, was over a budget issue; but it was also tied to workman’s compensation reform. The reality was that our workman’s comp system was out of whack at the time and wasn’t working properly. The Republicans took the position that we needed to fix it, and they didn’t have many tools in their tool box to do it. It was probably the wrong thing to do, to shut down state government. My point is that sometimes there are issues; and the national issue right now for many Republicans is, “How do we continue to sustain the level of debt that our country is absorbing?”

It is a generational problem. People in the baby boom generation have the wealth. When Cynthia talks about where the wealth is, it’s in the baby boom generation. It’s the older folks who have the money, it isn’t the young adults who are 20 and 30 and 40. Many Republicans believe that this national debt of $17 trillion that grows by the day, is a big problem. I don’t believe it justifies shutting down government; but the question is, “How do you stop it, if it’s just continuing to grow?” It is a frustration.

DILL: Well, I’m sorry, Ken, but the recent government shutdown had nothing to do with a legitimate concern about debt and deficit. It was some Republicans’ attempt to block the Affordable Care Act, which was passed in both chambers, signed by the President, and upheld by the Supreme Court. The government shutdown was not an issue of principle that could help solve the problem. It was a temper tantrum; and an opportunity for Senator Ted Cruz of Texas to get a lot of national attention, to raise a lot of money, and to become the Tea Party favorite in the next presidential election. It was not a legitimate political issue; it was self-serving on the part of someone who put his own political agenda ahead of the interests of the country.

Question: On another matter, how is the State of Maine going to deal with the outmigration of young people from the state, even as we also have the oldest population of any state in the country?

DILL: The reason young people leave the State of Maine is that they can’t get a job. The older population adds a wonderful dimension to our state, and brings a lot of skills and talent and opportunities for new businesses. But the two aren’t necessarily related. Young people would stay here if we had the kinds of jobs that enabled them to pay for school, get a job, and raise a family. The question is, “What are we going to do to increase economic opportunity and create more prosperity and wealth for more people?” Democrats argue that we have to make sure that there’s expansion of Medicaid and that there’s fairness when it comes to tax exemptions. The Republicans argue that there needs to be welfare reform; but we need to get our arms around jobs.

FREDETTE: This is my favorite question, and I always respond to it from my life experience. I was born in Aroostook County and grew up in a small town of 600 in Washington County. In the 1970’s and 80’s we saw the out-migration of people from there who were young and in their 30s and 40s. I was in high school when my mother and father moved to New Hampshire. They didn’t move because they loved New Hampshire; they moved because they wanted economic opportunity. This happened for lots of families in Washington County, the poorest county in the state.

What happened in Washington County in the 70’s and 80’s has now happened in the rest of northern Maine – in Aroostook County, in Somerset County, and in Piscataquis County. While we’re all under the illusion of trying to do these great things for the State of Maine, my per-
sonal experience is that we’re seeing the de-population of central and northern Maine because of the lack of economic opportunity for people, whether they be 20 or 40.

It’s great that fifty percent of all the economic activity in Maine is in York and Cumberland County. It’s amazing to come down here from Bangor and see the bustling, to walk around the Old Port and see the activity. It’s really exciting. But when we’re talking about economic inequality in this state, it is North versus South. Somebody gets an education up at the University of Maine, and maybe they were born in Howland, or in Wytopitlock. A lot of times, they aren’t staying there once they get their degree. They’re coming down to Cumberland County or York County, or they’re leaving the state. That’s a problem that’s four or five decades old. We have failed to address it in a meaningful way, and it’s the biggest failure of state government in a half century.

Question: How do you suggest bringing economic opportunity and industries to northern Maine, to all the “rim” counties along the Canadian border?

DILL: One of the biggest things that I worked on in the Legislature was the build-out of broadband infrastructure. We had the “three-ring binder” project, 1100 miles of high-speed fiber optic cable to enable the rural communities in northern Maine to connect with the global economy. We need to take advantage of the technological opportunities that exist. There is growth in artisan foods and local foods; but we need markets for those products, and we can find markets on the Internet. Technology can go a long way to provide economic prosperity in rural Maine.

FRIED: A lot of the problem was the loss of manufacturing jobs, and this goes back to large, global economic forces and dynamics. The big loss of manufacturing jobs occurred in those areas, plus those at Loring Air Force Base as Washington tried to pare back on federal defense spending. Those sorts of things are not going to come back. We are not going to see more of that happening again because of the larger global dynamics. It’s probably going to be smaller-scale kinds of activities, maybe clusters of projects around particular things.

Agriculture may be some of it. For example, we have a different potato market today. Besides the potatoes that get used for French fries, there are other kinds today, like the purple potato. Raising cattle and other animals is another part of agriculture, but there hasn’t been a good place locally to process the meat. There’s going to have to be attention to what are the particulars of a sub-region within a larger county, and what it is already doing well that could be nurtured for growth.

HOST: Ken, we’ll give you the last word on this.

FREDETTE: When I was growing up in Aroostook County – in Houlton, Presque Isle, and Caribou – the schools took a three or four-week break in the fall of the year to pick potatoes, a practice that went back decades. Some of those schools have stopped doing it because of technology. They now use equipment to pick the potatoes that people once picked. On the blueberry barrens down in Washington County, it used to be hand-labor to get down and pick the berries. Now, there’s technology that allows the picking of blueberries by machine rather than by hand. Again in Washington County, a lot of it was about the woods industry and wood harvesting. A crew of men would go into the woods with handsaws, then chainsaws to fell trees; today, they go in with a large, mechanized piece of equipment and cut them down, ten at a time. A large part of the problem is the technological change in our natural resource-based 2nd Congressional District.

My answer is this: what we lack is a long-range and agreed-upon development strategy – Democrats and Republicans, alike – a 10 to 20-year state strategy on how we’re going to fix the Two Maine’s problem. You have a new group of people coming into every Legislature, and 30 to 40 percent of them are brand-new; you might have a new governor; and they are all going off on their own, in different directions. There’s no concrete strategy on how are we going to put a cluster in Houlton, or in Machias, or in Belfast, because it’s always moving around and changing so much in Augusta on this issue. Unless and until we get a 20-year strategy that’s agreed upon among government leaders, it will continue the way it is.

HOST: Well, we’ll look forward to your running for higher office, Ken, and doing just that! Thank you very much! (Applause)

DEAN JOSEPH MCDONNELL: In closing, I would like to say just a few words. This has been a wonderful series and I want to thank you, the audience, and to give thanks and gratitude on the part of all the faculty, the staff, and students to Dick Barringer and Ken Palmer. These are two emeritus faculty members who care deeply about the Muskie School, USM, UMaine, and all of Maine. This fine series has shown that, and we’re most grateful to them. Thank you all, very much. (Applause)