



the weekly anthropocene



dispatches from the wild, weird world of humanity and its biosphere
by Sam Matey

2018 Election Special: Exclusive Interview with Maine Gubernatorial Candidate Janet Mills.

Recently, this writer interviewed Maine Attorney General Janet Mills (pictured), the Democratic Party nominee for Maine Governor. Due to the time pressures of Ms. Mills' campaign, we were unable to set up a real-time interview. Instead, a list of questions were sent to the Mills campaign, which sent back written responses from the Attorney General.

A lightly edited transcript of this exclusive interview follows. This writer's questions and remarks are in bold, Ms. Mills' responses are in regular type. ***Bold italics*** are clarifications and extra information added after the interview. Ms. Mills' campaign website is

available at janetmills.com.

On your website, you call for moving to an economy that generates more of Maine's energy from renewable sources. This is a much-needed step, but it would take a lot of work. If elected, what specific policy initiatives would you enact to make this happen in Maine?

Moving Maine towards renewable energy will not only help limit our dependency on fossil fuels, but it will also help grow our economy. Our state has the natural resources, the entrepreneurial spirit, and the local expertise to be a leader in renewable energy – but what we need now is the political



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leadership to make that vision a reality. As governor, I would begin by enacting policies that do that right away, such as encouraging the growth of solar energy by incentivizing community solar and rooftop solar, investing in cutting edge off-shore wind projects like the one being done by the University of Maine, and working to see that all Maine homes are properly weatherized so they can cut down on energy use and energy costs. By putting the power of state government behind these ideas, and by welcoming others, we have the potential to become a clean energy power-house, creating hundreds of good jobs while reducing energy costs and exporting power to the rest of New England and beyond.

Moving to renewable energy is imperative. However, many of the effects of climate change are already being felt. Here in Maine, we're seeing heavier tick loads, hotter summers, new vector-borne diseases, more flooding due to sea level rise, and substantial shifts in the Gulf of Maine's ecosystem. How would you help Maine adapt to climate change?

From the presence of more ticks, to our lobster population moving up the coast, to the spread of new vector-borne diseases, Maine is feeling the detrimental impact of climate change every day, and it doesn't bode well for our future. That's why I believe it's critical to act now. In addition to leading the way in the development of Maine's renewable energy sector, I believe we must pursue and implement a comprehensive statewide strategy to bolster ourselves against the impacts of climate change, from protecting and enforcing our coastal infrastructure to improving our public health care systems that will help those impacted. It is critical that we recognize the far-reaching consequences that climate change has on Maine and work to address them immediately – as governor I would do that.

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Maine's Second Congressional District, which comprises most of northern and central Maine, is in the throes of a long economic downturn. However, it boasts some incredible wild areas, from



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the Allagash Wilderness Waterway to Baxter State Park to the new Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument. How would you leverage the Second District's natural beauty to create jobs and wealth for Mainers?

Having grown up in rural Maine, I know that some of our state's most beautiful spots come from the Second Congressional District. The lands and parks of that area are natural tourist draws, and with the proper support, I believe the tourism industry can be one of the central economic development tools in rural Maine, helping to create and sustain jobs. However, I believe it is also critical that we build out enhanced infrastructure, like next-generation, high-speed broadband, that will also help draw people and small businesses to rural Maine and that we implement policies that will lead to an improved quality of life, like a better education for our kids. All of this, though, will take the ingenuity and drive of partnerships between the private sector and the public sector across all levels of government.

On your website, you call for more investment in infrastructure and research and development in Maine. Can you tell me more about this? What specific policy initiatives are you planning to galvanize research in Maine?

As I mentioned previously, investment in infrastructure is critical. Improving that infrastructure comes in many forms, but centers around access to information as well as population centers. This means that we not only need to invest in improving and expanding our healthcare network, bridges, waterways, and roads, but also bringing 5G and broadband to every area of the state. If I am elected, I would work in these ways to build a state where all have

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opportunities to develop themselves to their fullest potential regardless of their zip code. Additionally, a role that government can play very well is helping spur innovation through research and development. However, over the past eight years, R&D has taken a backseat and I want to change that. I want to send the signal to the private sector that state government will be here to partner with them on innovative projects, like the University of Maine's offshore wind project. We need to be investing in much more of that, in a variety of areas.



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One of the biggest problems I see with a lot of political issues is that people aren't aware of or aren't engaged with their state and local government. How will you help include citizens in how Maine is run?

Right now, Maine is far too divided. We're divided along partisan lines, along economic lines, along geographic lines – and I want to put an end to that and work to unite us, as a state and as a people. I believe this requires transparency, honesty, and regular communication with the people of Maine. I am especially interested in the assembling a board of advisors from counties and towns across the state, no matter how large or small, and meeting regularly with them so that my administration can listen to their concerns and needs to make sure the people are heard. As governor, I want the people of Maine to know that I would have an open door, an open heart, and an open mind.

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If elected, you would be the first woman governor of Maine. What does that mean to you, and what advice do you have for other Maine women and girls who want to work to help their community?

It would be an honor to serve as Maine's governor – especially Maine's first woman governor. I was fortunate enough to be elected Maine's (and New England's) first woman District Attorney and Maine's first woman Attorney General. I'm running for governor because I believe Maine needs a new direction – one that is focused on providing affordable, high-quality health care, a strong economy with good-paying jobs, and a world-class education for every Maine child. These are the issues that Maine people face every day, and these are the issues that I will address in this campaign as I work to earn the vote of every person across this state. My advice to young girls is to work hard and keep going – especially when someone tells you no. I've had a lot of men tell me throughout my life that I am not qualified for something, but I knew I was, so I kept at it – so when times are tough, keep working.

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I personally support a lot of your policies. Could you tell our readers about the competition? You're running against Republican nominee Shawn Moody and independent candidates Terry Hayes and Alan Caron. Why are you and your policies better for Maine than Moody, Caron, or Hayes and their policies?

There are a lot of policy differences between Shawn Moody and me. For example, he denies climate science, said Maine schools are “overfunded”, and wants to repeal Medicaid expansion. But let’s put aside the stark contrast in policy positions for a moment. More fundamentally, I believe Maine needs a new direction after these past eight years – not simply more of the same like Mr. Moody. After all, how can we do more of the same and expect different or better results? I want to focus on ensuring that every Maine person has high-quality, affordable health care, that every Maine child receives a world-class education, and our state has a strong economy with good-paying jobs. To accomplish those goals, I believe we need a change – and that’s what I will deliver come next January.

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Is there anything else you want to say?

First, thank you for the opportunity to answer your questions. As Attorney General, I have worked hard to stand up for the people of Maine and against those who would take advantage of them – whether it was fighting back against the mortgage companies to help Maine people stay in their homes or fighting back against Big Pharma for their role in the opioid epidemic. Now I believe we have to keep that fight going – but this is a fight for a new direction for Maine. It is time that we bring change to Augusta to ensure that we have good-paying jobs in every corner of the state, affordable, accessible health care, and a world-class education for Maine kids. We can do better and we can achieve these things by working together, just as I have tried to do all my life. Now is the time for change. Now is the time for bold ideas. I believe the best chapter in the story of our state has yet to be written—so let’s get to work writing it together.

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