

# HVJ Fall 2024 Voting Guide

## US Senate

Every election season, Homeless Voices for Justice (HVJ) creates educational voter material and visits several community locations to register people to vote. This year, we sent all candidates a series of questions and have published all of their answers, here.

HVJ is a grassroots organization that works for social change with, and on behalf of, people experiencing homelessness and poverty. HVJ is led by organizers who have all experienced homelessness. The founding group in Portland has existed since 1995, and we network in other locations across Maine. Our goal is to build a coalition for, and of, people experiencing homelessness and poverty throughout Maine. We seek to empower people experiencing homelessness and poverty whose perspectives are often excluded from the development of policies and programs that impact their social and economic wellbeing. Disenfranchisement, oppression, and marginalization creates this absence. Therefore, we hope to assert ourselves and our interests in Maine politics through protest, education, positive policy change and reform.

HVJ meets every Monday morning from 9:30-11:30am and is welcoming of everyone who has experienced, or is currently experiencing, homelessness.

For more information, email [HVJ@preblestreet.org](mailto:HVJ@preblestreet.org) or call 207-899-6042 with questions.

**Are you registered  
to vote?**

Visit [vote.org](https://vote.org) to  
register and see  
what's on your ballot



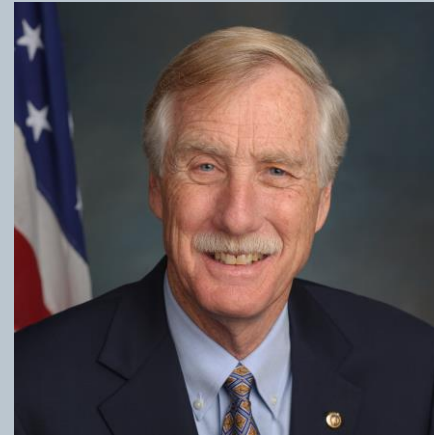
# US Senate



**Jason Cherry**  
Independent



**David Allen Costello**  
Democrat



**Angus King**  
Independent



**Demi Kouzounas**  
Republican

# Jason Cherry (Independent)

(he/him)



- Residence: Bangor, ME
- Current Position:
  - Unknown
- Issues and Priorities:
  - Government ownership
  - Reforms to the US Constitution
  - Social Security
  - Immigration
  - Healthcare
  - Environment
  - Gun control

# David Allen Costello (Democrat)

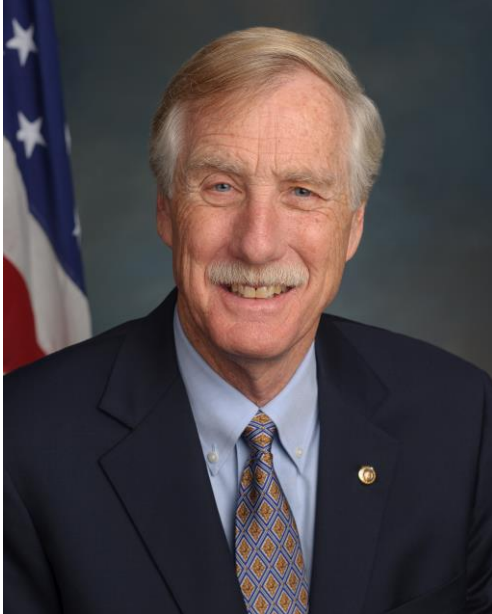
(he/him)



- Residence: Brunswick, ME
- Current Position:
  - Unknown
- Issues and Priorities:
  - Affordable and adequate health care for all
  - Medicare for all
  - Improve Affordable Care Act
  - Strengthen Social Security benefits
  - Increase benefits for low-income retirees
  - Raise federal minimum wage



# Angus King (Independent)



- Residence: Brunswick, ME
- Current Position:
  - U.S. Senator representing Maine
- Issues and Priorities:
  - Increase housing construction and affordable housing
  - Expand home and community-based care for Veterans
  - Lower cost of healthcare and prescription drugs
  - Improve response to evolving public health threats
  - Increase access to basic infrastructure like roads, water, sewers, etc.



# Demi Kouzounas (Republican)



- Residence: Saco, ME
- Current Position:
  - Owner of two dental practices in Skowhegan and Scarborough
- Issues and Priorities:
  - Strengthen Maine's economy
  - Push bipartisan solutions
  - Provide safety and security
  - Give Mainer's a voice

**Demi Kouzounas did not respond to HVJ's questionnaire.**

## In your opinion, what are the most urgent issues facing the state of Maine?

### **Jason Cherry:**

"Basic living costs, such as retirement, appear to be on the mind of many working-class people. As a parent and someone who cares about the rising costs of living, I am concerned about Senator King's proposal to raise the age of Social Security eligibility to 70 years old. He has not adequately addressed problems on his proposal. What jobs can citizens earn a "living wage" past 65 years old (Choi-Allum, L. (2022). Age discrimination among the 50+: Annotated questionnaire)? <https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00545.001>). This concern is voiced in conjunction with the rise in elderly homelessness and the inability of younger generations to afford housing and education while being told they need to find spare income to save for retirement (The "wealth transfer" from boomers won't save Gen X and millennials. (2023, December 29). NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/business/consumer/generational-wealth-transfer-baby-boomers-cant-save-gen-x-millennials-rcna128099>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/20/business/saving-money-inflation-economy.html>). If senior citizens are struggling on Social Security benefits now, how does raising the eligibility age alleviate the trends for rising poverty?"

### **David Allen Costello:**

"Unaffordable housing, inadequate access to quality healthcare, and insufficient retirement security."

### **Angus King:**

"Our state faces a series of challenges from housing and healthcare, to supporting our seniors, addressing energy and climate, and many more. That is why I have proposed legislation across issue areas. Just this Congress, I have introduced 64 bills and cosponsored 487 others. These bills cover topics from Committees I serve on, like the Energy Natural Resources Committee and the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, to Committees I do not serve on, like the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. I want to continue my work to help lower the cost of healthcare through prevention programs. I want to ensure more affordable housing throughout our state. I have introduced bills to help our veterans transition from the military to civilian life. I want to continue my efforts to address the opioid epidemic and help those who are most vulnerable. This is just a small sample size of policies I want to tackle, and I'm eager to continue the work."

### **Demi Kouzounas:**

No response was received.

# If you were to distinguish yourself from your opponent(s) for voters, what would you highlight as three critical differences?

## Jason Cherry:

"1.) I am dedicated to the principles of executor-style representation and the Law of Agency, wherein each citizen has inherited a portion of government power and influence pursuant to the preamble of our U.S. Constitution. Therefore, I must listen to various perspectives, study the facts, and weigh the interests of all voters prior to making decisions for the benefit of Mainers. In doing so, I am required to communicate and be transparent in my decision-making. When able, I should also endeavor to minimize the harmful effects of any proposed legislation or measure that might impact the minority. In accordance with the principles of the executor-style representation, I have purposely chosen not to run as either a Democrat or Republican due to the evident pressures these parties have on their members to cleave to a narrow agenda. 2.) I have a legal education and minor in economics, which are important skillsets for any legislative representatives. 3.) Of all the U.S. Senate candidates, I am the only one who has a significant background in understanding the challenges of our Digital Age, including the threats to Freedom of Speech, loss of privacy, and the potential value in market growth. We are also witnessing a crisis level of cyber-attacks in the U.S. and the greatest transference of stolen assets to other countries who do nothing to stop these crimes, which are often state-sponsored in some manner. We need greater proactive efforts by both our federal intelligence and law enforcement assets"

## David Allen Costello:

"Having grown up in a working class family in Maine and having served for more than 25 years in senior level government positions, in the U.S. (including Maine) and abroad, I believe that I have the broadest and most fitting experience. I'm also the only candidate pressing for substantial governing reforms so that we are better positioned and resourced to tackle such critical challenges as climate change; economic inequality; gun violence; unaffordable housing, healthcare, and childcare; opioid and other drug additions; underperforming schools; and insufficient retirement security. I am also the least afraid and most willing to think bigger and act boldly."

## Angus King:

"My work in public life has always been about the people of Maine. I make every decision with our state in mind and am proud to have led efforts to pass the American Rescue Plan, the Inflation Reduction Act, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, and the PACT Act (just to name a few). As you'll see in subsequent answers, I'm working to address our housing crisis and increase access to healthcare. I have a record of accomplishment and bipartisanship. I know how to get things done in the Senate and I will continue to build on those efforts if reelected."

## Demi Kouzounas:

No response was received.





# What is your plan to address the root causes of homelessness and help people experiencing homelessness in Maine find safe and stable housing?

## **Jason Cherry:**

"As a former defense attorney, the root causes of homelessness appeared I witnessed firsthand appear to be the same observed by experts in the field (<https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/what-causes-homelessness/>). I would increase mental health care for children in our school system to identify issues earlier on and not when they "self-medicate" their unresolved issues or become active shooters. I would work with other congress members to isolate the factors for rising housing costs such as obstacles to construction, the absence of capital investment with reasonable profit margins, and limitations on the commercial purchase of homes in areas where affordable housing is properly defined as a crisis by local governments (Affordable Housing: Investing for profit. Investopedia. <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/mortgages-real-estate/10/affordable-housing.asp>; Waters, C. (2023, February 22). Wall Street has purchased hundreds of thousands of single-family homes since the Great Recession. Here's what that means for rental prices. CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/02/21/how-wall-street-bought-single-family-homes-and-put-them-up-for-rent.html>; & Fox Business. (2024, April 29). Wall Street has spent billions buying homes. A crackdown is looming. Fox Business. <https://www.foxbusiness.com/markets/wall-street-spent-billions-buying-homes-a-crackdown-is-looming>). As an executor-style representative, I would study these factors and propose legislation to address the variables associated with the affordable housing crisis. As an executor of government power for all beneficiaries, I would hear all sides in making determinations, which will be transparent and communicated to Mainers prior to supporting a specific position officially."

## **David Allen Costello:**

"With federal assistance we needed to markedly expand housing, mental health, and substance abuse treatment options and services in Maine."

## **Angus King:**

"Homelessness in Maine has several root causes. First and foremost, our state has a housing supply crisis state which has made it very difficult for many people to afford safe and stable housing by driving up the prices of our existing housing stock. To combat this root cause, I am leading and supporting a number of pieces of legislation that will expand the housing supply, putting downward pressure on prices. These efforts include my recently introduced Farmhouse-to-Workforce Housing Act, which will provide grants to homeowners who seek to build ADUs; the ACRE Act, which makes mortgage interest tax-free to community banks, enabling them to reduce mortgage rates; the Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act, which will enhance the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit; (continued on next slide)

## **Demi Kouzounas:**

No response was received.

# What is your plan to address the root causes of homelessness and help people experiencing homelessness in Maine find safe and stable housing? (continued)

## Angus King continued from previous slide:

(continued from previous slide) and the HTC-GO Act, which improves the Historic Tax Credit — a vital tool in creating affordable housing out of Maine's historic places. Second, I am working to provide more resources to people experiencing mental illness. Improving access to mental and behavioral health services is critical, which is part of the focus of my legislation called the CARE for Mental Health Professionals Act. This bill would establish a grant program to promote interstate licensure compacts for mental health professionals, allowing providers to practice across multiple states and more readily reach rural communities. I also regularly support increased appropriations to support our research at the National Institutes of Health towards better understanding treatment and interventions to address mental and behavioral health issues. Broadly and recognizing the critical role that federal investments play here, I have also urged the Senate Appropriations Committee to fund mental health programs—including Mental Health Block Grants, Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs), School-Based Health Centers, programs to address the shortage of school mental health professionals, and programs to alleviate shortages of healthcare professionals in rural areas. Finally, I have been a long-time supporter of housing voucher funding. I also support more flexibility for vouchers so that it is easier for voucher holders to access housing on the open market or in housing projects depending on availability."



# Maine's Housing Choice Voucher, which currently exceeds its federally allocated budget by 5%, stopped issuing new vouchers in many parts of the state on July 19th. Do you believe there should be more funding for Maine's HCV program (Section 8)?

## Jason Cherry:

"I would need to hear from HCV directors for the federal government to determine why they are not issuing additional vouchers (<https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/local/housing/section-8-housing-choice-voucher-program-budget-pause/97-74ebf403-ce51-4ac1-8a5e-b01e20f35bbb>). However, this issue of budget constraints is a problem nationwide which is affecting our domestic homeless population (<https://apnews.com/article/chicago-migrants-black-latino-biden-immigration-ab8d7f22eea423d86fb350665b9e66f6>). Uncontrolled immigration can lead to overcrowding, loss of financial assistance to U.S. citizens, and rising poverty rates. Congress should set a template for urban infrastructure and growth that is reliant on maintaining proper levels of job creation, education, healthcare, law enforcement, social assistance, and energy usage necessary to maintain prior to creating an influx of immigration. Congress should also conduct a study on the tax contributions to those companies that rely on the immigration workforce to increase profits and determine what percentage is necessary to support public infrastructures."

## David Allen Costello:

"Yes, absolutely."

## Angus King:

"Yes. I have consistently supported more robust funding for the HCV program."

## Demi Kouzounas:

No response was received.



# What is your plan for increasing affordable housing units in Maine?

## Jason Cherry:

"I would work with other congress members to expand the construction of multi-unit complexes in areas where there is infrastructure to support the new construction. I would ensure those businesses that profit from mass immigration are paying their fair share of taxes. The second major proposal would be focused on the fair taxation of assets and wealth in the nation. As seen from many sources, both political parties have wealthy supporters who appear to be unwilling to contribute to the nation's welfare [Avi-Yonah, R. (2024, May 21). A Five-Year prison sentence for a public hero. The American Prospect. <https://prospect.org/justice/2024-05-21-five-year-sentence-public-hero-charles-littlejohn>]. As someone who pays the 34% tax rate with no "shenanigans", I and (hopefully) many middle-class citizens are fed up with the manner in which both political parties curry favor with their wealthy supporters by placing the tax burdens unfairly on the shrinking middle class ([https://thehill.com/homenews/nexstar\\_media\\_wire/4866650-the-20-us-cities-where-the-middle-class-is-shrinking-fastest/#:~:text=As%20the%20cost%20of%20living,down%20from%2061%25%20in%201971](https://thehill.com/homenews/nexstar_media_wire/4866650-the-20-us-cities-where-the-middle-class-is-shrinking-fastest/#:~:text=As%20the%20cost%20of%20living,down%20from%2061%25%20in%201971).))."

## David Allen Costello:

"I would immediately sign on to support Senators Warren's and Warnock's Housing and Mobility Act. I would look to bolster efforts undertaken by the Mills' Administration to increase affordable housing units in Maine and any new efforts by the Harris-Walz Administration to increase affordable housing across the U.S."

## Demi Kouzounas:

No response was received.

## Angus King:

"I'm tackling housing accessibility and affordability from a number of angles. In addition to my answer to question #6, I am committed to preserving the affordable housing — particularly in our rural places — that we already have. For that reason, I support substantial increases to the 515 and MPR programs, as well as the Rural Housing Service Reform Act, which I plan to cosponsor."



# How do you plan to address the problem of food insecurity in Maine and ensure that Mainers have enough food to achieve an active, healthy lifestyle?

## **Jason Cherry:**

"I would expand our trade with Canada to provide better competition for food, fuel, and housing goods and services. I would maintain the early education initiatives on appropriate diet choices along with funding to ensure every child receives meals at school. I would also explore the best methods to collect and distribute donations of foods. I would also ensure that private sponsors who collect food donations or funds are operating with reasonable limits to overhead costs."

## **David Allen Costello:**

"I would support a marked increase in funding for SNAP and other federal programs designed to combat food insecurity in the U.S."

## **Angus King:**

"Throughout my tenure in the Senate, I have been a supporter of federal nutrition programs that address food insecurity in Maine. Ensuring that these critical programs receive needed funding and opposing policy changes that either make them more burdensome for recipients or undermine the programs mission has been a top priority to address food insecurity. This Congress, I have supported bills that would boost federal nutrition programs, including the SHOPP Act (S. 2223), School Hunger Elimination Act (S. 4525), the Military Family Nutrition Access Act (S. 497), and CARE for Kids Act. Additionally, I'm pushing for federal efforts to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency and expand economic opportunities for small and underserved producers while promoting food security. I believe that supporting our farmers in local and regional markets will help boost local economies, while at the same time addressing food insecurity."

## **Demi Kouzounas:**

No response was received.



The House version of the FARM bill will cut SNAP Benefits by \$30 billion over the next decade for people experiencing food insecurity. This cut would limit the USDA's ability to adjust SNAP benefits to the costs of a healthy diet potentially impacting 40 million people. Do you support cuts to SNAP benefits?

**Jason Cherry:**

I believe it should be amended to prevent the loss of \$30 billion for SNAP benefits. However, to address the debt issues and shortfalls predicted by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), we need a fair tax contribution basis for all citizens to address the deficiencies for the working-class. We also need the businesses that profit from mass immigration to contribute to the state and federal infrastructures.

**David Allen Costello:**

Absolutely not.

**Angus King:**

"I oppose efforts to cut SNAP benefits in the FARM bill, and I will oppose plans to rescind USDA's updates to the Thrifty Food Plan in any future Farm Bill."

**Demi Kouzounas:**

No response was received.



# The opioid epidemic is one of the biggest public health crises in the state of Maine. What programs or initiatives would you support to address this issue?

## **Jason Cherry:**

"In addition to increasing mental health resources, I would place tariffs on Chinese goods and services for firms that are exporting fentanyl chemicals to South America and levy sanctions against any country found to be manufacturing the opioid compounds in mass quantities (Cite: [extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/DEA\\_GOV\\_DIR-008-20%20Fentanyl%20Flow%20in%20the%20United%20States\\_0.pdf](https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/DEA_GOV_DIR-008-20%20Fentanyl%20Flow%20in%20the%20United%20States_0.pdf)). We have educational and drug addiction resources, but as a former defense attorney assigned to the Drug Court matters in Portland, Oregon, the vast supply and availability of drugs are a real concern. They cannot be legalized and made readily accessible (see study: Lessons learned from the Amsterdam Cohort Studies among people who use drugs: a historical perspective Daniela K. van Santen, corresponding author<sup>1,2,3</sup> Roel A. Coutinho,<sup>4</sup> Anneke van den Hoek,<sup>1,5</sup> Giel van Brussel,<sup>6</sup> Marcel Buster,<sup>7</sup> and Maria Prins<sup>1,5</sup>)."

## **David Allen Costello:**

"I would support expanding HHS and other federal resources for the dozens of best practice government and non-government treatment, education, re-entry, and opioid/fentanyl interdiction programs."

## **Angus King:**

"There isn't a family in Maine who hasn't felt the impact of the opioid crisis, which is why I have worked hard at the federal level to support initiatives addressing the opioid crisis. I am proud that legislation I cosponsored was passed into law in 2023 and resulted in the elimination of the burdensome X-waiver requirements on Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) with buprenorphine. I am also a strong supporter of federal grants to distribute needed money to state and local organizations that are making a difference in their communities. I also cosponsored the Budgeting for Opioid Addiction Treatment Act, which would fund more treatment options paid for by imposing a one-cent-per-milligram fee on the sale of active opioids—and also contains guardrails to prohibit any associated costs being passed onto the patient. Additionally, I helped to introduce the FDA Accountability for Public Safety Act, to require the FDA to seek the advice of an advisory committee before approving any new opioid. Federal funds serve a critical role in helping state, local, and community organizations aid people in their areas, and I have helped bring millions of dollars to organizations like community health centers and schools to establish and expand access to integrated substance use disorder and mental health services."

## **Demi Kouzounas:**

No response was received.

# How do you plan to incorporate the perspectives of people with lived experience of homelessness and poverty into your policymaking?

## **Jason Cherry:**

"I believe having someone in my office with prior experience in community services is a priority. This person would act as an advocate and provide a two-way stream of communication between my office and those Mainers who need assistance. The advocate and my office will communicate weekly on emerging issues and potential resolutions."

## **David Allen Costello:**

"Myself and my staff would seek out the perspectives of people with the lived experience of homelessness and poverty to ensure that we acquired the best understanding possible. To do less would only ensure less success."

## **Angus King:**

"I meet regularly with advocates who have lived experience of homelessness. During our meetings, I actively listen to advice from advocates on the federal policies that, based on their experience with homelessness, will be most impactful and transformative."

## **Demi Kouzounas:**

No response was received.

