

At a Glance

- **What it is:** An independent, nonpartisan online comparison tool that helps Maine voters see how their views on policy issues align with candidates for the 2026 gubernatorial election.
- **Focus:** 2026 Maine gubernatorial race, with plans to add a U.S. Senate comparison set on the same platform.
- **Audience:** Maine voters, educators, civic groups, and local media.
- **Access:** Free to use, mobile-friendly, no login required.
- **Location:** Built in Maine, for Maine voters.
- **Status:** In development and updating as the 2026 ballot becomes clearer.

What Is Pine Tree Key?

Pine Tree Key is a nonpartisan voter tool that shifts attention away from campaign slogans and toward specific policy questions. Users respond to a series of clear, issue-based statements and then see how closely their answers align with each candidate's documented positions.

Why It Matters

- Voters often have to piece together candidate positions from scattered interviews, mailers, and social media.
- Existing election tools can be national in scope, ad-driven, or organized around party labels rather than specific policies.
- Pine Tree Key focuses on Maine-centered issues and policy statements, helping voters compare candidates on substance, not personality.
- The tool is designed to support informed, issue-based voting and to be usable in classrooms, workshops, and community events.

How It Works

1. Voters walk through a set of statements covering key state-level issues (for example: education, energy, housing, public safety, and the economy).
2. For each statement, users select how strongly they agree or disagree.
3. The tool compares their responses with candidates' documented positions and generates a simple overview of areas of alignment and disagreement for each candidate.

How We Source Candidate Information

- Candidate data and policy positions come from responses to Pine Tree Key questionnaires (where available), official public sources such as state and federal campaign filings, candidate and campaign websites, and public statements.
- Because official filings and public records sometimes lag behind real-time campaign decisions, there may be moments when a candidate's listed status (for example, appearing as filed for a race) differs from recent media reports about their plans.
- Pine Tree Key reviews and updates candidate information regularly and clearly marks any known discrepancies or transitions (such as when a candidate changes the office they are running for).

Nonpartisan & Independent

Pine Tree Key does not endorse candidates or parties and does not accept funding from political campaigns or party organizations. The goal is to provide a clear, accessible way for voters to compare issue positions without being told whom to support. All users see the same information, and candidates are treated under the same criteria for inclusion and updating.

About the Creator

Pine Tree Key was created by Daniela Kloeckner, a Maine-based writer and civic researcher who focuses on making local policy more understandable and accessible. Drawing on in-depth research and a commitment to nonpartisan civic education, she developed Pine Tree Key as a practical resource for voters who want to engage more thoughtfully with Maine elections.

Media Contact & Links

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