

Union bureaucracy, DSA rally behind Troy Jackson after collapse of Graham Platner campaign

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Former Maine Senate President Troy Jackson was formally selected last Saturday, July 25, as the Democratic Party's nominee against Republican Senator Susan Collins, completing the rapid transfer of the political apparatus built around Graham Platner to another politician.

Jackson won the nomination at a hastily organized party convention in Bangor by a vote of 566 to 5. The convention was called after Platner withdrew from the race on July 10 following allegations of sexual assault, which he denies.

The 58-year-old Jackson, a former logger from the tiny northern Maine town of Allagash, is being presented by Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), the AFL-CIO and the United Auto Workers bureaucracy as the natural successor to Platner's supposed "working class" campaign.

Many of Platner's staff members, volunteers and institutional backers immediately migrated to Jackson. Representative Ro Khanna, who had endorsed Platner before abandoning him, became one of the first congressional Democrats to back Jackson. Sanders quickly followed.

The UAW endorsed Jackson even before the Democratic Party completed its replacement process. UAW Region 9A announced on July 15 that its Maine Community Action Program Council had voted unanimously to support him.

"Troy will fight like hell for labor, because he comes from labor," UAW President Shawn Fain declared. "UAW members all over Maine are ready to support his campaign and deliver the change working class people demand."

UAW Region 9A Director Brandon Mancilla, a member of the DSA, added:

Troy has shown up time after time for our members, from the strike at Bath Iron Works to the campaign for a first contract at the University of Maine to supporting the organizing efforts at museums. If that's any indication, we know he will go to Washington to fight for working people and expand organizing.

The Maine AFL-CIO has likewise endorsed Jackson. Its legislative scorecard gave him a perfect 100 percent rating for the

2023-2024 session.

These endorsements expose the political function of the trade union apparatus. Jackson is a capitalist politician with more than a quarter-century of experience subordinating workers to the Democratic Party and the nationalist union bureaucracies, and dividing workers along national lines.

Jackson first ran for the Maine legislature as a Republican in 2000. He won a state House seat as an independent two years later and joined the Democratic Party in 2004. He was first elected to the state Senate in 2008 and later became Senate president.

His political career began with an attack on Canadian workers. In 1998, Jackson helped organize a blockade of the Saint-Pamphile border crossing between Maine and Quebec. Loggers parked their trucks across the road to prevent Canadian workers from entering Maine's North Woods.

The blockade brought Jackson into immediate contact with the state political establishment, including then first-term Senator Susan Collins. He has continued to tout the protest as the foundation of his supposedly "working class" politics.

Far from challenging the paper companies and timber conglomerates that drove down wages on both sides of the border, Jackson blamed Canadian workers. He demanded that employment be reserved for "American" loggers, accepting the nationalist framework of the AFL-CIO.

Jackson continued this campaign after entering the legislature. In 2009, he led reporters through logging areas while listening for French-language radio traffic and searching job sites for Canadian workers. He subsequently sponsored legislation designed to restrict the employment of Canadian loggers and truck drivers.

For years Jackson anonymously posted comments on the *Bangor Daily News* website under the username "Canadians for LePage." The name was intended as an attack on Republican Governor Paul LePage for supposedly failing to protect "American" jobs from Canadian workers.

In one comment responding to criticism of LePage's line-item vetoes, Jackson wrote: "Could you stop making pipe bombs in your basement, and send me your Communist manifesto. I have to see if you are making this up or reading from something insane."

The comment underscores the right-wing and anti-socialist outlook underlying Jackson's populist rhetoric.

Workers in Maine and Canada do not have opposing interests.

They confront the same transnational timber, paper and transportation corporations, which use national borders to drive down wages and pit one group of workers against another. Jackson's nationalism serves these corporations by preventing a unified struggle against them.

He made the same reactionary appeal against immigrants during a 2019 town hall in Caribou. An audience member complained about "illegals coming into Portland and being supported by taxpayer money" while Maine residents supposedly went without assistance.

Jackson replied: "I think I started my career by blocking the border and making sure Mainers had job opportunities in the state. I think my record is pretty clear."

Jackson now denounces Immigration and Customs Enforcement murders and has called for abolishing ICE. But his record shows that his opposition is not based on the international unity of the working class. His politics remain rooted in border enforcement, national preference and the exclusion of workers based on where they were born. As president of the Maine Senate, Jackson opposed legislation that would have expanded MaineCare to low-income residents excluded because of their immigration status.

Jackson has promoted "Buy American" legislation and supported tax credits to encourage corporate investment in Maine. In 2019, he defended a food-processing tax credit as "good economic policy," promoting the interests of business under the banner of creating jobs.

In 2024, Jackson voted for a retroactive tax credit worth nearly \$2 million for the Portland Sea Dogs, a minor league baseball team owned by Diamond Baseball Holdings. The company is controlled by the private equity firm Silver Lake, which manages more than \$100 billion in assets.

Public money that could have funded housing, education or healthcare was instead handed to a financial conglomerate. This did not prevent the Maine AFL-CIO from awarding Jackson a perfect legislative rating.

For much of his political career, Jackson also held far-right positions on abortion and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights. In 2009, he voted against legislation recognizing same-sex marriage in Maine. Anti-abortion organizations gave him perfect scores in 2003 and 2010. In a 2010 Maine Right to Life questionnaire, Jackson answered "yes" to the statement that abortion should always be illegal.

He declined to support exceptions involving rape, incest or the health of the mother. He also registered opposition to the morning-after pill and supported forcing women seeking an abortion to undergo an ultrasound. In 2011, he backed fetal "personhood" legislation and a mandatory 24-hour waiting period.

Jackson now says he was wrong and supports federal protections for abortion and same-sex marriage. His shifts coincided with his rise through the Democratic Party and were necessary for his advancement within its state leadership. His campaign says he "evolved" on the issues.

The DSA is backing Jackson even though he has never claimed to be a socialist. Asked by NBC whether he considered himself a democratic socialist, Jackson rejected the designation. "I see myself as a Mainer and a working class person," he said.

Jackson supported Sanders in the 2016 and 2020 Democratic presidential primaries. As a Democratic superdelegate, he was among the minority who voted for Sanders at the 2016 Democratic National Convention. He subsequently backed Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, just as Sanders did.

Jackson also appeared alongside Sanders and Platner on the "Fighting Oligarchy" tour. He joined them in Portland on September 1, 2025, and again in Portland and Orono on May 24 and 25, 2026.

The latter appearances took place long after Platner's Nazi SS Totenkopf tattoo had become public, along with his archived Reddit posts glorifying his service as a U.S. Marine in Iraq. Platner later worked as a contractor for Constellis, the successor company to the notorious Blackwater mercenary organization.

Jackson had no difficulty sharing the platform with Platner while the latter remained politically useful. Only after the allegations that ultimately destroyed Platner's campaign did Jackson join Sanders, Khanna and other former supporters in demanding that he withdraw. Jackson declared it would be "incredibly self-serving" for Platner to remain in the race.

With Platner removed, Jackson has adopted much of his rhetoric. He speaks of "oligarchy," supports Medicare for All, calls Israel's slaughter in Gaza a genocide and denounces ICE violence. This language is aimed at inheriting the social anger that the Sanders and Platner campaigns worked to channel back into the Democratic Party.

Jackson's actual political trajectory is already being made clear. This week he traveled to Washington for a friendly meeting with Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, an ardent Zionist and defender of the US-backed genocide in Gaza. *Politico* congressional bureau chief Burgess Everett reported that Schumer is "already working closer with Jackson than he did with Platner after Platner won the nomination."

Jackson's campaign celebrated the encounter. "Troy and Leader Schumer had a great meeting where they discussed working together to beat Susan Collins," it said.



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