

Maine Senate debate: Collins and Jackson defend capitalism, austerity and war

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The debate Tuesday between US Senate candidates from Maine, Republican incumbent Susan Collins and Democratic State Senate President Troy Jackson, provided an illustration of the advanced state of political decay in the US.

Neither Collins nor Jackson offered any answers to the urgent issues facing the working class. Under conditions of spiraling living costs, low wages, rising unemployment, attacks on government services, deteriorating public infrastructure, an expanding threat of nuclear war and plans on the part of the Trump administration to hijack the 2026 midterm elections, the debate was carefully stage-managed to ensure that nothing veered outside of conventional two-party politics.

Hosted by Maine television news anchor Gregg Lagerquist, the debate was structured to restrict discussion to narrow squabbles, personal recriminations and superficial policy differences. The questions that were asked showed that the media apparatus is an active participant in political theater.

Susan Collins is a Republican who has served in the US Senate for 30 years since first winning election in 1996. A right-wing politician who has specialized in “bipartisan dealmaking”—a euphemism for the collaboration of both parties against the working class—she has always represented corporate interests. In recent years, she has played the critical role of casting deciding votes to ensure that the policies of the Trump administration move forward in the Senate.

During the debate, Collins emphasized her position as chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, a powerful position in the US government. However, even though the US Constitution gives Congress the authority to appropriate government funds, Collins has done nothing to block the Trump White House from

unilaterally spending more than \$40 billion on the war in Iran while refusing to disperse funds allocated by Congress.

Troy Jackson is a Democrat from Allagash and former president of the Maine Senate, where he served for roughly two decades. Jackson began his political career as a Republican and, after he became a Democrat in 2004, maintained right-wing positions on abortion, same-sex marriage and gun rights.

Jackson became the Democratic Party nominee after the collapse of the party’s campaign to nominate oyster farmer Graham Platner. Platner’s campaign was promoted by the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and “progressive” and “socialist” politicians such as Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. It was built around the fraud that he was a working-class representative and “plain-spoken” challenger to the political establishment. He and the Democratic Party touted his military background.

Platner’s campaign unraveled amid revelations of a Nazi tattoo and allegations of abusive conduct toward former partners. It collapsed after a former girlfriend accused him of sexual assault, and major Democratic Party figures withdrew support. Sanders, Ocasio-Cortez, the DSA and company then transferred their support to Jackson.

In the beginning of Tuesday’s debate, both candidates attempted to present themselves as representatives of the working class. Collins said, “I learned the value of hard work picking potatoes.” Jackson said, “I’m a working-class man from Allagash.” They both sought to tap into growing social anger by adopting populist demagoguery.

Collins defended private healthcare, boasting of securing a \$50 billion rural health fund through the Trump administration’s “Big Beautiful Bill.” She cited

minor market palliatives, such as a \$35 monthly cap on insulin for seniors, federal research funding, and nurse training programs. Collins upheld private corporate control, declaring that “big government takeovers” would lead to “avoidable deaths.”

Jackson voiced support for “Medicare for All.” But when asked by Lagerquist about socialism and whether he was a member of the DSA, he declined to answer.

Both Collins and Jackson confirmed their adherence to the global strategy of US imperialism, differing only on tactics. Collins’ foreign policy record demonstrates her consistent backing of American militarism. Despite claiming to have voted nine times to end the war in Iran under the War Powers Act, she initially voted to support the war five times.

Collins maintained her position as a “strong supporter” of direct military aid to Israel at current funding levels, while simultaneously backing US military assistance to Ukraine. On the domestic energy crisis, Collins championed market mechanisms while advocating for fossil fuel expansion to bolster US “energy independence.”

Jackson’s pseudo-opposition to war is rooted entirely in American nationalism. His condemnation of Collins for voting five times in favor of the Iran war was not tied to the horrific human cost of imperialist aggression but entirely to the increase in gasoline, diesel and natural gas prices.

Endorsed by the Zionist group J Street, Jackson advocated stopping offensive weapons shipments to Israel but was silent on so-called defensive weapons.

On Ukraine, Jackson explicitly called for more military support, aligning himself with the escalation of the NATO proxy conflict against Russia and said nothing about the imminent danger of the use of nuclear weapons either by the Putin regime or NATO governments.

In his attacks on Collins, Jackson emphasized her alignment with Donald Trump, her vote to confirm Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh and her support for corporate tax breaks.

On state violence, Jackson seized on the killing of 26-year-old Johan Sebastián Guerrero by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents in Biddeford, Maine. He called for ICE to be disbanded but said the billions allocated for its funding should be used instead to fund Customs and Border Protection, which oversees

the Border Patrol Gestapo.



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