

# Bangor Daily News

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## HEALTH CARE PRIORITY CLINTON SHOULD LEAD WITH DENTAL ACCESS

Hillary Clinton bills herself a progressive who gets things done. And the Democrats' nominee for president has pledged to keep the Affordable Care Act intact in office, shielding it from Republican repeal attempts and building on its foundation.

When it comes to building on the Affordable Care Act, one of Clinton's first priorities should be expanding access to dental care.

A person's dental health is inextricably linked with overall health, so it's illogical that medical and dental insurance evolved as separate products throughout the 20th century and that the Affordable Care Act largely perpetuated the dichotomy. There's no reason medical care should apply to every region of the body but the mouth.

The Affordable Care Act designates preventive dental care a required benefit for health insurance plans sold on the law's online marketplaces, but only for children. The federal law also requires that state Medicaid plans cover pediatric, preventive dental care — but no such requirement extends to coverage for adults.

That leaves adult dental coverage options inconsistent and dependent on a mix of state policy decisions and state-by-state insurer offerings. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, only 15 states offer extensive adult dental coverage through Medicaid (Maine isn't one of them). And state health insurance exchanges offer a patchwork of dental coverage options, often through stand-alone insurance plans that adults must purchase apart from their medical plans and without the help of the federal subsidies that defray the cost of health insurance.

The result? The U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration estimates 108 million Americans lack dental insurance, compared with 35.7 million people who live without health insurance.

In Maine, adults with Medicaid can receive coverage only for dental emergencies, such as tooth extractions, which are generally needed only after man-

ageable dental problems have developed into major — and expensive — health issues.

The medical consequences of a lack of dental care are clear. A 2010 study of emergency room use by the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine revealed that dental disease was the top reason for someone age 15 to 44 with MaineCare or without insurance to seek emergency room care.

Dental problems can have medical roots, and medical problems can have dental origins. Diabetes can contribute to gum disease, for example. Gum disease, in turn, can exacerbate diabetes. Gum disease also is associated with increased risk of stroke. Pregnant women with poor dental health — such as untreated tooth decay and gum disease — are more likely than other mothers to have low birth-weight or premature babies. And at a most basic level, poor dental health can make it difficult for someone to eat a nutritious diet. Dr. Charles Norman, then president of the American Dental Association, told the website MarketWatch in 2014.

Researchers have found that adequate, preventive dental care is linked with fewer hospital admissions and substantially lower medical costs during pregnancy and to treat type 2 diabetes, coronary artery disease and cerebrovascular disease. Preventive dental care, once integrated into the health insurance system, is a benefit that can go a long way toward paying for itself.

Clinton so far has pledged to build on the Affordable Care Act as a way to make access to health care universal. She's pledged to pursue a public insurance plan as an option on the Affordable Care Act's exchanges. And she's proposed allowing people 55 and older to buy into Medicare — which, by the way, doesn't offer comprehensive dental care as a core benefit.

In focusing on new mechanisms to make insurance more widely available, she can't afford to lose sight of a critical benefit that insurance should cover.

ervations at our favorite restaurants — why should the concept of making a reservation at Yellowstone or Yosemite be any different? Quota systems that keep parks from being overrun and overtaxed have a history of succeeding. At Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in northern Minnesota, a quota system has been in place for years, preserving the area's natural beauty and the tranquil experience visitors seek.

Along with controlling the numbers of visitors, there's something every vacationer can do to help cull the crowds at overcrowded parks: self-culling. Americans need to realize that the nation's natural beauty isn't just embodied in the National Park Service's titanic draws: Yosemite, Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon. Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, about an eight-hour drive from Chicago, astounds with its sandstone sea caves. The spires and buttes of South Dakota's Badlands National Park look otherworldly. And if you really want to get away from it all, pick up a backpack and get on the ferry to Isle Royale in Michigan, where the only way to get around is on foot.

Quotas will go a long way toward keeping our national parks from withering from the weight of the masses. But Americans also need to remember that national parks aren't just backdrops for Facebook selfies. They're a national treasure that deserves reverence, awe — and breathing room.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Grow up, white men

During this election I have heard it stated repeatedly that white men are backing Donald Trump because they are falling behind economically. But the truth is that this is only part of the reason.

To be honest, most white people, especially men, are having an epic freak out. There are too many Latinos in the country, too many Muslims, too many foreigners in different clothes living in their areas, too many gays getting married, too many women taking leadership roles, too many other people in their world. In fact, there is one of these others currently in the White House, with the possibility of a woman to follow. It's all just too much for the frail white ego of many men.

They "want their country back," as they keep saying. What they really mean is they want all the other people to go away so they can have their perfect Mayberry fantasy land, where they are in charge and no one else demands to be treated equally. They pine for the past that was good for them but misery for everyone else.

But I think it's time that the delicate white men of this country were sat down for a little chat. It's time to make them aware that the world is changing and is not going back just because they can't cope. And this message needs to come from other white men who understand that just because their world is changing doesn't mean there isn't room for them. To put it simply, grow up.

**Kevin Gardner**  
Bangor

### Collins not a Republican

Once again Sen. Susan Collins has shown her Maine Republican constituents her true colors. By announcing to the press she was not going to vote for Donald Trump, the Republican candidate for president, she has proven once and for all she is not a Republican.

Either she is a Republican or she is not. Sorry, there is no moderate Republican Party. She can't change the rules after she joins the team. Just like Sen. Angus King, who prides himself on being an "independent" but always votes with the far left, is a Democrat. So why doesn't he admit it?

So what does Collins' decision not to support the party's candidate really mean? It means she does not care about our First Amendment and Second Amendment

rights, the U.S. Supreme Court, unborn children, protecting Americans from Islamic terrorists or saving our nation from the downward financial, moral and racial spiral we have been on since 2008.

It means she does not care if Hillary Clinton, a woman who has the blood of four American men on her hands, who over and over again has proven to be a liar, who befriends our nation's enemies and is corrupted by money and power, becomes the next president of the United States.

It means our RINO senator, one of the Washington elite, has told every Republican conservative in Maine who voted for her that she does not care about them.

**Beth Weirich**  
Glenburn

### WRITE TO US

Letters must be 250 words or fewer and include a full name, town of residence and daytime phone number. OpEds may be 700 words. Letters may be edited or rejected for clarity, taste, libel and space. If a letter or OpEd is published, submissions by the same writer will not be considered for 60 days.

Letters may be sent to letters@bangordailynews.com. OpEds may be sent to OpEd@bangordailynews.com or P.O. Box 1329, Bangor, ME 04402-1329.

### Double standard

Rep. Bruce Poliquin recently proposed a bill to target food stamp fraud, saying he wanted to stop people from cheating the system and that he wanted to save "precious, limited taxpayer money for those who truly need it."

But consider the fact that Poliquin has just been caught paying his taxes late dozens of times and abused the Maine Tree Growth Program to pay almost no taxes on his multimillion-dollar property in Georgetown. The Legislature and Gov. Paul LePage actually fixed the law after Poliquin was caught because it was a system intended to help Maine jobs, not Poliquin's checkbook.

Contrasted with his latest bill proposal, the whole situation drips of irony. The direction of Poliquin's moral compass has to be seriously questioned. He seems incredibly worried about other people playing by the rules but doesn't play by them himself.

**Danielle Lane**  
Milford

### Trump's trash talk

When I hear that a politician is pivoting, I think of basketball. Once a player stops dribbling, he must anchor his actions in a pivot foot. So if Donald Trump is pivoting, in what is his pivot foot anchored?

I believe it's his basic, core, fundamental beliefs and attitudes. Those don't change. Because the pivot foot can't move, the player can twist, turn and look for teammates, but moving the pivot foot is a foul.

So, I see Trump's pivoting as a flurry of twisting and turning but no real movement — just words, or in basketball terms trash talking.

**Mark Schwartz**  
South Portland

### Vote yes on Question 2

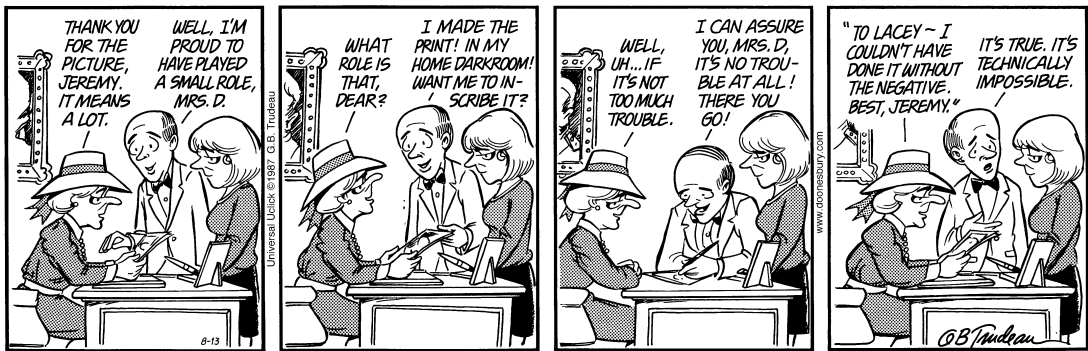
I implore my fellow community members to join me in voting yes on Question 2 this November to provide more funding for public education. As an elementary public school teacher in Belfast, I have seen the effects firsthand of the state's failure to fund public schools to the promised rate of 55 percent. The severely underfunded system has led to a lack of access to basic classroom consumable supplies, fewer quality professional development opportunities for staff and severe cuts to necessary staff and programs for our schools.

Despite local school board and community members' best efforts, the burden to fund this budget shortfall gap has fallen to our local property taxpayers. But we have a solution to our funding dilemma. Question 2 proposes a 3 percent surtax on annual income over \$200,000, which would generate approximately \$157 million annually for public education. This money would go directly to support public education, and it is a sound investment in our children and our future.

It's time for our schools to be fully funded, as was promised more than a decade ago, and a "yes" vote on Question 2 will do exactly that. Every child in Maine deserves a great public school educational experience, regardless of their ZIP code. A "yes" vote on Question 2 will ensure access to the promised funding for public schools and would create much needed property tax relief in our rural towns. Please join me as I stand up for students in support of a "yes" vote on referendum Question 2.

**Beth French**  
Teacher  
RSU 71  
Searsport

### DOONESBURY



### GARRY TRUDEAU