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## Democrats try to create space in crowded field

**Jobs and the economy were the hot topics for the five candidates for governor.**

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KENNEBUNK — Five Democrats who are running for governor tried to distinguish themselves Friday night in a forum leading to the June 8 primary.

All of the candidates talked about the need to create jobs and expand Maine's economy, while emphasizing different ways they would go about it.

The atmosphere at Kennebunk Town Hall was mostly collegial, with some of the candidates praising a strong ballot lineup: Pat McGowan of York, a former state conservation commissioner and business owner; Maine Senate President Libby Mitchell of Vassalboro, a former speaker of the House and state housing authority director; John Richardson of Brunswick, former speaker of the House and state economic development commissioner; Steve Rowe of Portland, former Maine attorney general and speaker of the House; and Rosa Scarcelli of Portland, an affordable-housing developer and provider.

A few took subtle shots at other candidates. Scarcelli said Mainers are frustrated with what's happening in Augusta. She described herself as a candidate with real-world rather than "theoretical" experience.

Mitchell later defended the difficult budget work being done at the State House and said Augusta cannot be blamed for a worldwide recession.

McGowan, Mitchell and Richardson urged voters to select one of them because they chose to run publicly financed campaigns under the Maine Clean Elections Act.

"I do not want special interests determining the outcome of this election," Richardson said.

McGowan said he has a vision for Maine that includes being energy-independent and moving the state from having the largest to the smallest "carbon footprint" in the nation. He said he would work to create jobs by promoting educational and manufacturing opportunities related to Maine's renewable energy resources.

Mitchell said she supports government that spends within its means while investing in the future and caring for those who cannot care for themselves. She said she would continue to work to

reduce taxes, lower energy costs, promote health-care reform and support equality in marriage.

Richardson said he has the experience to provide the tough but fair leadership that Maine needs in difficult times. He said he would work to send more Mainers to college and promote a green economy that manages natural resources for the common good rather than exploits them for wealth.

Rowe said he believes that education is the "soul of society" and the engine that will move Maine forward. He said being innovative and connected to the wider world will help Maine create sustainable, living-wage jobs. He also said reducing the cost of health care, housing and energy are necessary steps toward a healthy economy.

Scarcelli said she would bring new people into state government and fill her Cabinet with experts rather than political appointees. She said she would be open to good ideas, no matter the party of origin. She said Maine's current economic challenges offer a unique opportunity to find new ways of doing things.

Responding to a question from the audience, the candidates said they wouldn't promise not to raise taxes, as at least one Republican candidate for governor has done. However, all said they support various version of tax reform.

Donna Dion, a former Biddeford mayor who is a write-in candidate for governor, was in the audience Friday night.

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