

Q & A with Mark D. Grover

Independent Candidate for Maine House District 67

Grover provides detailed answers to dozens of your questions about his views and qualifications!

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Link to download this file:

<https://voteforgrover.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/QandA.pdf>

Outside reports and questionnaires are available at the following sites:

- [Ballotpedia](#)
- [Project VoteSmart](#)
- [Maine Campaign Finance Reports](#)

[What office and district are you running for?](#)

Maine House of Representatives, District 67. This district covers most of Gray (except an area near Cumberland), Frye Island, and small portions of Raymond and Casco. A detailed map is available here:

<https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/2013/House/hr67.pdf>

Voters can look up their districts by street address here:

https://www.maine.gov/portal/government/edemocracy/voter_lookup.php

[Why are you running for office?](#)

Government at all levels spends too much time in partisan fighting, and not enough effort on fixing problems. I want to focus on solutions in Maine to our most pressing problems of our public health, our economy, our educational system, and our taxes.

Would you tell me about your record of past public service?

I was elected to the Cumberland County Commissioners representing seven towns. While a commissioner, I served on the Cumberland District Public Health Council, which coordinates the private and public agencies in the county on public health matters, including infectious diseases. I was elected and served on the Gray Town Council for three years. As soon as I moved to Gray, I started volunteering as a member of Gray Fire-Rescue as an emergency medical responder, serving for twelve years actively. Since my early days as a Gray resident, I have served on committees and boards, including the Comprehensive Plan committee, the Library trustees, the Cumberland County Finance Committee, and as an officer of my local road association.

What is your political philosophy?

I am a problem-solver and a moderate. Generally speaking, I tend to be socially progressive and fiscally conservative, but I look at each issue on its own, with moderation. As a result, everyone is likely to agree with me on some issues and disagree on others. You are better off asking for my thoughts on each matter of interest, since I am independent-minded and do not follow any political party platform.

I discourage people from choosing candidates based on a single issue.

Also, I don't see most issues as yes-or-no questions. Life (and public policy) is more complicated than that. As an example, I strongly believe in gun rights for self-protection, but I can also support a "red flag" law which would allow for a judge to restrict gun possession by an individual who is demonstrably dangerous.

Wow. May I make a contribution?

No, thank you. **I am not accepting any campaign contributions.** I am not comfortable taking either private money or taxpayer funds, so I have chosen to fund a modest campaign myself. I have also signed the **Voluntary Expenditure Limit** pledge for this campaign.

Instead of a campaign contribution, please show your support by "liking" the [campaign Facebook page](#) or, even better, by sharing a link to VoteForGrover.com in your Facebook feed.

What are your views on campaign ethics?

I have signed the Maine Code of Fair Campaign Practices. You can view the pledge here: <https://voteforgrover.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020-TF-Registration-Packet-Signed.pdf>

Among other things, the pledge includes the following:

- I shall not participate in and I shall condemn defamation of and other attacks on any opposing candidate or party that I do not believe to be truthful, provable and relevant to my campaign.
- I shall not use or authorize and I shall condemn material relating to my campaign that falsifies, misrepresents or distorts the facts, including, but not limited to, malicious or unfounded accusations creating or exploiting doubts as to the morality, patriotism or motivations of any party or candidate.
- I shall not practice, and I shall condemn practices, that tend to corrupt or undermine the system of free election or that hamper or prevent the free expression of the will of the voters.

My campaign finance reports are [available here](#).

Do you have a campaign slogan?

Thoughtful. Independent. Fearless.

Thoughtful about all issues. Independent of political parties. Fearless in tackling the difficult problems facing us.

Angry debates are a waste of time. I want to solve problems.

What are your “Maine credentials”?

I was born in Augusta in 1955, and grew up happily in North Jay, Freeport, Brunswick, and Portland. When I was eleven my family moved out of state, where I pursued school, college and the initial years of my career. Twenty-five years ago, I moved back to Maine, and bought a house in Gray in January of 1996.

My roots in Maine and New England go back to the initial settlements from England. My great-great-great-great-great-grandfather was killed by the British during the American Revolutionary War during the Penobscot Expedition, near what is now the town of Castine. I also have three ancestors who were among the original Pilgrims on the Mayflower.

What is your professional background?

I just retired after fifty years of writing computer software, the last twenty-five at DeLorme/Garmin in Yarmouth. My engineering background makes me a naturally rational, science-based problem-solver.

After a career using logic and data to solve everyday engineering and business problems, I want to apply my skills to public policy.

Why do you think you can work “across the aisle”?

As an independent, and a moderate, I owe nothing to any political party, its platform, or its leaders. I can look at each issue as a problem to be solved, and stay away from emotional arguments. I believe I can offer reasonable compromises that might not be proposed by members of a political party. If elected, I would offer to be part of negotiating teams dealing with difficult subjects.

Here are some “hot topics”. What is your quick reaction?

Guns: I am a long-time supporter of gun rights, but I can also support proposals for “red flag” laws to allow a judge under some circumstances to restrict possession by someone demonstrated to be dangerous. I believe everyone has the right to defend themselves, and indeed may have a moral duty to protect their loved ones. I oppose most additional registration proposals. I oppose unregulated militias.

Mental Health: I see anxiety and anger as the source of many problems in public health, law enforcement, domestic abuse, and the economy. I want to establish a goal of a free or affordable mental health clinic in every Maine town of over 5,000 residents.

State borrowing: I oppose state bonding for most projects and believe we need to realign our budgets to incorporate such projects into ongoing capital planning.

CMP Corridor: I oppose the corridor as providing insufficient benefits to Mainers, at the potential expense of our natural resources.

Vaccines: I support requiring students to be vaccinated in order to attend public school, for the benefit of the public health of children and others.

Abortion: Roe v. Wade is settled law and I support women’s health rights.

Tax fairness: I would propose revising the excise tax to include factors beyond vehicle age, for example to include weight and mileage, to better reflect roadway usage. I support surtaxes on electric vehicles for the same reason.

Are you willing to honorably tell citizens where you stand on the issues you may face if elected by answering questions that are most important to voters? (from Project VoteSmart)

Yes! I have answered the detailed Political Courage Test at [VoteSmart.org](https://www.vote-smart.org), which enumerates my positions on many specific issues.

What are your views on the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement?

To begin with, I condemn the violence, counterviolence, and property destruction which has occurred recently in the name of “protesting” (and counter-protesting) which is simple criminal behavior. I also oppose unregulated militias. I believe that **violence often just begets more violence**, and instead I urge calm on everyone’s part. Fortunately, bad actors are a tiny number compared to those who are honest, peaceful activists who actually represent the Black Lives Matter movement.

In my early activist days, mostly in support of the Equal Rights Amendment, our marches, demonstrations, and gatherings were always peaceful, yet our message was communicated effectively, and the rights and power of women have continued to expand. It is those who are peacefully, yet powerfully, marching for justice and change to whom we should be listening.

In America it is normal for citizens to have differences with each other and with their government. We are glad for our rights of peaceful assembly and speech. We also have a long history of using civil disobedience to demonstrate support for changes to the law and the Constitution.

I believe that humans may have an instinctual fear of the unknown, which manifests itself in the irrational fear of unfamiliar social groups, aggravated by pre-existing cultural bias. We must overcome such prejudices. The innocent acceptance by children of new people they meet indicates that bias against individuals is not innate. Fortunately, the human species is amazingly good at learning and cooperating, allowing us to build cities and fly to the Moon.

We must listen to the protests. Since the beginning of the BLM movement in 2013, the central message has been that there are some law enforcement agencies with members acting in a biased or even criminal manner, and additionally that there are *unjust systems* which allow racists to literally get away with murder.

I believe we cannot truthfully say that all lives matter until we can confidently say that Black lives matter.

The situation is subtle, as best described by Ta-Nahisi Coates: “Racism is not merely a simplistic hatred. It is, more often, broad sympathy toward some and broader skepticism toward others.”

Hatred, violence, and prejudice should have no place in our land.

Here in Maine, regardless of whether or not there is demonstrably any police bias or brutality, we should recognize that there is a growing distrust and confidence in law enforcement. It is this potential distrust by some which I see as an area that we can preventatively address in Maine through legislation.

Firstly, the Legislature can review the requirements both for qualifying and for training as a law enforcement agent in Maine.

Additionally, we can ensure that state standards are clear in the use of deadly force, including chokeholds and batons. We can improve regulation of the reporting and review of force used by law enforcement, any time a weapon is drawn, and including the use of rubber bullets and Tasers. We can have requirements, guidelines, audits and state funding for the introduction of body cameras and safekeeping of their recordings. We can have state laws regulating how complaints about police behavior are handled, including independent review panels. We should review the use of potentially biased technology by law enforcement, such as facial recognition. Reconsideration should be given to no-knock warrants, and qualified immunity.

Finally, the Legislature can better fund mental health services and crisis responders to enable law enforcement to focus on criminality. I believe we should establish a goal of a free or affordable mental health clinic in every Maine town of over 5,000 residents.

In the years that I served as an emergency medical responder, I experienced first-hand the importance of having partners of different specialties working together to solve serious problems. I felt protected by the officers with whom I served, and at the same time, I was able to make my own contributions to improve difficult situations. Later, while serving as a county commissioner, I had the privilege of working with the Sheriff and county jail personnel. They can tell you that I did not shy away from asking tough questions. Those leaders have conclusively earned my respect over the years.

Above all, we need to calm down and rationally address citizen concerns. Angry debates are a waste of time. I want to solve problems. We must see that law enforcement is respected, but only because agencies and officers are showing that they are worthy of that respect. I am confident that we can do this in Maine.

The following are my answers to the seven questions of the Bangor Daily News 2020 survey:

[Maine is facing an estimated \\$1.4 billion budget shortfall over the next three years. Should the state fill that gap with cuts or tax increases? Give examples of what you would consider.](#)

We need to be realistic to solve this problem and we must consider all options. Service cuts, project deferrals, temporary reductions in state employee salary or benefits, and limits to revenue sharing should all be on the table. So also should targeted tax increases, such as surtaxes on electric vehicles, taxing internet usage, and a higher rate on top incomes. During all this, we must keep aware of the most vulnerable Mainers affected by the pandemic.

[An estimated 14,000 Mainers lost health coverage between February and May amid pandemic job losses. What is a new initiative you would support to increase or improve coverage?](#)

We should consider extending MaineCare temporarily as an option to those who qualify for unemployment insurance, for the duration of the pandemic.

[The pace of economic reopening has been a major issue nationally and in Maine. Have you generally agreed with restrictions and reopening measures from Gov. Janet Mills? What would you have done differently?](#)

Maine's success in controlling the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) through science-based decision-making is an example to the nation. The recent outbreak caused by a large wedding reception in Millinocket demonstrates the wisdom of temporarily limiting the size of social gatherings.

I agree with the governor's measured approach to opening as much business as possible while using safe practices and limiting physical contact. I also agree that Maine is diverse, and the rules should differ depending on the local region's situation. Mainers are to be commended for cooperating during this emergency. We must also continue offering loans, grants, and extensions of aid to those most affected.

[Last year, a wide, bipartisan majority of the Legislature passed a law establishing a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050. How should the state pursue this goal while keeping short-term energy costs as low as possible?](#)

I am not optimistic about achieving this goal. Most greenhouse gas reductions will only be possible through changes to individual behavior, such as reducing the use of electricity, which is an unlikely occurrence considering the popularity of consumer electronics.

One significant method would be by the reduction of the miles spent by Mainers commuting. To that end, the state can help by (1) extending broadband service, (2) providing tax incentives to companies with a high percentage of employees working from home, and (3) increasing gasoline taxes and creating surtaxes for electric vehicles.

Finally, I have some hope that ocean tidal power can become sufficiently cost-effective to have an impact, but that remains to be seen.

Do you support the Central Maine Power corridor project as proposed and permitted by state agencies to date? (This is a yes or no question.)

No, I do not. I believe it provides inadequate benefits to Maine.

Recently, the Legislature has tightened laws regarding lobbyist contributions to campaigns and increased harassment training for members. Name new steps that the Legislature could take to ensure that members uphold high ethical standards.

I would support extending the current Maine Ethics Commission to have permanent investigatory staff and a more robust public complaints review process. I have signed the Maine Code of Fair Campaign Practices pledge, and I believe that this should be better publicized and enforced.

Name a unique focus or priority that you would bring to the Legislature if elected.

As an independent, and a moderate, I owe nothing to any political party, its platform, or its leaders. I can look at each issue as a problem to be solved, and stay away from emotional arguments. I believe I can offer reasonable compromises that might not be proposed by members of a political party. If elected, I would offer to be part of negotiating teams dealing with difficult subjects.

Angry debates are a waste of time. I want to solve problems.

(End of Bangor Daily News questionnaire.)

Do you support Ranked Choice Voting (RCV)?

I have been a supporter from the start, circulating petitions, providing citizen education at public events, and working the phones and computers. I am gratified that the Maine citizens have implemented this improvement. *I believe that runoff elections provide for the best representation.* Everyone gets to vote in a runoff. RCV achieves the same result at a fraction of the cost and time of holding a series of runoff elections. I also believe RCV enables candidates outside of the major parties in a way that empowers citizens who do not feel well-represented by the parties. I support a Maine constitutional amendment to apply RCV to state elections, such as governor, state senator and state representative.

What are your thoughts on unionization and right-to-work (RTW) laws?

I believe all workers have a right to organize, with union behavior regulated under federal and state law. I believe labor unions tend to improve worker benefits and salary, especially during difficult economies.

I oppose so-called “right-to-work” laws that seek to completely prevent labor unions from recouping any representation costs from non-members. At the same time, I believe such charges are often too high and should be limited to a small percentage of membership fees.

What should new, young voters consider in this election?

In Maine, I think young people should be most concerned about jobs. I believe we need to provide better preparation for the jobs of the future, which will in turn encourage the development of modern business opportunities in Maine, strengthening our economy. (See the answer to the next question.)

What should change at the state level with respect to education?

I support the goal established by the citizens for state support of 55% of education costs. However, due to the drop in state revenues from effects of the novel coronavirus, the next biennial budget will be very difficult and such a goal is unlikely to be met soon.

At the same time, if the state is to be the majority funder, I believe it is proper that it come with expectations for the quality of education in the state.

I believe education is the key to improving our state economy, which is too heavily dependent on cyclical, unsustainable and declining businesses, such as hospitality services, uncompetitive manufacturing, and unpredictable natural resource use.

My proposal is to tie funding to improvements in public education in areas that are focused on successful aspects of the economy, are beneficial to Maine citizens, and will encourage young people to pursue careers in Maine.

In particular, I believe educational institutions at all levels should shift emphasis to increase its capacity to produce workers (and teachers) who are highly competent in fields such as healthcare (in all capacities, including an invigorated Maine Public Health Corps), engineering (in many disciplines), sciences and mathematics.

I have recently retired from a long career in software engineering. My interest was initiated fifty years ago by a good high school experience with computers, which was a rarity at the time. I went on to achieve several degrees, including a doctorate. In turn, I was able to be effective in making professional contributions, resulting in happy customers, for decades. I want to hear of more such success stories from other Mainers.

[What are your thoughts on government operations?](#)

I believe government is generally far more inefficient than private organizations, but also that it is filled with dedicated public servants. After a career in software engineering, I am appalled by media reports of obsolete computer systems and slow or unsuccessful attempts at making improvements in many states. I do not know the actual situation in Maine government.

I am a huge fan of government transparency, both within legislative affairs and throughout the administration. When modern software systems are in use, transparency does not need to be difficult.

I would welcome the opportunity to serve on the Government Oversight committee.

[If elected, on what committees would you like to serve?](#)

If I were to be able to choose, I believe that I would be most effective on Government Oversight, Education, Health and Human Services, Criminal Justice, State/Local Government or Taxation committees. My answers to other questions in this document would probably explain this answer.

What organizations have given you a ranking or endorsement? What does that mean?

Although I have responded to numerous surveys by special interest groups, it seems unlikely that many will offer an endorsement, because I support only parts of their agendas. I have received letters of endorsement from the Maine AFL-CIO and the Maine Education Association. We may not agree on every legislative proposal, but I very much appreciate their confidence in my fair treatment of their concerns and our shared support of education and of working Americans.

My approach to moderation in problem-solving lends itself to dealing with complex issues on an individual basis. Special interest groups, which often have highly detailed legislative proposals, usually find that I support some of their initiatives but not others. As a moderate, I hope that my views are balanced, thoughtful, and nuanced.

What is your faith experience and how does it affect your life and decision-making?

I was raised Congregational and Methodist, becoming a youth leader in my high school years. As an adult, my church home has been the United Church of Christ (UCC), a progressive denomination which emphasizes social justice. I have read the Bible from cover to cover, as well as the Koran, Tao Te Ching, Book of Mormon, Bhagavad Gita, and the Analects. I enjoy occasional personal theological and philosophical study and reflection. I believe God provides strength. I believe civilization benefits greatly from spiritual traditions which emphasize peaceful behavior, kindness toward others, personal morality based on love, and ethical maturity. These lessons enrich my personal life, and I believe form the foundation of a healthy and happy society. My own integrity is vital to my personality.

The answers to the following questions are taken from my [Ballotpedia](#) profile.

What characteristics or principles are most important for an elected official?

An elected official should be of sound, independent judgment. He or she should not spend time or make decisions mainly to further the goals of a political party, but instead should act for the best interests and future of Mainers.

What was your very first job? How long did you have it?

My first paycheck was as a laboratory assistant for summers during high school. As a precocious engineering student, I helped high school teachers from across the state learn how to teach engineering concepts in their classes. I recognized the importance of science-based education, and how much I enjoyed helping others learn.

What is your favorite book? Why?

“1939: The Lost World of the Fair”, by David Gelernter, a history of the New York World's Fair and the culture of that time. In 1939, America was dreaming (and building) its future, full of hope. The rest of the world was occupied by aggression, racism, hate, and despair. The lessons are to maintain hope, solve problems, and face down evils.

What is something that has been a struggle in your life?

I chose a career in software engineering at an early age, fifty years ago. This seemed natural, due to an instinctive passion to “fix” things. It turns out that, especially in personal relationships, I don't always know what is best for everyone! Imagine that! I have always struggled to balance my urge to make the world around me better and the recognition that it is often other people who must decide what is “better”. For a legislator, this means simultaneously examining both the principles on which one stands together with the will of the people.

Do you believe that it's beneficial for state legislators to have previous experience in government or politics?

Maine has a “part-time” Legislature, with the intent that government is not the full-time career for representatives. At the same time, having spent at least a little time, as I have, as a local town councilor or as a county commissioner (which are also not careers in Maine), is helpful for learning government and public processes and the expectations of constituents. I spent my career in software engineering and have now retired, allowing time for me to run for state office.

What do you perceive to be your state's greatest challenges over the next decade?

Maine needs to improve the education of young people in order to encourage them to remain in the state, to enter productive, sustainable and valuable careers (such as healthcare or technology), and to help determine the future of the state.

What do you believe is the ideal relationship between the governor and the state legislature?

A partnership. There should be a constant discussion between the governor and the legislative leadership council to avoid wasteful veto battles and to solve problems that Mainers think are most important.

What process do you favor for redistricting?

I would like to see our current political redistricting process be replaced by an independent, data-based process. On two occasions in my past, my own plans for running for office were inhibited by redistricting which, I believe, resulted in unrepresentative districts. Although Maine has been spared from ridiculous gerrymandering, we could do better. Maine does have the advantage of small districts, improving the chances that Mainers are well-represented in the state legislature.

(End of Ballotpedia questionnaire.)

How do you spend your personal time? Do you have any interesting hobbies?

I enjoy walking in the Maine landscape, birdwatching, reading, classical music, film, live theater, good food and wine, and collecting Maine art. Also, proving that we can still challenge ourselves even in retirement, I am currently a student helicopter pilot. You can also find more about my personal background at 24-7pressrelease.com/press-release-service/457507

More questions?

Email me at mark@VoteForGrover.com if you have further questions. You are also welcome to write with your comments.

I listen to all points of view. I even make mistakes sometimes. I invite your feedback.