

NH News

'We shouldn't be this divided': N.H. voters lament state of politics on eve of election

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Josh Rogers / NHPR

Kitty Fleury of Manchester (right) speaks with Sen. Maggie Hassan at the Red Arrow Diner. Fleury said she has lost faith in politicians -- and politics in general.

When Sen. Maggie Hassan canvassed the midday crowd at the Red Arrow Diner in Manchester last week, she told 61-year-old Kitty Fleury, who works at a gas station and lives out of a motel room, that she was prioritizing affordable housing.

“Look, we agree on that and I hope you will consider voting for me,” Hassan told Fleury.

Once Hassan moved on to the next table of potential voters, though, Fleury offered her own take on the current state of politics.

“What happened to ‘By the people and for the people?’ ” Fleury said.

She said politicians have no idea what people actually need.

“They’re not in there for that anymore,” Fleury said. “They are in there for the money. And I hear a lot of people talk about things they want to do, things they want to get, but then when they get in there, if they get in there, nothing’s ever done.”

Suspicion of elected officials – and distress over the state of politics in general – is something many voters share this election season. With polls showing a tight race in New Hampshire’s U.S. Senate race, the outcome could be decided by a relative handful of voters, including plenty — like Fleury — who aren’t wild about their choices.

“Everybody lies: So who is telling the truth?” Nancy Smith of Londonderry said after a town hall meeting hosted by Republican Senate candidate Don Bolduc in Windham Saturday.

Smith, who says she typically votes Democratic and probably will in this election, said she’d come to see Bolduc mostly out of curiosity. She said she once hoped President Joe Biden would unite the country, but now considers him a failure.

“We shouldn’t be this divided,” Smith said. “It’s just wrong. And then we wonder why people attack people.”

While Smith said she blames leaders in both parties for the state of our politics, her husband David Smith – who described himself as a reliable Republican voter – said Democrats are mostly culpable.

“The policies of the people who are not Republicans, I’ll say, have torn this country apart, and I’d like to make a change,” he said.

David Smith added he’ll definitely vote for Bolduc, but indicated his choice was more informed by a distrust of Hassan than any faith that Bolduc would end up delivering on his promises.

“I’d rather believe him than the people who have proven you can’t believe them that are in there now,” Smith said.



Josh Rogers / NHPR

Republican Senate candidate Don Bolduc talks to voters in Windham on Oct. 29, 2022.

Fred Osterholtz, who works at WG Bagshaw, a Nashua manufacturer Hassan toured earlier this week, sees things differently. He said New Hampshire's Democratic incumbents deserve reelection. Osterholtz cited their willingness to defend abortion rights and back the Biden administration's economic policies.

But while he's certain about how he'll vote, Osterholtz admitted he has his doubts about whether politics still operates on a level playing field.

"I'll be very curious to see what the price of gas at the pumps is, after the midterms," said Osterholtz, who lives in Amherst. "It's been creeping up, and that may have nothing to do with our politics or it might. So I'm not all 100% thinking it's going to be rosy, but I'm not really sure anymore that polls can tell us what's really going to happen."

Steve Gauthier spent more than three decades as a unionized worker for General Electric, and said he's full of doubt this campaign season. At 71, Gauthier now teaches classes in OSHA

compliance. Hassan greeted him with familiarity when she ran into him as she campaigned this week at WG Bagshaw. Gauthier said inflation is a major problem, and thinks Democrats, from Biden on down, have been too rash in dropping Trump-era economic policies.

Gauthier said he's undecided in the Senate race.

"I see her commercials, and I see their commercials," he said. "It's like, 'Please, what about us? What about the citizens of the country?' We are the ones suffering from all of these decisions. Whoever they are, all of those decisions are costing us."

On-the-fence voters like Gauthier now have less than a week to make their decision. In a season where all of New Hampshire's federal races could come down to the wire, such choices could prove decisive.

Source: ['We shouldn't be this divided': N.H. voters lament state of politics on eve of election | New Hampshire Public Radio \(nhpr.org\)](https://www.nhpr.org/news/2024/11/05/we-shouldn-t-be-this-divided-n-h-voters-lament-state-of-politics-on-eve-of-election)