

Exhibit highlights images from Portland’s gritty past *Audience, E1*



FALL BACK: Don't forget to turn clocks back one hour Sunday

\$5.00
Sunday,
November 2, 2025

Maine Sunday Telegram

WEATHER:
Mostly sunny
and pleasant
High 50°
Details, B8

NEW ENGLAND'S 2025 NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR



ELECTION
2026

The major candidates in the Maine Democratic primary for U.S. Senate, Gov. Janet Mills and Graham Platner, are using opposition dumps in different ways. (JOE PHELAN AND GREGORY REC/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS)

Opposition research isn't new. Here's how it's affecting Maine's US Senate race

Disclosures of past behaviors and online comments made by Graham Platner are part of a well-known political playbook, highlighting the risk young outsiders can face when seeking public office.

By **RANDY BILLINGS**
Staff Writer

Shortly after Gov. Janet Mills entered the Democratic primary to take on U.S. Sen. Susan Collins, the early and unexpected frontrunner in the race faced a sudden onslaught of negative headlines about comments he made online and for having a tattoo linked to Nazi imagery. Like the candidate himself, they

seemed to come out of nowhere. Graham Platner, an oyster farmer and military veteran from Hancock County, had been drawing hundreds of people to town halls across the state and raising millions of dollars. He has no political experience, and that is part of his appeal. The recent disclosures are a textbook example of opposition research, a well-known and standard

practice of deeply researching political candidates to identify their strengths and, more importantly, their weaknesses. While the negative press and advertising that follows can seem like dirty politics, it's become a critical part of vetting candidates and drawing early contrasts during a campaign.

Please see **RESEARCH**, Page A14

'I KNEW IT WAS GOING TO BE BAD'

Health insurance premiums for the Affordable Care Act — the sticking point in the federal shutdown fight — are set to skyrocket if tax credits expire at year's end.

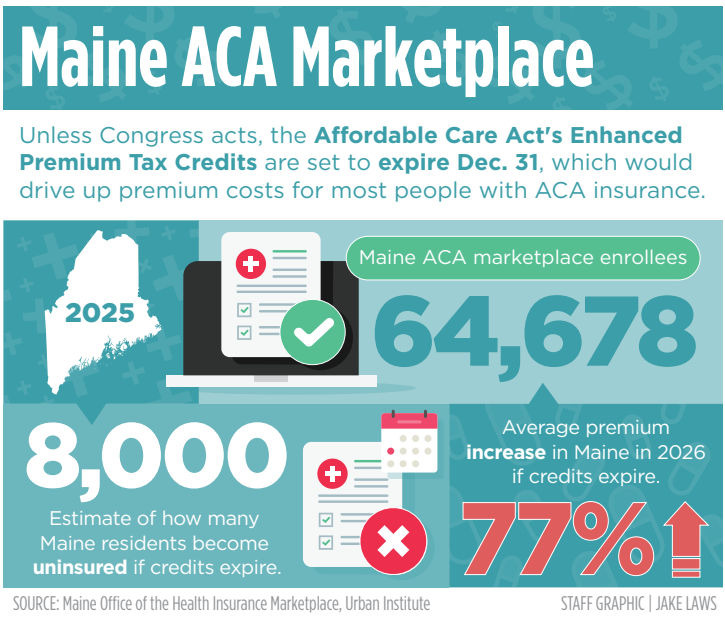
By **JOE LAWLOR**
Staff Writer

Samantha Merrill said when she opened a letter last week from Maine's Affordable Care Act marketplace, she knew it was going to be bad news about her 2026 premiums. It was worse than she anticipated. Merrill, 59, of North Berwick, said the letter indicated her premiums would jump from \$478 to \$1,262 per month if ACA tax credits, which help pay health insurance premiums for millions of Americans, expire this year. That would amount to more than \$15,000 per year for health insurance, of her \$65,000 annual income as a self-employed mental health counselor. "I knew it was going to be bad, but when I saw it, I thought, 'How am I going to do this? Is it even possible?'" Merrill said. If Congress doesn't extend the subsidies — called Enhanced Premium Tax Credits — by Dec. 31, premiums for ACA plans are set to skyrocket in Maine and across the country.

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Samantha Merrill, 59, of North Berwick, is a self-employed mental health counselor who says her health insurance premiums would jump from \$478 to \$1,262 per month — more than \$15,000 a year — if Affordable Care Act tax credits are not extended. "You like to think that if you work hard and made the right decisions, that you'll be rewarded. In this case, it's a giant plot twist," she says. (GREGORY REC/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)



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'... THAT CONNECT US ALL'



Retired Yankee Magazine editor compiles stories of New Englanders at their best
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Why are concussions so frequent in girls soccer?

Studies indicate that soccer players — girls in particular — get concussed at a higher rate than most other sports, though there are no clear solutions to lower the alarming numbers.

By **DREW BONIFANT**
Staff Writer

It was, in Maisie Rayback's mind, a "freak incident." The Cape Elizabeth junior back was jumping to try to head a corner kick into the net during last year's regional girls soccer semifinal against Freeport when her teammate, Noelle Mallory, had the same idea, and the two collided while going for the ball. Mallory was fine. Rayback was not. She fell to the ground, got up and felt dizzy. Rayback left the game early, then missed the regional final against Greely four days later. In the weeks that followed she had headaches, found it harder to pay attention in school and had trouble sleeping. "You don't feel like your-

self," she said. "That's the scariest part." Rayback's experience is nothing unusual in high school soccer, a contact sport in which collisions often occur and the head either frequently plays the ball or is in the line of fire of a shot, and data show the risk is even higher on the girls' side. Concussions are serious injuries, with recoveries that can stretch for weeks or even months and have long-term effects on daily life. But in soccer, the people who play it and coach it don't see an easy way to limit them. A national study of high school sports injuries from 2023 to 2024 shows girls soccer was second only to football in concussion rate

Please see **GIRLS**, Page A12



Cape Elizabeth High School senior Maisie Rayback suffered a concussion in last year's playoffs, and took herself out for the next game. "My head is not something I mess around with," she says. Her experience is nothing unusual in high school soccer. (DEREK DAVIS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)