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FRIDAY, JULY 10, 2026 | GREATFALLSTRIBUNE.COM

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After Graham Platner's withdrawal from Maine's Senate race, Democrats face a short window to find a new nominee to replace him by the end of business on July 13. CJ GUNTHER/GETTY IMAGES FILE

Platner exit leaves Dems in disarray

Maine Senate seat vital for congressional control

Phillip M. Bailey and Terry Collins
USA TODAY

Democrats are racing for the reset button in the pivotal U.S. Senate battle in Maine after Graham Platner announced he will suspend his campaign, throwing the party into a frantic search for a replacement nominee to take on Republican incumbent Susan Collins this fall.

The decision comes after Platner faced a broad chorus of calls from fellow Democrats to exit the race following a new allegation that he sexually assaulted an ex-girlfriend nearly five years ago. Platner has denied the accusation, saying any claims about "non-consensual behavior" are "categorically untrue."

"We believe that for the movement to continue, it can't be me. And for that reason, we are suspending campaign operations," Platner said in a July 8 video message.

Platner's withdrawal caps days of turmoil that had engulfed his campaign



Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-New York, made clear that Maine – along with Alaska, Ohio and North Carolina – was a vital patch in taking control of the U.S. Senate. TOM BRENNER/GETTY IMAGES FILE

and intensifies pressure on Democratic leaders to quickly coalesce around an alternative candidate. Party officials now face a short window to find a new nominee to replace him by the end of business on July 13.

The urgency by Maine Democrats and others, experts and operatives say, reflects the political reality of how diffi-

cult it will be for the party to retake the U.S. Senate this year. Many who spoke with USA TODAY said the quest becomes an almost impossible task if the Pine Tree State remains in GOP hands.

"This Maine Senate seat was the top of the list that Democrats had when

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Iran says it hit U.S. military targets

Trump declares ceasefire between nations is 'over'

Erin Mansfield and Michael Loria
USA TODAY

Iran struck U.S. military infrastructure targets in other countries in the region, state media reported July 9, the latest in a fresh back-and-forth as President Donald Trump declared the ceasefire between the nations "over."

Attacks were reported across the region. Iran's army said on state media that it made drone strikes on U.S. Patriot missile defense systems in Kuwait, satellite antenna in Qatar and fuel storage in Bahrain. USA TODAY reached out to the Pentagon for confirmation.

According to the U.S. military's Central Command, American forces struck 90 targets in Iran on July 8, including air defense systems, missile and drone storage sites, and naval assets.

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Family speaks out after dad was fatally shot by ICE

Michael Loria
USA TODAY

The son of a man fatally shot by U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement in Houston says his father should have been relaxing at home after a hard day's work. Instead, his absence has left an empty space in the house.

An ICE official on July 7 shot and killed Mexican national Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, described by loved ones and a congresswoman at a news conference as a 52-year-old father of

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No. 49 | Volume 142
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