



Trans issues likely to reach court again

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Platner exit leaves Dems in disarray



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

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



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

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

and intensifies pressure on Democratic leaders to quickly coalesce around an alternative candidate. Party officials now face a short window to find a

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Weekly jobless claims decline

Economist says layoffs will likely stay low

Lucia Mutikani
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – The number of Americans filing claims for unemployment benefits fell last week, supporting economists' views that the labor market remained in a "slow-hire, slow-fire" mode, despite a sharp slowdown in job growth in June.

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits slipped 2,000 to a seasonally adjusted 215,000 for the week that ended July 4, the Labor Department said July 9. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 218,000 claims for the latest week.

Unadjusted claims increased by 9,967 to 224,583 last week, with applications surging by 8,467 in California. Filings shot up by 4,401 in Michigan and increased by 5,872 in Missouri, likely as some auto-makers idled assembly lines

for maintenance and retooling. General Motors and Ford Motor Co. have, however, canceled summer shutdowns at many of their plants.

Overall adjusted claims have dropped after rising at the end of May and the beginning of June, with economists mostly dismissing the increase as being related to difficulties adjusting the data at the end of the school year. Some states allow non-teaching staff to apply for unemployment benefits during the long school holidays, which can throw off the model used by the government to strip out seasonal fluctuations from the data.

Though job growth slowed sharply in June and the nonfarm payrolls count for April and May was revised lower, economists said there had been no material shift in the labor market.

"Claims remain low and stable, with the rise over the last couple of months probably reflecting residual

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