

# MAINE BEHIND THE NUMBERS

The facts on the economic track record of Maine governors Paul LePage and Janet Mills



## HEALTH CARE

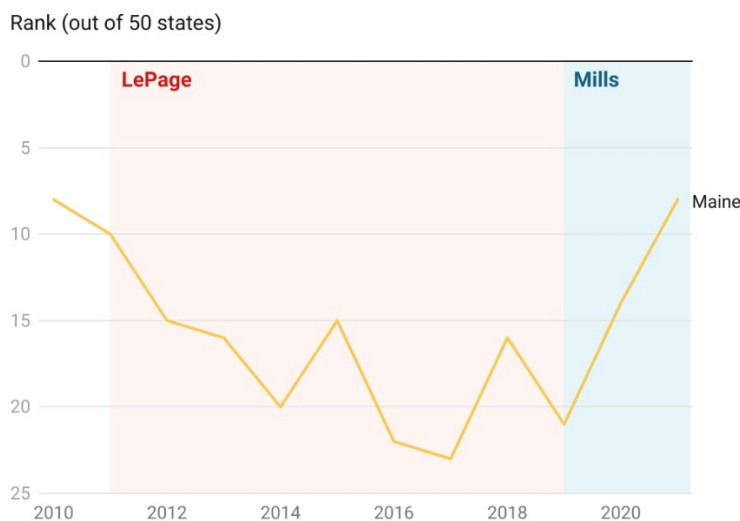
### LePage

- Cut funding for family planning services
- Increased drug costs for older and disabled Mainers by cutting medication assistance programs
- Blocked Medicaid expansion and cut eligibility for Mainers with low income
- Positioned Maine as the only state that didn't increase its share of people with health insurance, including 3,600 fewer children with coverage.
- Maine dropped from 10th best health ranking to 21st

### Mills

- Protected and expanded reproductive care and abortion access
- Reduced medication costs for older and disabled Mainers by restoring funding for medication assistance programs
- Implemented Medicaid expansion, giving 95,000 Mainers access to affordable health care, and increased coverage eligibility for 40,000 children
- Top-rated pandemic response among states
- Maine rose from 21st best health ranking to 8th

***Under LePage, Maine fell from being the 10th healthiest state to 21st —  
Under Mills, Maine improved to 8th healthiest***



Learn more: [bit.ly/healthcareMBTN](https://bit.ly/healthcareMBTN)

Source: United Health Foundation, America's Health Rankings • Created with Datawrapper

**MaineBehindTheNumbers.org — a project of MECEP Action**

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Paul LePage photo by Gage Skidmore



## Cutting access to care

While other states worked to provide more people with health insurance, LePage [worked to take health insurance away](#), disproportionately impacting rural Maine. Beyond rejecting federal funds to expand Medicaid, he [lowered eligibility levels](#) so that many Mainers struggling with low income no longer qualified. Even a single parent earning just \$16,000 a year was considered too wealthy. [Older, rural Mainers](#) faced higher health insurance costs as a result of changes to insurance laws spearheaded by LePage. Older Mainers with fixed incomes were targeted, too — the popular [“Drugs for the Elderly” program](#) was one of the first LePage slashed, leaving thousands of older Mainers unable to afford their medications. LePage also [opposed](#) efforts to expand reproductive care through Medicaid and in 2013 defunded family planning services by [\\$400,000](#), despite research showing that every \$1 of public family planning funding [saves almost \\$5](#) in Medicaid costs. At a time when millions of Americans were gaining access to health care through the Affordable Care Act (ACA), [Maine was the only state](#) to not increase its share of people with health care coverage — by the end of LePage’s term, [3,600 fewer children were insured](#) than before he took office. When Maine voters [rejected LePage’s approach](#) and used the referendum process to force Medicaid expansion in 2017, LePage refused to implement the law, [even when ordered to by courts](#).



## Hollowing out public health systems

LePage’s cut-and-gut approach to state government extended to the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the agency tasked with preparing for and responding to public health emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic. His cuts included ending [state and local public health partnerships](#) and [largely dismantling](#) the nursing program that fills rural health care gaps and acts as the front line defense in public health emergencies. LePage not only [eliminated 111 positions](#) from Maine CDC, he also illegally [refused to fill funded positions](#) even after the legislature passed a law requiring him to do so. When he left office in 2019, only 35 percent of the public nursing positions were filled and Maine CDC was only 70 percent staffed.



## Restoring Maine’s health

[According to America’s Health Rankings](#), Maine went from being ranked 8th in the nation before LePage took office to 21st by the end of his term. Today, Maine is ranked 8th under Governor Janet Mills. [As her first act in office](#), Mills implemented the voter-approved expansion of MaineCare (Maine’s Medicaid), resulting in affordable care for [95,000 Mainers](#). [New laws](#) impacting MaineCare will make as many as 40,000 children newly eligible, provide dental benefits to as many as 190,000 adults, extend postpartum services to new mothers for a full year, and restore eligibility for pregnant and postpartum immigrants and their children that LePage terminated. [New](#)

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Paul LePage photo by Gage Skidmore

[programs](#) will soon make it easier for Mainers to automatically know which plans and subsidies they qualify for and reduce higher fees charged in rural counties. Unlike LePage, Mills has also worked to both protect and [expand access](#) to the full spectrum of reproductive care, including requiring public and private insurers that offer prenatal coverage to include [abortion care](#).



### **Top-rated pandemic response**

Mills' work to rebuild Maine's gutted public health infrastructure was made more challenging by the simultaneous onset of a worldwide pandemic. As of June 2022, Maine had one of [the highest vaccination rates](#) and [one of the lowest death rates](#) in the nation, and Mills' pandemic response earned one of the [highest state rankings](#) by conservative economists. LePage has been critical of Mills' strategy, [holding up South Dakota](#) — a state with a death rate almost [twice as high](#) as Maine's — as a model for pandemic response.

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