

MAINE BEHIND THE NUMBERS

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



ECONOMY

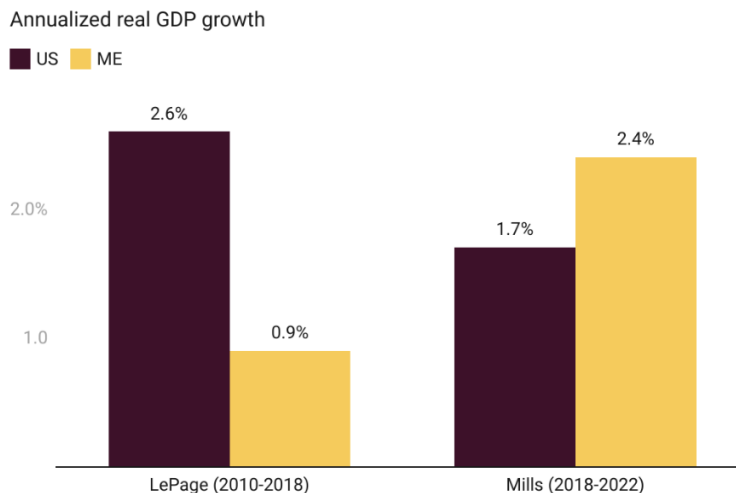
LePage

- Turned away almost \$2 billion in federal funding
- Slashed public services, gave towns less for local services and failed to fully fund schools
- Gutted public health system, leaving Maine vulnerable to the pandemic
- Rural communities saw 7 straight years of economic decline
- 10 years after the recession, Maine was 1 of only 5 states without net GDP growth

Mills

- Leveraging \$2.25 billion in federal funding to build a stronger economy and support Maine's recovery from the pandemic
- Recovered 95,000 jobs lost in the pandemic in just 2 years
- Fulfilled state education funding obligations for the first time in Maine history and restored state funding for local services
- GDP growth and unemployment rate are better than national averages
- Quadrupled the state's "rainy day" fund

Under Mills, Maine's economy has outperformed the national average — under LePage it lagged behind



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Source: MECEP Action analysis US Bureau of Economic Analysis, Quarterly GDP by State in chained 2012 dollars. • Created with Datawrapper

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Paul LePage photo by Gage Skidmore



Trickle down approach thwarted economic growth

While the US GDP grew by 13 percent during LePage's tenure, Maine was one of only five states that [failed to achieve positive net growth](#) a full 10 years after the Great Recession started in 2007. Instead of utilizing [proven financial stabilization](#) and stimulus measures working in other states, LePage adopted the failed "trickle down" approach that amplifies inequality, cutting taxes for the wealthiest Mainers and reducing annual income tax revenue by [\\$895 million](#). To cover the shortfall, he slashed public services, gave towns less than they were due for schools and local services, laid off more than [1,800 state employees](#), and left hundreds of other positions unfilled. [Forfeiting federal funding](#) was another hallmark of the LePage administration. Between 2011 and 2017, almost \$2 billion in federal funds that should have been rippling through Maine's economy were left unclaimed or unspent. LePage's refusal to expand Medicaid not only defied the will of voters, it also left \$500 million in federal funds annually and more than [4,000 jobs](#) on the table. Far from boosting Maine's economy, LePage's policies [extended and amplified the recession's painful impact](#), especially in rural communities where economic growth declined for seven straight years.



Cut-and-gut policies slowed job growth

It took Maine almost [nine years](#) to recover the jobs lost during the Great Recession — [among the worst performance](#) in the nation. Instead of making investments to train, attract, and retain the kind of workforce needed to grow a modern and resilient economy, LePage worked to [suppress wages](#) and [undercut younger workers](#). He opposed raising the minimum wage from \$7.50, even after voters demanded the change that ultimately benefitted [one in three](#) Maine workers. LePage also made it harder for Mainers who lost their jobs to get back on their feet. His unemployment compensation system [denied unemployment benefits](#) to untold numbers of Maine workers out of jobs. He also prohibited unemployed Mainers from accessing [food assistance](#) while stockpiling [\\$155 million](#) in federal funds and improperly spending another [\\$13.4 million](#) intended to support young families. In addition to failing to attract younger workers, LePage's approach resulted in an [aging, underpaid, and urban-based workforce](#) poorly served by gutted state programs and vulnerable to the public health crisis that was to come.



Robust pandemic response

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020, Maine had the oldest and most medically vulnerable population in the nation, an aging workforce supporting a tourism-dependent economy, and public health and social services infrastructure [severely weakened](#) from eight years of budget cuts. Mills mounted a [robust pandemic response](#) that maximized relief funding to shore up public health systems, upgrade

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Paul LePage photo by Gage Skidmore

schools for safe in-person learning, add capacity to massively scale up [food assistance](#) and [unemployment](#) benefits, and quickly deploy testing and vaccination services. Even conservative economists couldn't deny the results, recently awarding an [A grade](#) to Maine's pandemic response. [Compared with other states](#), Maine has the third highest vaccination rate and the sixth lowest death rate. Maine has already recovered almost all of the jobs it lost during the pandemic — [95,000 jobs](#) in just two years — and is currently beating national averages on both [GDP growth](#) and [unemployment rate](#).



Creating a modern Maine workforce

The swift pandemic rebound allowed Mills to do even more to strengthen Maine's workforce and put the state on solid financial footing. While workforce and affordable housing shortages continue to pose serious challenges to Maine's economy, Mills ensured that no federal funding opportunities were left on the table. Directing [\\$1.25 billion](#) in federal relief funds into Maine's economy and launching the sweeping [Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan](#) with another \$1 billion in federal stimulus aid, Mills responded to a wide range of needs of Maine working families and small businesses, including [child care](#), [transportation](#), [workforce development](#), [housing](#), [higher education](#), and [broadband expansion](#). Despite criticism that more of the state's surpluses were not directed at critical needs, bipartisan agreements led to quadrupling the ["rainy day fund"](#) as well as direct [inflation relief](#) payments to Maine households. Mills' approach is already proving to attract young working families. Not only does Maine currently have the seventh highest rate of net [in-migration](#) nationwide, ours is also the only state in the nation [growing younger](#).

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