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## Guest Editorial Foreword

L. Sandy Maisel  
*Colby College*

G. Calvin MacKenzie  
*Colby College*

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## **U.S. Senators from Maine Fifty Years of Influencing the Nation**

### **Guest Editorial Foreword**

For more than half a century, Maine's United States senators have played an unusually large role in national affairs. Margaret Chase Smith called Joseph McCarthy to account in her "Declaration of Conscience" speech and served as the ranking minority member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. She was the first woman to have her name placed in nomination at a major party convention. In 1989, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Edmund Muskie wrote many of the country's environmental laws and was instrumental in the enactment of many other Great Society programs. He was the Democratic vice presidential candidate in 1968, and later served as Secretary of State. In 1981, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

William Cohen voted to impeach a president of his own party in his first term in Congress and then, after 18 distinguished years in the Senate during which he chaired two committees, served as Secretary of Defense in the cabinet of President Bill Clinton.

George Mitchell first rose to national prominence during his intensive questioning of Oliver North in the Iran-Contra Scandal, about which he and Cohen later wrote a best-selling book. Mitchell was the Senate Majority Leader from 1989 until he retired from the Senate in 1994. In his post-Congress years, he has performed important diplomatic roles in the public and private sector, managing the negotiations that led to the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland, serving as a facilitator of peace negotiations in the Middle East, and

chairing the commission that reviewed the steroids problem for major league baseball. In 1999, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Maine's incumbent senators, Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins, have continued the long Maine tradition of moderation and independence in their voting records and have both chaired Senate committees. In the contemporary Senate, where the parties are often closely divided, they inhabit the ideological center and are thus often pivotal votes on major legislation.

Few states, and none as small as Maine, have enjoyed such significant representation in the Senate for so long. In recognition of this, Colby's Goldfarb Center for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement sponsored a conference on the topic of Maine's senators in October of 2009. Papers were prepared and delivered by political scientists, journalists, lawyers, and former Senate staff members. Sen. Olympia Snowe delivered the keynote address.

We are pleased that the *New England Journal of Political Science* has agreed to devote a special issue to this topic. In the articles included in this special issue, readers will find both an overview of the characteristics that have defined Maine's senators and contributed to the election of individuals who rose to national prominence. But here, too, are articles that focus more directly on individual senators and offer insights into their careers and operating styles.

After working with the authors of these articles and listening to their presentations during our conference, we remain uncertain whether it is Maine exceptionalism we should be commemorating in this Journal or simply Maine's good fortune. Whatever the answer, we are grateful for the opportunity to provide the readers of this Journal a chance to review the thoughtful analyses that this topic inspired.

G. Calvin Mackenzie, Colby College  
L. Sandy Maisel, Colby College  
Guest Editors