



Democrats are coalescing around progressive political outsider Graham Platner and his bid to oust incumbent Republican Sen. Susan Collins in Maine after primary rival Gov. Janet Mills ended her struggling bid Thursday.

Mills, who is term limited as governor, jumped into the race late last year as one of Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer's (D-N.Y.) top recruits, but she had trouble gaining traction in polls and fundraising while Platner surged ahead — despite various controversies around his campaign. She ended her bid Thursday in a statement without endorsing Platner.

But Schumer and the Democrats' Senate campaign arm got behind Platner as Mills exited the ring, joining progressive Sens. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), and nearly two dozen state legislators who were expected to endorse on Thursday. The winnowed field adds to Democrats' bullishness about what's expected to be one of the closest Senate races in the country this fall.

"The base couldn't have spoken more clearly," Democratic strategist Christy Setzer said.

"Candidates and electeds who act like we're living in normal times won't fare well," Setzer added. "We're not interested in so-called establishment candidates who are bringing a butter knife to that fight."

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