

NBC's *Today*

07/09/26

7:00:59 a.m.

3 minutes and 15 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Breaking Overnight; Platner Ends High-Stakes Senate Campaign]

CRAIG MELVIN: But we're going to start with our top story this morning, that big political shake-up overnight. Embattled Democratic Senate candidate Graham Platner dropping out of that race in Maine, following a string of sexual misconduct accusations. His decision, of course, coming with some major implications for the upcoming midterm elections and the battle for control of Congress in just a few months. NBC's senior Washington correspondent, Hallie Jackson, starting us off this morning. Hallie, good morning.

HALLIE JACKSON: Hey, Craig, good morning to you. And this news stunning, certainly, if not shocking, considering the chorus of calls that have been building for Graham Platner to get out of one of the most important Senate races in the country. And now, Platner says he will do just that after this new, explosive allegation against him, capping months of controversy. In his announcement, sounding both angry and aggrieved at what he sees as a system working against him. This morning, a political bombshell from a defiant Graham Platner.

GRAHAM PLATNER: We are suspending campaign operations.

JACKSON: The embattled Democratic candidate saying overnight in a video statement he plans to withdraw from Maine's critical U.S. Senate race while also denying a newly surfaced rape allegation against him.

PLATNER: The things that have been claimed did not happen. It's not real.

JACKSON: Platner, also railing against a party apparatus that he says pulled its support, including a vow not to help him raise money.

PLATNER: Those in power, who have the ability to do so, are using these allegations as an excuse to take away all of the things that we need to run a campaign. [SCREEN WIPE] I know that some will think it's an admission of guilt, and it most certainly is not.

JACKSON: Once seen as a rising star, Platner, facing a firestorm these last few days after a former romantic partner, Jenny Racicot, publicly alleged he sexually assaulted her five years ago.

JAKE TAPPER [TO RACICOT] [on CNN's *The Lead*, 07/06/26]: Did Graham Platner rape you?

JENNY RACICOT [on CNN's *The Lead*, 07/06/26]: By definition, yes. Absolutely. [SCREEN WIPE] He violated multiple layers of consent that night.

JACKSON: Now the implosion of Platner's campaign, throwing into chaos a race Democrats saw as their best hope of flipping a Republican Senate seat currently held by Susan Collins. Maine Democrats will have just two and a half weeks to select a replacement for Platner, the state party, saying it'll hold a nominating convention.

MAINE DEMOCRATIC PARTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEVON MURPHY-ANDERSON [on MS NOW's *The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell*, 07/08/26]: And what I care about is that Mainers feel represented in this process, that they feel included in this process, that we have the full transparency every single step of the way.

MELVIN: So, Hallie, perhaps no surprise here, a number of folks have already thrown their hats in the ring to be Platner's replacement in that race. But notably this morning, there's someone who says he's not going to be running. That's making some news. What can you tell us about that?

JACKSON: Yeah, that's right, Craig. He — a familiar face and not just in his home state of Maine. Patrick Dempsey, you may know him as McDreamy from *Grey's Anatomy*. He says he gave real thought to running, but in a new op-ed, Dempsey says, while public service is honorable, he thinks he "can contribute more effectively through the life [he's] already built." As for the candidates who do want to run, this is a process that is going to move fast. There's that July 27 deadline to pick a new candidate, Craig, and then a very truncated sprint until November. Lots of folks watching this.

JACKSON: All right, our senior Washington correspondent, Hallie Jackson with the breaking news. Hallie, thank you.

(...)

8:00:17 a.m. [TEASE]
21 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Major Shakeup]

MELVIN: Coming up, major shakeup. Democratic nominee Graham Platner dropping out of Maine's race —

PLATNER: We are suspending campaign operations.

MELVIN: — while denying a newly surfaced sexual assault allegation.

PLATNER: The things that have been claimed did not happen. It's not real.

MELVIN: Where does the race and the battle for control of Congress go from here? We'll break it down.

(....)

8:03:13 a.m.

1 minute and 35 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Breaking Overnight; Platner Ends High-Stakes Senate Campaign]

MELVIN: We're going to begin with that major upheaval in one of the midterm elections biggest races. Democratic nominee Graham Plant [sic] — Platner dropping out of Maine's closely watched Senate race following a string of sexual misconduct accusations. NBC's Hallie Jackson, our senior Washington correspondent, has the very latest on all of it. Hallie, good morning to you once again.

JACKSON: Hey, Craig, good morning to you, and the news today stunning if not shocking, considering the growing chorus of calls for Democrat Graham Platner to get out of one of the most important Senate races in the country. And now, Platner is doing just that in this video statement, saying he's suspending his campaign operations and plans to withdraw from that race in Maine, denying an explosive, on-the-record rape allegation against him, and railing against a party apparatus that pulled its support, including a vow not to help him raise money. The implosion of Platner's campaign throws into chaos now a race that Democrats saw as their best hope of flipping a Republican Senate seat currently held by Susan Collins. Now, you've got that clock ticking. There's a deadline to pick a new candidate just two and a half weeks away. That's coming up soon. The state party says the whole denominating convention to select a replacement. We know several candidates already overnight and this morning are throwing their hats into the ring, but one person is making headlines for taking themselves out of contention. That's Patrick Demsey, better known as McDreamy from *Grey's Anatomy*. He's from Maine. In a new op-ed, he says he gave real thought to running, but says while public service is honorable, he believes he can contribute more effectively through the life he has already built, Craig.

MELVIN: Alright, no McDreamy in the upper chamber, Hallie Jackson. Hallie, thank you.