Maine is one of the jewels of the earth and one of my favorite places to visit.

Professionally, it’s on the cutting edge of our politics; look at how more and more people are saying they resist the two-party system and wish people—and politicians—would be more pragmatic and less ideological. Well, that’s a big piece of Maine’s political culture, from independent-thinking governors to two Republican senators who often are critical to big national debates.

I traveled to Maine in September 2009 for CNN’s State of the Union, and hearing independents raise so many questions about the Democratic health-care plan was a good lesson in where the national debate was going.

I borrowed a bucket of lobsters to make a point about the political breakdown—perhaps my favorite low-tech graphics, ever!

Personally, I love the ocean and rugged terrain, so Maine has long been a favorite. I dented a few trees skiing in Bethel during my years in high school and have always enjoyed the coastal areas. A few years back, I drove from Burlington across Vermont and into Maine and ultimately down to Boston on a two-week trip to show my children the best of New England. While in Bar Harbor there was a power outage, and I remember Rosalie’s Pizza patiently staying open and feeding people (gas ovens!) and everyone just having that “so-it-goes, might-as-well-make-it-an-adventure” attitude. Plus, while Fenway is heaven on earth, going to see the Sea Dogs and getting a glimpse of a replica of the Green Monster is a great treat. And the Maine microbrews are a special addition to the ball-game experience!