

MNA/2020 – Political Question/survey – Collin Peterson

Top priority: If elected, what is your top priority for the 2021 Congress? Why are you running for office?

My top priority for 2021 will be fighting to rebuild our rural economy and implement policies to help it grow. As Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, I will work on the upcoming farm bill which authorizes farm safety net, conservation and nutrition programs. I will continue work to prepare our livestock industry against the potential for a virus like the African Swine Fever from China. I will also continue to work on policies to support life in Western Minnesota by reforming the Universal Service Fund, so we can build out broadband using the successful model employed to bring telephones to rural America. I believe that my bipartisan approach to governing best represents my constituents in Minnesota and serves as a model for how other committees should operate in Washington.

Economy: How do you grade the federal government's response to the pandemic? Are additional measures necessary to spur the economy? If so, what?

The federal government's response to the pandemic was slow, uncoordinated, and misguided. In May, I co-lead a letter requesting \$250 billion dollars for testing and tracing to stop the spread of the virus. Had that funding been approved, and the Administration implemented a coordinated national testing and tracing strategy, we could have avoided the worst of the public health crisis, and saved the economy trillions. Within our current situation, additional funding will be needed to help businesses, support our healthcare system, assist families in need, and support local governments so they can maintain vital services.

Police reform: Police reform has become center stage since the George Floyd death and has prompted calls for legislative action at all levels of government. What actions do you support at the federal level?

I voted for H.R. 7120, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act which seeks to bring more accountability and transparency to law enforcement. It is unfortunate that looters, rioters and people with extreme agendas have taken away from the message of people who want to see more fair treatment for all Americans.

Foreign affairs: How do you grade President Trump's foreign policy record? Which of his initiatives do you support, and which do you oppose? Be specific.

I agree with the President's pro-Israel policies, his goal of reducing our military presence in the Middle East, and the withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal which was not strong enough to

confront Iran's nuclear ambitions. I am a strong supporter of the US-Mexico-Trade Agreement (USMCA) which provides certainty to American producers. While I understand the need to negotiate better trade deals, the unilateral trade wars have been ineffective and counterproductive to dealing with trade abuses from China. The trade wars have hurt our rural economy.

Health care: Do you support the expansion of Association Health Plans?

Yes, I support additional options that allow people to gain affordable healthcare coverage through associations. Solutions to improving our healthcare system have been stymied by the partisanship around healthcare, so any healthcare solution needs to have buy-in from both parties to have a chance at addressing the pressing needs to make our system more affordable for people in the middle who struggle to pay for coverage.

Education: COVID-19 has had a profound effect on the demands for and delivery of education. What role should the federal government play in ensuring that U.S. graduates can compete in the global economy?

In May I supported the Heroes Act which would have provided billions for school districts to prepare for the unique challenge of the 2020-21 school year. In addition to the need for resources for schools, the biggest unmet need for rural schools is access to high speed broadband for all students. I am leading a bipartisan bill called the Universal Broadband Act which would reform the Universal Service Fund to bring broadband to unserved areas using the successful model used decades ago to bring telephone service to rural areas. This reform would provide a sustained funding source sufficient to expand broadband to the hard to reach areas, and ensure that this service could be updated over time as technology evolves.

Energy: Is the United States doing enough to reduce carbon emissions? What can the federal government do to promote homegrown energy?

I support an all-of-the-above energy policy. In Congress I have supported the tax credits for wind and solar energy, and policies that have supported the development of the natural gas industry. Biofuels are an important homegrown transportation fuel, and I have helped pass the Renewable Fuel Standard which has been critical to the development of this industry. Coal remains an important source of low-cost electricity in rural areas and I support tax credits to help capture the carbon emissions from power plants.

Transportation: What role should the federal government play in funding state and local transportation infrastructure? Be specific.

We all agree that our infrastructure is crumbling, but there hasn't been the political will in Congress act. I have been a long supporter of increasing the federal gas tax. This has not been done since 1993 and is the most straightforward way to increase funding our infrastructure.

Immigration: Immigration reform continues to languish at the federal level. What should be the principles of any legislation?

Our current system is broken which has hurt American workers and American businesses. A reformed system should be enforceable, and help meet many of the shortages we have from agriculture labor to increasing the number of rural doctors. I am a strong supporter of a bipartisan agriculture guest worker program that expands the availability of agriculture labor and increases accountability by requiring employers to participate in the E-Verify to discourage illegal immigration. Reform should also address some of the fairness issues, and legislate a fix for the DACA kids.

Foreign trade: Do you support the president's actions on international trade? Long term, will they help or hurt the U.S. economy?

I was the first Committee Chair to support the USMCA trade agreement and helped bring other Democrats on board to give this trade deal a large bipartisan majority of support in the House. I voted years ago to not allow China into the World Trade Organization (WTO) because I didn't feel they could be trusted to play by the rules. China has been a bad actor, but acting without our allies to confront China's abusive trade practices have hurt our economy with some of the biggest losses coming from farmers and the jobs they support. It could take a long time to get back to the level of agriculture exports we were before the trade wars started.

Other issues: Are there other issues you want to address?

People are disgusted with dysfunction in Washington, and I share their frustration. As the Chairman of the Agriculture Committee, I operate my Committee in a bipartisan manner. I have passed farm bills as a Committee Chairman - but also worked to pass farm bills when in the minority party, because it is the right thing to do for farmers and the rural economy. This doesn't happen in other committees where people settle for getting nothing done rather than doing the hard work of finding a compromise everyone can live with. I have always worked with the President and whoever serves with me in Congress regardless of who belongs to what party. The hyper-partisanship in our country doesn't make it easy to do things this way, but it's how I operate and I'll never change.

Briefly summarize your personal background and qualifications.

I grew up on a farm in Baker, MN, graduated from MSU-Moorhead and served in the National Guard from 1963-1969. I was a Certified Public Accountant and owned a small business in Detroit Lakes, and am a musician and a pilot. Prior to serving in Congress, I was a Minnesota State Senator, and currently in Congress I serve as Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee and am a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee.