

2018 ELECTION QUESTIONS – CONGRESS / Dan Feehan

Top priority: If elected, what is your top priority for the 2019 Congress? Why are you running for office?

Meeting with tens of thousands of southern Minnesotans throughout this campaign, I have consistently heard from them that healthcare is too expensive, real wages are stagnant, and the trade war weakens our economy.

First and foremost, we must ensure that healthcare is affordable, accessible, and high-quality for everyone. In order to do this, I'll work to stop Big Pharma from limiting competition from safe generic drugs, allow Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies, and fight for a public option to add more competition in the insurance market.

By making healthcare more affordable, we can ensure that middle-class families have more money in their pockets, which is especially critical as real wages have stagnated and even declined in recent years. But we must go further if we are going to help middle-class and working-class families achieve economic security. I will fight for real tax reform that cuts taxes for middle-class workers, rather than giving handouts to billionaires, and I will advocate for workforce development training programs that help people qualify for high-paying jobs and re-train them when they find themselves out of work.

Finally, we must end this costly trade war. Our farmers, particularly our soybean growers and pork producers, are struggling because of these reckless tariffs. They do not want a handout, they are looking for access to the markets they opened in the first place. That's why I would stand-up for our farmers, no matter who is in the White House, so that Congress is a co-equal branch of government that has a voice in trade policy. Furthermore, I would work to protect existing markets and create new ones both here locally and across the world.

In order to address these items, we need leaders who are not beholden to party leaders or corporate special interests.

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.

What has discouraged me, not only with this Administration, but with Administration of both parties is the ever-growing power vested to the Executive Branch. Simply put, the Executive Branch wields too much authority, particularly around the use of military force. Furthermore, as a national security expert, I know that our military is strongest when it is not being used. After 17 years of war, our military is overworked and overburdened. This prevents them from fully addressing our country's most pressing national security issues. That is why Congress, as a co-equal branch of government has an obligation to end our perpetual wars and instead authorize use of military force to truly keep our country safe and our government balanced.

We must also ensure that our foreign service is fully staffed and funded. Without diplomacy, our nation risks further conflicts and unending wars. I am deeply concerned that this Administration has not fully embraced the role of diplomacy in solving the world's most complex and pressing issues.

Finally, we must work with our partners and support our allies. People are discouraged and disappointed that this Administration has chosen to alienate our closest allies, which has the impact of threatening our national security and economic prosperity.

If elected, I would ensure that Congress is a co-equal branch of government in foreign affairs, that diplomacy is valued and fully funded, that our military is respected, and that we do not alienate our closest allies across the world.

Health care: What role should the federal government play in combating the opioid epidemic?

We need to ensure that our approach in addressing addiction and the opioid epidemic reflects the experience of families and our communities. Across our state, we have seen an increase in opioid addiction and opioid related death, which doesn't begin to tell the story of how loved ones or our community are affected. As a Congressman, I will first fight to end the stigma around addiction, ensuring that it is recognized as a disease, so that we can help ensure families and individuals are able to access the healthcare services and treatment they need to get well. Secondly, I will focus our efforts across the continuum seeking ways to prevent, respond, treat, and support long-term recovery of opioid addiction to ensure that across our communities we are developing sustainable solutions that not only address the current crisis, but prevent it from growing or happening in the future.

Education: What role should the federal government play in ensuring that U.S. graduates can compete in the global economy? Are there specific measures that you advocate?

In order to keep American workers competitive, I would support educational programs that teach high-demand and emerging skills. This is particularly relevant in the First District of Minnesota, where we are facing a severe shortage in our workforce. Specifically, I would increase incentives for students to pursue apprenticeships, 2-year degrees, 4-year degrees, and advanced degrees in the skilled trades and STEM fields.

But more broadly, as a former middle school teacher in high-needs community, I believe that young people in our K-12 education system must be fully prepared to enter the workforce. We should teach our kids how to think on their feet and problem solve, how to work in teams and as part of a larger group, expose them to modern technology and give them the opportunity to try working with their hands. In Germany, at the age of 10, every student is required to participate in an internship. This shapes their futures and supports the needs of the economy. For this reason, Germany prides itself on one of the lowest youth unemployment rates, while in the U.S., it stands at double that of the national average.

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

Climate change is a problem that affects not just people who live on the coasts, but also our communities right here in southern Minnesota. Our farmers feel the effects of a changing climate most acutely, from record flooding to unpredictable growing and harvesting seasons. That is why

we need to reduce carbon emissions and stop climate change. Furthermore, I am proud that southern Minnesota is leading the charge in fighting climate change by installing solar fields and wind turbines to growing the corn needed for biofuels.

As solar and wind becomes fully cost-competitive with coal and other fossil fuels, it is critical that Congress makes investments in modernizing the electric grid. In its current state, the electric grid is unprepared to distribute electricity if a significant percentage of energy comes from solar or wind; however, this should not stop us. Just as we must fix our roads, bridges, and airports, we must also fix our electric grid. This investment would help create jobs and ensure that we transition to a clean-energy future and future generations of southern Minnesotans.

Debt: Federal entitlements are the main drivers of rising U.S. debt. What specific steps can be taken to keep programs such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid solvent and still serve those individuals in need?

I reject the premise that Social Security and Medicare are entitlements. People who receive Social Security and Medicare have worked their entire lives and paid into the system. We must address the national debt, but we should not balance the budget on the backs of hard-working southern Minnesotans and jeopardize their retirement security.

We can and should address our rising national debt in other ways, namely ending our perpetual war that has gone on for 17 years and cost trillions.

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

I support a major federal investment in infrastructure. First, we must take care of our transportation systems. Our roads, highways, bridges, waterways, and airports are all deteriorating and require much-needed repair and maintenance. But we cannot stop with just our transportation infrastructure.

From there, I would move towards updating our power grid. Our power grid is both vulnerable from attack, which presents a major national security issue, and unsuited for large-scale renewable energy. Investment is needed to create a nationwide smart grid that is both safe from attack and able to meet our energy needs. We must also address our slow internet speeds, which hurt our ability to compete in a global economy. South Korea made a major investment in a robust fiber optic network in the early 2000's that has allowed it to have the fastest internet speeds in the world. The United States can make the necessary investments in a fiber optic system to allow small businesses, especially those in southern Minnesota, to be fully competitive with companies from all around the world.

Economy: Assess the impact of the 2017 federal tax reform on the nation's economy. What additional steps do you support to stimulate job growth?

I believe Congress missed an opportunity by not passing a bipartisan tax reform bill that would have simplified the tax code for both individuals and businesses, provided direct tax relief for

small businesses and the middle class, and not threatened our long-term fiscal health by adding significantly to our national debt.

Instead, Congress chose to push through a partisan tax bill that will add trillions of dollars to our national debt and disproportionately benefit the ultra-wealthy while leaving very little for the middle class.

That is why in Congress, I would work with both parties on a bill that would lower taxes for middle class families and simplify taxes for our small businesses without increasing the deficit. Finally, Congress must pass legislation that increases funding for workforce training programs so that vacancies for good paying jobs all across southern Minnesota are filled. Having a well-trained and highly-qualified workforce ensures that our businesses thrive which in turn creates more jobs in the community.

Immigration: Congress remains deadlocked on federal immigration reform. What should be the tenets of any immigration reform legislation? Do you support DACA?

Our immigration system is broken and it is directly a result of the dysfunction in Washington. We must work together towards comprehensive immigration reform that strengthens our borders and our economy. As I speak with farmers, business owners, and community leaders, they are demanding reform to make sure that our economy and communities are vibrant. This means providing a pathway to citizenship for those who pay their taxes and don't have a criminal record, holding employers who hire undocumented immigrants accountable, and developing a robust guest worker program.

We must implement a clear directive through the Department of Homeland Security for ICE, so that our local and state law enforcement agencies are no longer having to supplement the federal government's role in immigration and customs enforcement. Lastly, I believe that a critical, and often overlooked, component is the need to make a concerted effort to work with other countries to stem the tide of migration under dire circumstances, which has put families and children at significant risk. In Congress, I will work with both parties to achieve the comprehensive immigration reform that is so desperately needed.

Foreign trade: The imposition of tariffs by President Trump has results in retaliation by foreign countries. Do you support the president's actions? Long term, will they help or hurt the U.S. economy?

First and foremost, we must end the trade war. Congress needs to be a co-equal branch of government and check the Executive Branch when they take unilateral actions that hurt our economy. The trade approach of this Administration has been disastrous for farm commodity prices. Soybean prices in southern Minnesota have dropped nearly \$2.00 a bushel over the past year.

Developing markets for farm products across the world requires developing relationships that often take a long time to establish. Unfortunately, trade disputes show how quickly these relationships can be damaged. Our farmers are hurting as a result of trade disputes currently

taking place with some of Minnesota's largest export markets, China, Mexico and Canada. I am open to short term solutions to provide assistance and which help our farmers weather this storm. But ultimately, Minnesota farmers want open markets and a level playing field on which to compete.

Our farmers need markets, both global and local, and I will fight to create and keep markets open so our southern Minnesota farmers can compete on a level playing field.

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

When I served my first tour in Iraq disarming roadside bombs, I learned that no two people share the exact same views on everything. The Army is more diverse than the country itself. But despite our differences and disagreements, we knew that we had a job to do and we could only do it by working together. Throughout my entire career, whether as a soldier, as a teacher, or at the Pentagon, I have worked with people with whom I disagreed with, but we have always gotten things done. After all, I took an oath to support and defend the Constitution as an Army officer. The oath of a Congressman is no different.

First and foremost, I am committed to listening and respecting others. While this is a simple lesson, it is something that many in Congress have clearly forgotten. By having empathy and understanding where others are coming from it helps build mutual trust, even when you don't see eye-to-eye.

Furthermore, in Congress, I will be able to work with others with different political views because I am not interested in playing hyper-partisan games. Instead, I am committed to working with anyone, whether Democrat, Republican, or Independent, to actually improving the lives of southern Minnesotans. We need to raise incomes, ensure healthcare is affordable, accessible, and high-quality for everyone, and strengthen our ag economy. In my career, I have learned that you get things done when you engage partners with different opinions and find consensus on how to accomplish a shared goal instead of assuming that your method is the only right way of doing so.

Briefly summarize your personal background and qualifications.

Growing up here in southern Minnesota, I learned the importance of everyone in a community doing their part, and I have strived to live a life dedicated to serving others. After witnessing first-hand the 9/11 attack on the Pentagon, I joined Army ROTC and went on to serve two combat tours in Iraq where I disarmed roadside bombs and captured dangerous terrorists. Upon returning from Iraq, I taught middle school math in high needs communities, and was then fortunate enough to advocate for our servicemembers and veterans as an acting Assistant Secretary of Defense. These experiences taught me the very real life and death consequences of federal policymaking. In each of these positions, I worked with a very diverse set of individuals and ideologies, and I learned that even when we disagree, we can accomplish tremendous tasks and improve people's lives by working together.