

MNA Political Questions / Senate | Amy Klobuchar

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

Getting things done for the people of Minnesota. It's why I visit all 87 Minnesota counties every year. At a time when not enough is getting done because of gridlock, grandstanding, and the grip big interests have on Washington, I've gotten things done by putting partisanship aside and working with Democrats and Republicans to find ways to strengthen our economy and support Minnesotans. I'm proud to work for our state in the U.S. Senate.

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.

Protecting our nation from those who would do us harm is the first and most important responsibility of our government. While I have long supported diplomatic efforts with North Korea, and am glad the Administration is undertaking negotiations, we will need firm commitments and time tables about nuclear research and development from Kim Jong-un. We must also stand by the world's democracies and our allies, which is why I disagreed with the President when he stated that the NATO alliance was "obsolete" and when he stood next to President Vladimir Putin instead of his own intelligence agencies, failing to hold Russia accountable for attacking our democracy and interfering in our elections.

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

To combat the opioid crisis we must ensure that communities have improved access to evidence-based prevention, treatment and enforcement programs. First, we need to stop people from getting addicted in the first place. That's why I have a bipartisan bill that requires states that receive federal funding have prescription drug monitoring programs that stop the kind of "doctor shopping" that facilitates addiction. I also favor prescription limits for routine procedures. We must also ensure that people who need treatment for addiction receive it, and I worked with a bipartisan group of three senators and introduced the landmark Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA), which was signed into law in July of 2016 and encourages states and local communities to pursue proven strategies in the fight against addiction, including increasing the availability of naloxone. I favor the LifeBOAT Act which would provide resources to expand access to substance abuse treatment. Finally, we must crack down on those who sell and distribute these drugs. In October of 2018, the Senate passed bipartisan legislation -- which includes my bipartisan bills that would close loopholes that allow dangerous synthetic opioids to cross our borders through the mail and make it easier to prosecute the sale and distribution of analogue drugs.

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?

From paper mills to poultry lines, American industry is changing, and to compete in a global economy, we must do a better job of preparing the next generation for the jobs of tomorrow that our businesses are creating today—positions that may not require a Ph.D. or even a four-year degree, but demand specialized training and experience. My own sister didn't go to college, not at first. She got her GED, took the accounting exam in Iowa, and got the highest score in the state. To promote the many different paths to success, I have introduced legislation to allow taxpayers to use tax-advantaged "529" accounts to save money for technical and vocational education programs in addition to traditional four-year colleges. I have also introduced the bipartisan American Apprenticeship Act to provide funding for tuition assistance programs to states for participants in apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs in a variety of industries and occupations. And at a time when more and more jobs require some form of higher education, we simply cannot allow soaring costs to be a barrier to opportunity and must do more to rein in college student debt. If billionaires can refinance their second homes and yachts at a cheaper rate, students should be able to do the same.

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

We need a comprehensive energy strategy that promote the development of energy efficient technologies and homegrown energy resources without burdening our farmers and small businesses. I support the International Climate Agreement and have pushed the Administration to rejoin that Agreement. I also believe that our nation needs to follow Minnesota's lead by adopting national standards for renewable energy. Minnesota is at the forefront of ethanol, biodiesel, and wind energy production and led the nation in 2007 by adopting a renewable energy standard that requires electric utilities to obtain 25 percent of their electricity from renewable sources like wind, solar, and biomass by the year 2025. This state policy—which should be adopted at the federal level—has helped stimulate renewable development throughout Minnesota, bringing in new investment and opportunities to both rural and urban areas

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 will continue to push for sensible reforms to extend the solvency of Social Security and Medicare. That's why I have cosponsored the Keeping our Social Security Promises Act that would extend the solvency of Social Security by 50 years. I have also led legislation that would allow the government to directly negotiate lower drug prices for Medicare Part D so our seniors can have access to their medicines at the lowest possible prices. At the same time, I'll continue to support legislation that promotes sound tax policy, closes loopholes, and puts in place a long-term plan to responsibly reduce the debt with a balanced approach.

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

We need a 21st-century infrastructure network that meets the demands of our 21st-century economy, including safe bridges, modern highways and forward-looking public transportation. I

support establishing an infrastructure financing authority to provide loans to help states and localities fund road, bridge, rail, port, water, and other significant infrastructure projects. And I was one of the first Democratic senators to support the long-term transportation bill called the FAST Act that provided over \$4 billion in funding for Minnesota transportation projects over five years.

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 have long called for a bipartisan approach to tax reform that brings down the business and middle-class tax rates. But tax reform needed to be done responsibly, not by adding \$1 trillion in debt. We must continue to address our nation's long-term fiscal imbalances, and we should close tax loopholes which were not addressed in the 2018 tax reform bill. My focus has been on moving our economy forward by strengthening the fundamentals that lead to sustained economic growth and more good-paying jobs. That means investing in education, updating and enhancing our current policies to focus on training the next generation of workers to compete in a global economy, increasing our emphasis on exports, including for small- and mid-sized businesses, responsibly reducing red tape, and addressing our nation's debt.

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

Passing comprehensive immigration reform has been one of my priorities in the U. S. Senate. A comprehensive immigration reform bill should include the prioritized enforcement of existing laws, enhanced border security, DACA (also known as the DREAM Act), an accountable pathway to earned citizenship and reforms to our visa system, including a new agricultural guest worker visa program. I will continue to work to pass the DREAM Act, which allows immigrants brought to the United States as children, through no choice of their own, to stay in the only country they consider home – as well as comprehensive immigration reform, which we must pass for the good of our economy and our country.

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?

Exports are critical to our Minnesota's economic success and our state is the fourth biggest agricultural exporting in the country. With 95 percent of the world's potential customers living outside our borders, opening up new markets and lowering trade barriers is critical to our country's economic growth. That's why I am the lead sponsor on the bipartisan bill to lift the trade embargo on Cuba. As for tariffs, we must come back to the negotiating table and work with our allies so we have trade agreements instead of tariffs. As the co-chair of the US/Canada Senate group, I am pleased that Minnesota's number one trading partner Canada is back in the mix in our renegotiation of NAFTA, and we must continue to work with our allies to avoid triggering a trade war that harms Minnesota manufacturers and farmers. One example of this is small-town newspapers. I co-sponsored the PRINT Act—which would have suspended the import duties on uncoated groundwood paper from Canada. I'm glad that the United States International Trade Commission found that these import duties were unwarranted.

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

When I first came to Congress, my number one ask was to be on the Senate Agriculture Committee and I have loved working on behalf of rural Minnesota. I firmly believe that kids who grow up in rural Minnesota should be able to live there. And I will continue to push for a strong Farm Bill that will move our rural economy forward. I worked hard to ensure that the Senate Farm bill includes a strong safety net for farmers, important conservation provisions, support for our dairy farmers, as well as my provisions to create an animal disease and disaster response program and vaccine bank.

And Minnesota has always enjoyed a reputation for high voter turnout, and for fair and clean elections. As Ranking Member of the Senate Rules Committee, I've been working to get dark money out of politics, safeguard our election systems from foreign interference, and restore the Voting Rights Act.

Briefly summarize your personal background and qualifications.

I've been guided by the values I learned growing up in Minnesota. My grandpa worked 1,500 feet underground on the Iron Range. My dad Jim was a newspaperman, and my mom Rose was an elementary school teacher who taught second grade until she was 70. My husband, John, is a native of Mankato, and we have a daughter, Abigail.

When Abigail was born, she was very sick. And even though she was in intensive care, the hospital discharged me after just 24 hours. As a result, I became an advocate for the successful passage of one the first laws in the country guaranteeing 48-hour hospital stays for new moms and their babies.

As Hennepin County Attorney, I headed the largest prosecutor's office in Minnesota. In 2006, I became the first woman elected to the United States Senate in our state's history and the Medill News Service reported I ranked first of 100 senators in sponsoring or cosponsoring bills enacted into law during the last Congress. Serving in the U.S. Senate, my focus is on what's right for Minnesota. That's why I work across the aisle to find ways to strengthen our economy and support Minnesota families, workers, and businesses.