

## Minnesota Newspaper Association

### U.S. HOUSE QUESTIONS 2014

#### **1. Top priority: If elected, what is your top priority for the 2015 Congress? Why are you running for office?**

The economy is my top priority. Congress should balance the budget and pay down our enormous debt. Congress needs to stop spending money it doesn't have. Think of the good we could do with the hundreds of billions of dollars we waste every year on interest -- money for important priorities, including education and infrastructure. Improving the economy means improving the financial security for all families. We need good, well-paying jobs for everyone. Higher education (college and vo-tech) must be affordable and geared toward actual job opportunities. The middle class has suffered too much -- we must do more to ensure that everyone has a path to a thriving middle-class.

I've lived in the district virtually all of my life. I care deeply about our community and want to do my part to make a positive difference for everyone. I'm running for office because I am frustrated by the dysfunction in Washington. Both parties in Congress are too focused on fighting each other rather than working for the people. The people are my only special interest. I am a problem solver and will work tirelessly with everyone -- Republicans, Democrats and Independents -- to actually get good things done. I'm particularly concerned about the federal debt and how much money we waste on interest every year. With my economics degree and focus, I'm well suited to help us solve this problem.

#### **2. Foreign affairs: More than half of Americans say President Obama is not tough enough in his foreign policy and they believe the world is getting more dangerous with the Islamic State posing one of the greatest security issues, according to the latest Pew Research poll. Should the United States be more aggressive in its foreign policy? Be specific.**

The Pew Research Poll's question was not just about foreign policy, but also national security. National security and foreign policy are inextricably linked, but national security should drive foreign policy not the other way around. National security is always mission critical. But, that does not mean we should fight every possible threat abroad. We cannot be the world's police. We can, however, focus on making sure we are secure. If our homeland is secure, we are protected from all threats, anticipated and unexpected. If we try to achieve security by chasing down specific known threats, that leaves us vulnerable to all others.

ISIS, specifically, is powerful and brutal. But, there are plenty of "bad guys" in the world and we don't, and can't, go after them all. ISIS may wish us great harm, but the reality is they can't reach us here in a conventional military way. ISIS is not America's concern alone. A broad coalition is essential to combat the threat of ISIS. While the U.S. will take the lead in ensuring our own national security, others actually in the region must join together, particularly on the ground, to forge the long-term solution for peace and stability.

As of October 1, our military operations targeting ISIS in Iraq and Syria have already cost close to \$1 billion. The projected ongoing costs are staggering. Our national debt is already too high. If we're going to increase spending anywhere, Congress first needs to have a plan to pay for it.

**3. Health care: Cost and quality of health care is an ongoing concern. What can be done at the federal level to ensure Americans have access to quality and affordable health care? Do you support changes in the Affordable Care Act?**

All people, including those with pre-existing conditions, should have access to affordable health insurance. There are plenty of problems with the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), including policy and administrative costs. Implementation has been difficult and disruptive, with many not able to keep their existing plans or their own doctors. The real problem with Obamacare, however, isn't administrative. It simply doesn't address our more pressing healthcare issues.

Our healthcare costs are far too high. We need to cut costs for everyone. Obamacare is aimed at re-allocating, not reducing, costs. We have the most expensive healthcare system in the world, which might be fine if we had the best healthcare or the best health in the world, but we don't. In fact, we have poor outcomes compared to others (who spend much less per capita). We need to work toward a healthcare system which costs us all less and provides more – we know that's possible because plenty of others are already doing just that. The federal government should not interfere in, let alone run, our healthcare industry. We need to unleash the market so it can innovate, compete freely and provide us all with more effective, efficient and affordable healthcare. We need more transparency about healthcare costs and quality, enabling us to choose good, cost-effective providers. Insurance should be portable, not limited by state lines or particular employers. We need to improve the actual healthcare system in America.

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

We must make sure that every child has access to a great education. Needs of every child, school and neighborhood are best addressed locally, at the state level rather than from Washington, DC. We need to stop spending our education dollars in Washington, so our money stays here and goes directly to Minnesota students. Education dollars should follow each student, not schools, so parents can choose where to send their children to school.

Colleges and other vocational schools must be affordable. College costs have escalated beyond what's reasonable or necessary. We need to think outside the current model and lead education on a path that's both more effective and less expensive. The federal government's involvement in the student loan business doesn't make sense. We're borrowing money to lend to students. Easy access to federal money enables schools to be careless and inefficient, and charge too much. Others in the financial industry should provide student loans. Perhaps schools should guarantee these loans, helping ensure that education programs are tailored to actual work opportunities.

**5. Energy: Do you support removing barriers to increased domestic oil and natural gas production?**

We should become energy independent. We have the natural resources and technology to do so. Being energy independent would create good jobs, strengthen our economy and reduce our dependence on the Middle East.

We should drill for oil and natural gas where we can do so in a safe and economically efficient manner. Environmental issues should be duly considered. Appropriate projects should proceed without being hindered by unnecessary regulations which are often confusing, cost too much and take too long.

Opportunities for safe and profitable oil and gas production on federal land and offshore sites should be considered. This is a federal resource, a federal asset, which could be used to help pay off our national debt.

**6. Social Security/Medicare: What role should these entitlement programs play in Americans' retirement plans? Be specific in any changes you may support in the existing programs to ensure they remain solvent.**

We need to ensure that both Medicare and Social Security get on a long-term trajectory which is sustainable. For Medicare, we need to bring down healthcare costs. We can do that and improve healthcare itself. The current system rewards inefficiency and unnecessary spending. We need to give seniors a real voice in their own healthcare, enable and reward smarter use of health services and allow the market to innovate, finding cost-effective ways to deliver good care. We also need an effective team approach to managing complex or chronic conditions.

With regard to Social Security, seniors need to be assured that the rug won't be pulled out from under them. Any changes to Social Security need to be made over time, so everyone can plan accordingly. Any surplus should be invested better so it works harder for us and earns more interest. Social Security's ability to pay retirees has always depended on revenue from current workers. We need a stronger economy, with more workers participating and higher wages, to strengthen Social Security.

**7. Economy: What steps do you support to stimulate the growth of jobs?**

This is a critical issue. What we need to do is clear: First, cut the national debt and balance our budget. If businesses have confidence about the financial health of our country, they will spend more of the money they have, investing in their own business and creating new jobs. Second, we need to reduce unnecessary federal regulations which harm businesses, particularly small businesses, by costing them far too much money – that money could be used to hire more employees. Finally, we need to make sure we have a thriving middle class. We need more people and families with money to spend on all sorts of goods and services because that's what will ultimately create more jobs.

**8. Agriculture: The proposed definition of the Waters of the U.S. would subject nearly any property owner, including farmers, to new layers of reviews and permitting. Do you support this proposal?**

I, like most of us, truly enjoy Minnesota's lakes – certainly one of the best natural resources we have. I care deeply about the quality of the water in our lakes. Caring about clean water doesn't mean, however, that everything proposed by the EPA is appropriate. Small business owners and farmers have raised significant concerns about the EPA's proposed new definition of water. Congress needs to do more to ensure that no federal agency overreaches with burdensome regulations which end up doing more harm than good.

**9. Immigration: Do America's immigration laws need to be changed? What should be the tenets of any immigration reform legislation?**

Our borders should be more secure. A secure border is essential for our actual security and is a basic element of sovereignty. Also, millions of Americans are out of work, and we need to be sure our fellow Americans aren't losing out on scarce job opportunities to those who are not here legally.

Congress should stop fighting and start working together to solve this problem. We should disincentivize those who are contributing to the problem including those who are not here legally, those who bring them here, the governments to our south whose own borders are too porous and whose own economies are too weak, and employers who knowingly employ undocumented workers.

We must work toward an economy where we need more workers. Ultimately, the best way to stem the tide of illegal immigration is to make way for more legal immigration.

**10. Open records: The federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is widely regarded by citizens and the news media as being deeply flawed and often completely ineffective in achieving the purposes that it was enacted to serve. Would you support a federal study aimed at identifying reforms that could be made to the FOIA, so that it in the future it will function more effectively on behalf of citizens?**

I am in favor of more transparency in government. America is great because our government is of the people, by the people and for the people. Being able to review government information, with limited exceptions, is vital. The government should not waste time or resources trying to hide information from the people. I would support improvements to the FOIA. I do not, however, know that a special study is needed. Before enacting any legislation Congress should be well informed about its impact, effectiveness and cost, and should have a process for ongoing review of regulations so appropriate changes can always be made.

**11. Other issues: Are there other issues you want to address?**

One of the biggest issues we need to address is the dysfunction in Congress, where nothing gets done because the two sides won't stop arguing. Enough! We need Congress to work together for the people, not special interests, on things that really matter -- jobs, education, the economy, the national debt. We need to elect new people, with new ideas and new approaches, so Congress can function better and actually get good things done.

**12. Briefly summarize your personal background and qualifications.**

I grew up on East of St. Paul and graduated from Harding High School. I have degrees in Economics and Political Science and a minor in International Relations from the University of Minnesota. I worked for Senator Rudy Boschwitz in Washington, DC on his Small Business Committee staff. I graduated, with honors, from law school at the University of Minnesota, and practiced law for the past 20 years. I have always been involved in our community, and currently serve on the Board of a number of non-profit organizations, including the Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies.

I put people ahead of party or politics. I'll work with everyone -- Republicans, Democrats and Independents -- to actually get good things done. I am truly a people person who cares deeply and has the energy necessary to serve our community well.

I am driven to solve problems. I have an economics degree, preparing me well to handle our pressing economic issues.

I am not a career politician. To change Washington, we need to change who we send there. Sending a career politician won't change anything. My 20-year career has been in the private sector, working with a wide variety of businesses, large and small, to think outside the box and solve all sorts of problems.