

2018 ELECTION QUESTIONS – CONGRESS MNA / OMAR

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

Investing in education - We must ensure that children are set up for success at a young age by guaranteeing access to pre-kindergarten and childcare. We must eliminate the need to borrow for college, and make an investment in debt-free college so that everyone, regardless of their income or zip code, has access to a public education.

I am an organizer and a coalition builder. I believe in a democracy that guarantees a more equitable and just society. A society that gets us closer to the American promise and the America we deserve. With the support of the people in Minnesota's Fifth Congressional District, we will advance a progressive agenda to move our district, our state and our nation forward. This means investing in education, including debt-free college; guaranteeing healthcare for all; and welcoming immigrants into our country and providing them with pathways to citizenship. Together, we will fight back against those who seek to divide us with the politics of fear and scarcity.

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 give President Trump an F in his foreign policy record. We are currently engaged in a number of wars that have no end in sight—Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Somalia. These wars have destabilized regions, created massive humanitarian crises, and continue to hurt our image across the world. We must end these wars, and we must avoid military-use as a last resort in the future. I would support the following initiatives:

- **Reduce total spending on the military from its projected FY 2019 levels of \$886 billion and reinvest that money into healthcare, education, housing, jobs, clean energy, and infrastructure**
- **Cut the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) that has been called the Pentagon's 'slush fund'. In 2017, the OCO budget increased by 41% to \$82.4 billion.**
- **Eliminate wasteful military programs like the F-35 fighter jet program, saving taxpayers \$1 trillion dollars total**
- **Scale back the number of US military bases across the world**

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

The right to healthcare extends to being able to access prescription drugs at an affordable price. Americans pay the highest prices to access the drugs they need to survive. Instead of accepting donations from the pharmaceutical industry, I will work to hold them accountable. Medications are too expensive and we must act boldly to lower prices.

- **Shorten the patent life of prescription drugs**
- **Allow the import of prescription drugs from Canada**
- **Allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices**
- **Require transparency in pharmaceutical pricing**
- **Enforce antitrust laws with pharmaceutical companies**

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?

Education is a pathway to greater opportunity and economy security. However, over the past few decades, the federal government has failed to invest in education. We must ensure that children are set up for success at a young age by guaranteeing access to pre-kindergarten and childcare.

The inability to pay tuition should not be a deterrent for any student seeking to go to college. Making public two- and four-year colleges and universities accessible is essential to investing in an equitable future. College graduates are burdened with student debt. Over a trillion dollars in potential stimulus to local economies is tied up in student debt. I support the following measures:

- **Guarantee tuition-free and debt-free two- and four-year public colleges and universities**
- **Expand funding for Federal Pell grants and ensure they can be used to cover all expenses for college, such as housing, books, food, etc**
- **Cancel all \$1.4 trillion dollars in student debt**

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

The United States is not doing enough to reduce carbon emissions. We need bold action, and a transformation of our political and economic systems to combat climate change. We need a complete shift away from fossil fuels. We must build a green society; invest in alternative energy sources and energy efficiency programs. Energy efficiency alone is

predicted to keep over \$2 trillion in the pockets of Americans by 2030, and will create millions of jobs and begin to beat back climate change.

- **Support the legislation like the Off Fossil Fuels for a Better Future Act (OFF Act), which would put us on a path to 100% renewable energy by 2035**
- **Invest in access to renewable energy for communities that have been most impacted by the impacts of climate change and ensure that renewable energy is affordable for all**
- **Support the Keep It in the Ground Act, which would prohibit new extraction on fossil fuels sitting below federal lands and water**
- **Restore and strengthen the Clean Power Plan**

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?

Instead of providing tax cuts to the top 1%, we should provide robust funding for programs such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Specifically, Congress should repeal the 2016 Trump tax cuts, specifically the income tax, the corporate tax, and the estate tax.

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

We must revitalize our infrastructure to support the health of our people and our planet. A 21st Century infrastructure will improve our quality of life from removing toxins like lead and asbestos from our homes to connecting communities with high-speed rail, to affordable high-speed internet for everyone.

- **We need a \$2 trillion investment in our energy, water and transportation systems**
- **We must fully fund the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) which invests \$4 billion in Minnesota and expires in 2020:**
 - **First federal transportation bill enacted in over ten years that provides long-term funding for infrastructure planning and investment**
 - **Funded through the Highway Trust Fund (HTF), which is funded by the federal motor fuels tax**
 - **Expiration would mean the HTF faces a shortfall of \$18 billion**

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?

Providing tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy have crippled our ability to invest in areas that expand economic growth like infrastructure and education. Congress should repeal the 2016 Trump tax cuts, specifically the income tax, the corporate tax, and the estate tax, in order to adequately pay for critical programs like our public education, and infrastructure.

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 fundamentally unjust. Instead of extending humanity and compassion to migrants and refugees, we treat them as criminals. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has become increasingly militarized, brutal, and unaccountable. However, we must not simply revert back to the immigration system that preceded ICE. We must welcome immigrants into our country and provide them simple and accessible means to becoming documented.

- **Create a fair and accessible pathway to legal status and citizenship for all undocumented people living in the United States**
- **Pass a clean DREAM Act that also creates a pathway to permanent status for "DREAMers" and their families**
- **Fight to extend Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure for all countries currently listed, and create a mechanism for them to receive permanent status and citizenship**
- **Expand the number of refugee and asylum-seekers admitted to the United States**

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?

Free trade agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) were passed on the promise that they would help workers across the continent. However, the opposite happened. Jobs have left the United States, multinational corporations exploit working people and lobby against any labor and environmental protections.

- **Invest in a robust Trade Adjustment Assistance program that provides support for workers who have lost their jobs due to the impact of trade**

- **Eliminate NAFTA’s investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) that empower corporations to attack environmental and public health protections**
- **Add strong, enforceable environmental and labor standards to the core text of NAFTA’s agreement**
- **Require governments to prioritize policies that minimize climate pollution by including a “climate impact test” for policy making**

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

Briefly summarize your personal background and qualifications.

Rep. Ilhan Omar is the highest-ranking Somali-American, Muslim woman elected in the United States. She serves as the Assistant Minority Leader at the Minnesota Legislature. Before being elected to office, Ilhan was a Humphrey Policy Fellow and served as a senior Policy Aide for a Minneapolis City Council Member. Through advocacy work with which she’s been involved, she’s advanced important issues, including support for working families, educational access, environmental protection, and racial equity.