

## **2018 ELECTION QUESTIONS – CONGRESS | Colin Peterson**

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

*I'm running to be an independent voice on the issues for the people of Minnesota's Seventh District in Washington DC. It's an honor to serve as the top Democrat on the House Agriculture Committee, and my top priority is keeping rural America strong by negotiating a bipartisan farm bill that makes sense for farmers, ranchers and consumers across the country. I'm also focused on advocating for our veterans and our troops, and all those who serve.*

**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 support the effort to engage long-time adversaries like North Korea and Iran in constructive dialogue in the interest of finding better relationships between our countries, and the work the president has done on that front is admirable, although there is still much to do. Where I am certainly not sold is on the president's trade policy, which has put Minnesota corn, soybean and hog operations directly in the crossfire. Certain estimates place losses to net farm income in our region at 25 percent just in the last year. That's on top of a 50 percent decline since 2013. Our farmers depend on robust markets in China and Mexico, and the president needs to take a far more diplomatic approach on trade.*

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

*Drug overdose deaths in Minnesota have been steadily increasing since 2000 mostly as a result of opioid abuse. I have called for the federal government to declare the opioid epidemic as a national emergency, which would allow for FEMA funds to combat addiction. We also need to fully fund more than 30 federal programs that support prevention, treatment, law enforcement and recovery initiatives.*

*Last year I sponsored the RESTORE Act to restore the DEA's authority to carry out needed enforcement actions to combat the epidemic and keep our communities safe and healthy. I also have asked the Office of Management and Budget to provide Congress with a comprehensive proposal to provide additional funding in the next supplemental appropriations bill.*

**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?

*I would like to see more of an emphasis on work training and technical and community college programs to train people for the manufacturing and trades jobs that are available today. While I believe the federal government should continue to provide resources for students, I also support returning more control about how to educate children to parents and local educators. Finally, I think we need to bring down the cost of a college education, and let students refinance their loans at lower rates.*

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

*I'm for an "all of the above" energy policy. I support the safe production of oil and natural gas as well as the pipelines needed to get this energy to market. We've made a lot of strides in improving the technology and cost of renewable energy over the last decades, and I'm proud of the work Minnesota's corn and soybean farmers have done to lead the charge on biofuels like ethanol and biodiesel, but we need to make sure the administration doesn't drop the ball on the Renewable Fuel Standard so we can keep those industries going as well.*

**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?

*The National Debt continues to be a large and growing issue. In the late 90s, we were on a path to pay down the debt, but the Bush tax cuts and unpaid wars contributed to a weakened financial position. I will continue to be a voice in the middle willing to do the right thing to get our fiscal house in order. However, we cannot try to balance the budget on the backs of seniors or break our promise to them after spending their lives paying into the program.*

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

*We all benefit from a strong transportation system with connected roads, rail and airports. Part of the federal responsibility has been to keep these systems efficient and modern. We have fallen behind in providing the funds necessary to keep up with a growing economy. That is why I support common sense measures like increasing the gas tax, which hasn't kept up with inflation. I also support provisions to help local communities respond to the impacts of increased rail traffic.*

**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?

*While many people will get a modest temporary tax cut under the 2017 tax bill, others will see their taxes go up if they face high medical expenses, pay high state and local taxes, or have families with many children. I believe this bill will make the tax system more complicated for many small businesses while adding up to \$2 trillion to the nation's debt. It was a missed opportunity to promote real economic growth, simplify our tax code, and help the middle class. To stimulate job growth, we should streamline and eliminate burdensome regulations which add costs to businesses. I also support consistent, predictable and reliable investments in infrastructure like roads, broadband and water infrastructure that helps businesses and communities grow more efficiently.*

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

*Partisan politics has made it difficult to make the changes needed to create sound immigration policy while addressing security and workforce needs. In agriculture we have produce rotting on the vine because of a lack of labor. We also send away newly minted PhDs from US universities in science and math because they can't get the permits needed to stay. This hurts Minnesota businesses who want to expand their operations here. I have been supportive of strong border enforcement and screening processes to make sure we have a balance between our security and economic needs. Congress needs to find a solution to the DACA situation so that these young people can have some certainty moving forward.*

**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?

*So far, I don't see any positives from the president's trade policy. Not only has it put our farmers in harms way, it's made the basic goods that Minnesota families buy every day more expensive. Simple staples like canned goods are more expensive because of tariffs on aluminum. The parts our manufacturers use are more expensive because of steel tariffs. Our cell phones are more expensive because of tariffs on components out of China. It's a foolish mistake to think that trade exists in a vacuum, and groups from across agriculture and industry repeatedly warned the president that tariffs would lead to retaliation that punished them and our consumers as a result.*

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

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

*I grew up on a farm in Baker, MN and attended Minnesota State University Moorhead before becoming a small business owner and CPA in Detroit Lakes. I served in the National Guard, and in the Minnesota State Senate before being elected to Congress in 1990. I serve a primarily rural and agricultural district that spans more than 35,000 square miles of western Minnesota.*