

2018 ELECTION QUESTIONS – CONGRESS | Joe Radinovich

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

I believe the biggest challenge facing working families across this district are the pressures brought on by our changing economy as a result of increased mechanization and globalization. As our nation grows wealthier and more productive than ever, workers are not sharing in that increased productivity and have experienced stagnant wages for the better part of the last 40 years. My top priority will be to champion policies that equip working families to adapt to these changes in our economy. First, this means protecting retirement security in the form of Social Security, Medicare, pensions, and the unions that fought for them. Second, I'll prioritize investing in the people and places that built this country by building border to border broadband access, providing early childhood scholarships to reduce the cost burden of child care on working parents, and adopting a system of universal healthcare through a Medicare-for-All approach. Finally, we need to change the way we do politics in this country by removing the corrosive influence of dark money flowing into our elections so that we can elevate our political discourse and begin to build the trust necessary to enact policies that benefit the public good, and not simply the wealthiest and 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.

Overall, I think that both the President's words and actions have had negative consequences for America's reputation and standing amongst the international community. I often struggle to see any coherent foreign policy strategy from this administration. As someone who is deeply skeptical of unilateral military intervention, I am supportive of the President's attempts to resolve the North Korean nuclear situation through diplomacy and negotiations as opposed to "fire and fury." However, I oppose the President's decision to unilaterally withdraw from the JCPOA with Iran, Russia, and our European allies. This agreement committed Iran, in writing, to never pursuing a nuclear weapon, drastically reduced Iran's nuclear stockpile, increased its breakout time, and ultimately, withdrawing undermined our credibility as a collaborative actor with our international partners.

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

The federal government can and should play an important role in combating the opioid epidemic in several ways. First, the federal government should provide the financial resources necessary to scale programs that we know are working. For example, right here in the 8th district, St. Gabriel's Hospital in Little Falls is leading the fight against the opioid crisis with their innovative holistic approach to opioid addiction treatment, that brings medical professionals, social services, law enforcement, and non-profits together in a collaborative effort to treat those who are facing opioid abuse disorder. Second, to fund these types of programs, the federal government should wrestle control back from the interests of big pharmaceutical companies and put the people first by passing bipartisan "penny-a-pill" legislation similar to that proposed by State Rep. Dave

Baker (R-Willmar) and State Sen. Chris Eaton (DFL-Brooklyn Center). It's only fair that the pharmaceutical companies, who have profited to the tune of billions of dollars off the opioid crisis, should pay the bill to clean up their mess and not leave the public to foot the 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 believe in debt-free two-year community and technical colleges for everyone. We know that these institutions are nimble and responsive to local economies. Proposals like the America's College Promise Act would give students the opportunity to access quality and affordable higher education that gives them the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the 21st century economy. We need to prioritize investments in education for working class families above tax giveaways for millionaires and billionaires. I'll fight to make Minnesota families a priority in Congress.

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

I believe we need to move toward cleaner sources of energy and reduce the amount of greenhouse gases we emit, but we need a transition that keeps our blue-collar and union workforce employed as part of that move to more renewable and reliable energy sources. The federal government can do its part to promote homegrown energy by reauthorizing and expanding popular programs like the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). LWCF takes in annual royalties from oil and gas companies that pay to drill on the Outer Continental Shelf - and invests that money to expand access to public lands for hunting and recreation, conserve natural habitat, build and repair local parks and playgrounds, and acquire and protect historic sites.

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?

If elected, I will strongly oppose any plan that cuts seniors' benefits like Social Security or Medicare or privatizes these vital programs, including implementing so-called "chained CPI," raising the retirement age, means-testing recipients, and employing vouchers. I support requiring millionaires and billionaires to pay a higher percentage of their income in Social Security taxes. We must protect these programs, not turn them over to private insurance companies. Social Security and Medicare are earned benefits that seniors started paying for since their first day on the job.

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

The Federal Government does and should play a major role in funding our nation's infrastructure.

We owe it to our state and local governments to provide them with stable, long-term transportation funding so they can properly plan for their infrastructure needs.

Investing in our infrastructure will eliminate barriers for expanded business development and job creation and redirect these resources into quality American roads, highways, bridges, ports, airports, and waterways. Our economic success depends on strong investments in our transportation infrastructure.

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?

The impact of the 2017 federal tax reform on the nation's economy and on middle class Minnesotans is a major point of disagreement between my opponent and me.

My opponent wholeheartedly supports his party's plan that gives 83 percent of the benefits to the top 1% while ultimately raising taxes on middle class Minnesotans and adding \$1.9 trillion dollars to the national debt. My opponent and his Republican allies support cuts to Social Security and Medicare as a means to pay for their tax giveaways to the wealthy and corporations.

I have opposed it, primarily because of the harm and damage it will cause to our retirement security programs and the lack of benefits that have failed to trickle down to the middle class. For example, in the months following the tax bill's enactment, the Medicare and Social Security Trust Funds released their annual report that Medicare is now projected to become insolvent three years earlier than projected - specifically because of decreased revenues from the Republican tax bill. And, for millions of Americans, wages have not increased; instead, workers in non-supervisory roles have seen their wages fall. It is ridiculous that construction workers, like my brother and cousin, can no longer deduct their travel expenses while corporations can still deduct the cost of another corporate jet. I will strongly oppose any efforts to cut Social Security and Medicare in order to pay for tax giveaways to millionaires and billionaires.

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

The major tenets of any immigration reform legislation must address border security, legalization of the undocumented, interior enforcement of immigration laws, and fix our dysfunctional legal immigration programs.

This framework was outlined in S.744, the bipartisan bill passed by the Senate on a vote of 68-32 and the most monumental overhaul of U.S. immigration laws in a generation. It also included key provisions to resolve the DACA program, which I support.

Unfortunately, House Republicans blocked the bill from ever being considered.

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?

The Section 232 tariffs imposed by the President have been helpful for northern Minnesota's Iron Range but the administration's approach is overly broad: there's about 18,000 good paying jobs in the 8th Congressional District directly dependent on \$4 billion in goods and services exported across the northern border of Minnesota every year to Canada that are endangered because of President Trump's trade war. Furthermore, it should be noted that many of the mining jobs were already on their way back, with much of the turnaround owed to Denis McDonough's visit to the Iron Range in December 2015 and President Obama's administration. I can't support any trade policy that pits miners against farmers, or any other sector of our economy. We need smart trade policy that is good for everyone, and we can do it. That's how we'll grow the middle class together.

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

Briefly summarize your personal background and qualifications.

I first got involved in politics as a student when I protested budget cuts to our local school resulting from Pawlenty and the GOP's draconian cuts to K-12 public education. Since then, I have worked as a union organizer and was elected to the state legislature at the age of 26, where I made fighting for funding for rural schools my top priority and was able to succeed in securing more equitable funding. I was also proud to support a minimum wage increase, the Women's Economic Security Act, statewide all-day kindergarten and marriage equality during my one term in the State House. In 2015, I served as assistant commissioner of the IRRRB where I lead the agency's work on rural broadband and downtown revitalization. In 2016, I successfully lead Congressman Nolan's campaign- the most expensive and competitive race that cycle- by delivering a message that championed Social Security, Medicare, pensions, affordable healthcare, and the unions that have lead in the fight for those things. Most recently, I served as chief of staff to the mayor of Minnesota's largest city which gave me first-hand experience with the unique challenges that big cities, like Duluth, are facing. I have worked in a variety of capacities across this district in a way that best equips me to represent the people of Northern Minnesota.