

MINNESOTA NEWS ASSOCIATION: 2018 ELECTION QUESTIONS – SENATE / Tina Smith

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

The number one issue I hear about from Minnesotans is the rising cost of health care, including the skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs. As Senator, I have introduced multiple pieces of legislation aimed at closing a loophole that big drug companies use to keep generics off the market and holding big drug companies accountable when they game the system to hike up prices.

I'm running to keep this U.S. Senate seat to continue working on legislation to lower the cost of prescription drugs to make sure every Minnesotan can lead a healthy, financially secure life.

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.

Our government should always be working to protect our country's safety and prosperity. I am deeply concerned that the Trump administration's actions put these core values in jeopardy. I am especially concerned that his foreign policy agenda will serve to destabilize relations with our allies and isolate us as a country.

We saw this when the Trump administration pulled out of the Paris Climate Agreement, in his dealings with leaders of allied nations, and especially in the case of the administration's recent implementation of tariffs on goods from countries like China. I've heard from Minnesotans across the state that these tariffs are hurting their businesses, particularly on our farms. And not only that, these tariffs are creating a climate of uncertainty for small business owners and manufacturers in Minnesota who aren't able to plan for their futures when new tariffs are announced almost every week. Our foreign policy should put the best interests of Americans at the forefront, not picking fights with foreign leaders at the expense of our financial security.

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

The opioid epidemic has touched nearly every community in Minnesota. We need a strong federal response to prevention, treatment and law enforcement efforts to address the serious toll this epidemic is having on the health of our communities. I worked hard on a bill to combat the opioid epidemic, which recently passed the Senate with strong bipartisan support. This bill provides funding for addiction prevention, treatment and recovery programs – and includes one of my biggest priorities – expanding resources for students to access mental health services in their schools and communities.

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?

We need to make college more affordable, but we also need to make sure that every young person, even if they don't want to go to college, has the opportunity to get the skills and credentials they need to build a career and have a good-paying job.

That's why I was so proud that bipartisan legislation that I helped write to improve career and technical education was signed into law. This bill will help a lot of people get the skills they need to land in-demand, high paying jobs.

In the Senate, I'm a member of the TRIO Caucus where we come together to improve access to higher education for low-income, first-generation and disabled students. I've cosponsored legislation that would allow students to refinance their student loans to more affordable interest rates and also worked to secure funding for free online textbooks for students.

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

Our climate is getting warmer. The overwhelming scientific consensus is that this is happening because of human activity. This poses tangible challenges to Minnesota farm country, but the good news is that we know how to slow the problem down, and we need Minnesota's rural clean energy to do it. That means that the federal government should take an active role in leading efforts to expand renewable energy programs that benefit our rural communities and the nation as a whole.

I have been advocating for renewable energy throughout my career in public service. As Lt. Governor, I led a bipartisan effort to increase Minnesota's Renewable Energy Standard from 25 percent by 2025 to 50 percent by 2030. I've introduced a bill to protect our nation's renewable fuel standard to make sure we build on our efforts to produce clean energy and reduce emissions. I've also championed renewable energy initiatives in the Senate Farm Bill that would provide millions of dollars in energy grants and loans to rural communities, help develop biomass crops, and support new uses for agricultural biomass.

Moving forward, the federal government should work to support the innovation that will lead to an affordable clean energy future. That means creating an even playing field in the market for fossil fuels and renewables, creating federal policy that encourages clean energy innovation at the state level while setting a national floor for the amount of clean energy produced, and strengthening the Renewable Fuel and Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards.

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 believe that we need to work preserve and protect Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. That's why I've cosponsored the Protecting and Preserving Social Security Act with Senator Sherrod Brown. And, I strongly oppose serious threats to these programs – like the recent Republican tax bill which adds \$1.5 trillion to our national debt over the next 10 years to give tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans and large corporations. I will fight in Washington against any attempts to balance our national budget by going back on the retirement promise that we made to millions of Americans.

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

Strong infrastructure and transportation systems are vital to the nation's economy and jobs. It's important for state and local governments and partnering businesses to have certainty in federal funding in order to plan future investments and build strong economies. Rebuilding our nation's roads, bridges, water systems, ports, and broadband is going to cost money, and we need real investment. We can't simply cut funding from critical infrastructure programs elsewhere to pay for it.

That's why I've supported several important infrastructure programs in the Senate including the Capital Investments Grant program and the TIGER program. We need the federal government to lead the way towards rebuilding our nation's infrastructure with detailed plans like these that are both solvent and long-term.

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 people who deserve credit for our strong economy are the small businesses who are growing and the workers who are highly productive, not the tax cuts that went to the wealthiest Americans and largest corporations.

And while the economy is working for many Minnesotans, there are a lot of people whose wages have stayed the same for a long time. And, if people saw any benefit from the tax cut, it has already been eaten up by the rising cost of health care, expensive child care, getting help for their aging parents and putting their kids through college with rising tuition costs. These people don't feel like the economy is doing better – and these are the people I think we ought to be focused on – we have work to do to make sure that people see the path to build the life they want.

Stimulating job growth should be a top priority of the federal government, and that starts with creating more opportunities for our students to be successful. That's why as Lt. Governor I worked to freeze tuition at Minnesota's public colleges and universities, and in the Senate I've cosponsored a bill that helps people to refinance their student debt. I've also passed proposals in the Senate that would expand career and technical education opportunities for students so that we can address the workforce shortage in Minnesota and allow students who don't want to attend a four-year college to be successful. Our efforts to improve job growth should be aimed at making our economies stronger, not the richest Americans richer.

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

We need comprehensive immigration reform that ensures the well-being of all families and also prevents the wrong people from coming here. I've voted for a \$25 billion increase in border security and I support a tough but fair path to citizenship, but I also believe our immigration process should be humane.

I have been a strong opponent of the Trump Administration's immigration policy, including decisions to rescind DACA, which protects young people who were brought to the United States by their parents from immediate and unjust deportation. During my first weekend as Senator, I attended a rally to protect DREAMers and expressed my support for the DREAM Act. I also introduced the *Help Separated Kids Act*, which would cement into law the principle that no child should ever be abandoned as a result of an immigration enforcement proceeding.

We need to balance the security of our borders with the basic humanity that every family deserves, and we should move forward with comprehensive immigration reform with these principles in mind.

Should Immigration Customs Enforcement – ICE – be abolished, and replaced with a different with a different agency to control immigration crimes?

No, I don't think abolishing ICE is the answer to the need for comprehensive immigration reform. I do believe Congress needs to take action to ensure ICE is operating in a way that ensures the wellbeing of all families. That's why I introduced a bill called the *HELP Separated Kids Act* which would create a fair process that respects all families and makes sure that children can communicate with their parents if their parents are involved in immigration enforcement action.

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?

Trade is vital to the health of Minnesota's businesses and farmers. But trade needs to be fair, and all parties need to play by the rules. When other countries cheat, we have to enforce the rules and stand up for ourselves. While this seems to be the impetus behind the Trump Administration's current tariffs, it's clear that this strategy is escalating into retaliatory tariffs that are hurting Minnesotans. I have pushed the Trump Administration to explain the strategy around tariffs, and how we can move forward toward fair trade that works for Minnesota's workers, small businesses, farmers, and the environment.

I've been in constant contact with Minnesota farmers and producers during my time in the Senate, and I'm hearing from farmers across the state that the Trump Administration's tariffs are hurting their businesses. We ought to be listening to those folks when we're moving forward with national trade policy. We need to stand up for ourselves in global trade agreements – but President Trump's haphazard and bull-in-the-china shop approach is hurting MN agriculture.

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

Briefly summarize your personal background and qualifications.

I came to Minnesota 34 years ago with my husband Archie to work at General Mills, and we built our lives here. I also started my own small business that I ran for eight years. It was during this time that I started volunteering on local campaigns. I then went on to work at Planned Parenthood advocating for access to high quality, affordable healthcare. I then served as chief of staff for Mayor R.T. Rybak and as chief of staff and Lt. Governor for Governor Mark Dayton. During my time in public service, I've made listening to Minnesotans my top priority. Hearing from people across the state about the issues they

face informs my work every day in the Senate, where I work hard to get things done and help Minnesotans build better lives.