

Lacy Johnson / Congress

Top priority: If elected, what is your top priority for the 2021 Congress? Why are you running for office?

I am running for office to provide solutions that address root causes, rather than symptoms, and improve the lives of the people living in MN Congressional District 5 with priority given to economic development and jobs, education, healthcare, public safety, and criminal justice reform.

Economy: How do you grade the federal government's response to the pandemic? Are additional measures necessary to spur the economy? If so, what?

The federal government did the right thing by restricting foreign travel starting in late January and avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach. The conditions in New York City were very different than those in North Dakota. The bi-partisan CARES act was a successful start, critical to maintaining business employment stability, but more legislation may be needed. We should take political considerations off the table to focus on safely returning to work, including our vital school and university systems.

Police reform: Police reform has become center stage since the George Floyd death and has prompted calls for legislative action at all levels of government. What actions do you support at the federal level?

The federal government can play an important role in ensuring that police departments abide by federal anti-discrimination laws. Federal law enforcement should also set the tone for local departments in striving for excellence, best practice reforms (such as de-escalation tactics), and equal enforcement of the laws. There is simply no room in our society for those seeking to use their roles in law enforcement to indulge their own personal or political prejudices. I do not support defunding or abolishing the police. These calls are confusing, irresponsible, and only encourage more criminal activity and politicization of law enforcement. We do not need to turn back the clock to Tammany Hall or gangland justice.

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.

The President's success in achieving normalization agreements in Serbia and Kosovo and Israel and the United Arab Emirates demonstrates the power of diplomacy backed by strong principles. I also support the US State Department's Clean Network initiative that focuses on aligning the liberal democracies' vital infrastructure and minimizing the inroads made by Huawei and the Chinese Community Party (CCP). The world is dangerous and there are many regimes that seek to do our country and citizens' harm. All the wishful thinking in the world will not change that bad actors seek to disrupt our elections, steal our technology, subvert our message of hope, freedom, and opportunity, and develop means to bring harm to Americans and its Allies. While it is important for the President to treat our adversaries with cautious respect and an attempt at mutual understanding, it is equally important for us to realize when a foe is

unyielding. Countries like Iran and North Korea and leaders like Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, for example, have devoted considerable resources and energy to countering American objectives in the world. We need to focus on supporting our reliable friends and not deluding ourselves about the goals of known adversaries.

Health care: Do you support the expansion of Association Health Plans?

As a small business owner and entrepreneur, I support the expansion of such plans. It is long past the time for us to pursue fundamental reform in the American healthcare system. We pay too much and get too little under the current system burdened with stale and cumbersome regulation. We need considerable improvements in competition, transparency, and accountability. We need to drive down the costs of prescription drugs. We are witnessing astonishing innovations in healthcare technology and services and I am confident that prices will come down and quality will go up if we unleash the power of individual choice whether in both our healthcare insurance and provider systems.

Education: COVID-19 has had a profound effect on the demands for and delivery of education. What role should the federal government play in ensuring that U.S. graduates can compete in the global economy?

As the leading financier of higher education in the United States, it is the role of the federal government to take a lead in dramatically lowering the cost of colleges and universities. The soaring administrative costs and slow adoption of cost-cutting technologies have pushed the current business model to the brink and priced middle-income families out of being able to afford quality education.

It is also important for the federal government to recognize the value of two-year colleges and technical trade schools -- both online and in person. Many leading companies like Google and Amazon are no longer requiring college degrees and the federal government should be doing everything possible to make sure that students get to income earning potential without taking on debt. Now, the system does the opposite. It encourages taking on debt without focusing on marketable skills.

For preschool and K-12 education, the federal government should be a trusted partner and stakeholder in supporting and incentivizing innovation and quality outcomes while leaving decision-making at the local level.

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

Energy is the lifeblood of every economy. I am an adamant proponent of “all of the above” solutions, and the federal government can do several things to make sure that we do not end up like California with dangerous rolling blackouts. Posturing politicians who propose fantasy solutions like eliminating fracking and undermining domestic energy production, add little to the debate and should be ignored for their pandering.

Meanwhile, the risks of greenhouse gases (GHGs) demand that we pursue technologies such as sequestration and next-generation nuclear energy and geothermal energy that can provide reliable and resilient energy networks that do not add to GHGs. The growth of electric vehicles will create even more such demand, so we cannot afford to hamper our electric utilities.

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

The federal government plays an important role in funding interstate highway, rail, water, and air travel infrastructure. It can also be a key funder of high density, high usage mass transportation initiatives. However, it is important that these systems are viewed on a cost-benefit basis and not pursued as low usage vanity projects.

Immigration: Immigration reform continues to languish at the federal level. What should be the principles of any legislation?

Immigration is the cornerstone of the American promise and a key driver to our thriving economy. We should prioritize immigrants that provide jobs to Americans and help growth and innovation. It is essential we reform the Immigration and Naturalization Service to bring it into the modern era so that we prioritize and encourage the best from around the world to become American citizens. We need more Elon Musks.

We should take steps to make process improvements in the current system to reduce the long wait time of those seeking to enter this country legally in pursuit of their American Dream.

Illegal immigration is illegal.

Foreign trade: Do you support the president's actions on international trade? Long term, will they help or hurt the U.S. economy?

Foreign trade is an essential component of a healthy and vibrant American and US economy, but when countries promote slave or child labor, steal our intellectual property, or erect barriers to the importation of our goods and services, doing nothing is not an option. For too long we let the priorities of a few special interests dictate our trade policy, and I support the President's efforts to put a stop to one-sided trade arrangements.

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

While I recognize that pandemics and financial crises often merit emergency government fiscal intervention, we simply cannot continue to leave more and more government debt to our children. There are no easy solutions. If we took every dollar from every "millionaire and billionaire" it would still only pay for a few months of government operations, so we must look hard and long to more responsible ways to taxpayer money AND we must embrace the call to economic growth and prosperity. The only proven manner of getting out of the debt trap is to grow the economy through more productivity and more people with high-quality jobs.

Briefly summarize your personal background and qualifications.

I came to Minnesota forty years ago to attend the University of Minnesota and Brown Institute of Technology, and I have spent over three decades as a technology manager in leading Minnesota companies, including Control Data, Northwest Airlines, and Xcel Energy. I retired from corporate life a few years ago to focus on building companies in North Minneapolis and encouraging entrepreneurship. I have been blessed with my wife Betty and our two sons and community support earned through decades of service. The tremendous hope, promise, and enthusiasm that I see in our youth are only dampened by the dysfunction and division I witness coming from our political leaders. That is why I am running for Congress. I'm not a politician, but I am a believer that a government that focuses its attention and resources on a few critical tasks can be a positive instrument for change.