

2020 ELECTION QUESTIONS – CONGRESS / Kendall Qualls

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

My top priority as a member of Congress will be to ensure safe and secure communities by protecting our families, our jobs, and our communities by funding the police and implementing needed reforms. Safety and security is the first order of government and ensuring safe communities will help us revitalize and strengthen our economy by supporting small businesses harmed by COVID-19, easing burdensome regulations, and passing fair trade agreements.

I am running for Congress, as a leader with military and business experience, outside the world of politics, to address the difficult challenges facing our state and country and help people pursue a goal that is larger than each individual and that transcends racial, economic and gender differences.

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 response has been largely effective in mitigating economic turmoil caused by the pandemic, but the most important economic stimulus will be the approval of a vaccine to treat COVID-19. We must also engage in the hard discussions about the impact continued deficit spending will have on the national debt and the negative consequences it will have on future generations.

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?

George Floyd's tragic death illuminated the need for reforms addressing police strategy, training, and monitoring. At the same time, it is imperative that we give police officers the support and training they need. The efforts to defund and abolish the police threaten our physical AND economic security. The majority of police officers risk their lives on a daily basis to protect and serve the community. Our campaign was the first to forward a detailed plan to reform policing and protect our communities, which can be found at <https://bit.ly/3lw281n>, and include planks to:

- *Support, encourage, and implement community policing*
- *Provide better training of law enforcement tactics, including on use of force, de-escalation tactics, and intervention.*
- *Intervene, retrain, review, monitor, and remove problem officers*
- *Update and implement procedures for reporting, investigating, and disciplining use of force misconduct*

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 believe President Trump deserves a strong grade for his foreign policy successes. Most prominently, he has held China accountable and his administration brokered the recent deal between the UAE and Israel in which the UAE become just the third Arab nation to recognize Israel. Trump has insisted that American interests be paramount in our relationships with allies. He has rightly asked our allies and those protected by American troops to shoulder more of the financial burden for these bi-and multi-lateral agreements. He has made significant progress in extricating U.S. forces from Afghanistan and engineering peace between the Afghan government and Taliban. He has imposed economic sanctions on Venezuela and the corrupt socialist Maduro government.

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

Yes, but this should be done in conjunction with other healthcare changes such as price transparency, increased healthcare competition, putting an end to surprise billing, attacking the high cost of prescription drugs, protecting those with pre-existing conditions and ending healthcare monopolies.

Association Health Plans have proven to be a way for smaller businesses to share risk with other small businesses with the goal of limiting the cost of premiums over time, and as such, they provide a cost-effective alternative for small employers to provide health insurance to their employees.

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?

The delivery of education services is best delivered at the state and local levels, where state legislators and local school board members can best advocate for students, parents and teachers. Apart from the federal government honoring its commitment to more fully fund special education, the best federal policies are those which help create a growing economy and stimulate job growth – jobs which will need to be filled by U.S. graduates.

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

Yes. Both federal and state governments are addressing the goal of reduced carbon emissions through tax incentives and production tax credits for alternative energy sources such as wind, solar and biofuels. The federal government should pursue an "all of the above" energy policy to promote home grown, domestically produced energy including from wind, solar, biofuels, clean coal, oil and nuclear sources. Energy independence is among the most important domestic and foreign policy goals our country can achieve.

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

The federal government should continue to invest in Minnesota transportation funding through the levying of the federal gas tax and the distribution of those proceeds to needed projects. Here in Minnesota's Third Congressional District, federal funding has assisted in multiple transportation projects including those on Interstates 494, 694 and 94. Additionally, federal funds have been used for the ongoing construction of the Southwest Light Rail corridor and for many county road projects. As transportation is a critical function of the federal government, I will fight to secure our district's share of federal funds to address needed transportation improvements.

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

Our immigration system is broken, and both parties share the blame. Immigration reform should include provisions to secure our southern border, end illegal immigration, and put in place a merit-based immigration process. The United States is a land of immigrants, and we should welcome with open arms those who follow the laws and immigrate legally. Additionally, changes need to be made to the H-1B immigration process, but they must be well planned and address the concerns of all stakeholders, including families and businesses.

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

International trade agreements are in our country's best interest, but the United States was long overdue for a reexamination and reset of trade agreements that have cost American jobs and relaxed protections for intellectual property. The revised United States-Mexico-Canada trade agreement will open new markets and be beneficial to Minnesota business and agricultural interests. Furthermore, future trade deals with China must address China's economic abuses such as intellectual property theft, currency manipulation, export subsidies and economic espionage, among other concerns.

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

America is an exceptional place with exceptional people with opportunity for all, and I take umbrage with my opponent, Dean Phillips, and his characterization of America as a systemically racist country given all that this country has given me and my family. Sadly, Dean Phillips and many in his party are using the tragic death of George Floyd to fuel the flames of racism and create a smoke screen to cover up how they failed our cities, our country, and the Black community. This campaign is about the vision and direction of this country. I offer a vision of hope because America is an exceptional place full of exceptional people with opportunity for all. I know it, because I've lived it.

Briefly summarize your personal background and qualifications.

I grew up as one of five children of a single mother, spending my early years in a drug and gang-ridden public housing project in Harlem, NY before upgrading to a trailer park in Oklahoma. After paying my way through college, I served as an Active Duty Field Artillery Officer in the Army and served in the United States and in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in South Korea. I then began my career in the healthcare industry, leading global teams with companies such as Johnson & Johnson and Medtronic. Most recently, I served as an executive with a healthcare startup that helps cancer patients using artificial intelligence and data analytics. My wife Sheila and I have been married 34 years and have five children.

Thank you for your time.

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