

Adams on Agriculture

Interview with House Ag Committee Ranking Member Collin Peterson

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Note: This is an unofficial transcript of a discussion with Mike Adams and House Agriculture Committee Ranking Member Collin Peterson (D., Minn.) from the *Adams on Agriculture (AOA)* radio program.

Adams: Hello, everyone, and welcome to *Adams on Agriculture*. Thanks for joining us. Hope you're having a good day. We're getting ever closer to a vote in the House on the farm bill. And we're going to kick off today's show with that very topic and get the very latest from the Ranking Member of the House Agriculture Committee, Minnesota Congressman Collin Peterson joins us. Congressman, thanks for being with us. Always enjoy talking with you.

Peterson: Glad to be here, and good morning, everybody.

Adams: All right, you've got a week off. You're back talking with people. What kind of reaction are you getting to this farm bill proposal?

Peterson: Not much.

Adams: Really?

Peterson: That's about the fourth or fifth thing that comes up, if it even comes up. People are concerned about what's going on with this trade situation, what's going on with the RFS. That's the No. 1 and 2 things that I hear about, depending on where I'm at. And they just don't...I don't know, it just...they're not fired up. The question is, well, is it going to get done or not, and they don't seem to be too worried about it one way or the other. So I don't know. It's kind of weird.

Adams: So as the vote gets closer, have you any different thoughts on the proposal? Have your views changed at all on what you'll be voting on next week? Can you give us some insight what we might see as far as amendments are concerned?

Peterson: Well, you know, I'm reflecting the views of the Democrats on the Ag Committee. They are unanimous, and we have a lot of members on the committee that are most interested in the SNAP part of the bill. So this is an affront to them. And I don't know what you can do to change their minds. I don't think there's much you can do.

I think a bigger concern for where this thing is going is the fact that the Heritage Action people apparently came out against the bill, so I don't know

how you get this thing done. And that's what I tried to tell the chairman at the beginning of this process, that this just wasn't going to fly. And one of the things you don't do, and I've learned in politics if you want to have a bipartisan situation, you don't ask somebody to do something they can't do. And that's the situation we're in here.

So it'll play out. We're not going to have any amendments. They'll pass it or they won't, depending on what happens. If it goes into conference, you know, if it passes, the Senate is not going to do any of this SNAP stuff. So how you, even if we get a bill back out of conference, how you get that back across the House floor, if they've already taken this position going over to conference, I don't know. I just don't see it. But I'm not the chairman, and we'll just have to see how this plays out.

Adams: The chairman told me last week that he's hopeful that you'll come back to the table and work on this farm bill. He said he's hoping that you'll come back. Have you had any more conversations with him? Do you anticipate having any more talks with him before a vote?

Peterson: I have not had conversations with him. And, you know, I'm willing to talk to him, but I'm not going to initiate it because he's made pretty clear where he's at, and he's said from the start on these work requirements that he's not going to negotiate. And that was a deal breaker on our side of the aisle, partly because of what happened in 2013.

I think that people should work. I agree with that. What I don't agree with is this huge amount of money that's being spent on a bureaucracy that's not going to accomplish anything. It's not enough money to actually train anybody. They're fixing the wrong part of the problem.

The problem with people that aren't working is that they're living in the wrong place, and they have a waiver. And the bill doesn't do anything about the waivers. So you're still going to have all kinds of people in these metropolitan areas and other rural parts of the country that have been on waivers that are going to continue to be on waivers, and the folks that are going to be caught up in this are just going to be run through a huge bureaucracy where they're going to spend all their time filling out paperwork and I guess driving to workforce centers, which in my part of the world is not reasonable.

So I just don't agree with what they're doing. Apparently the Heritage Action people, who have been pushing this, they don't agree with what they're doing either. They came out this morning and said that the provisions in there they don't think work, and they're not for them. So I don't know. I don't know where this thing is going. We'll see what happens.

Adams: Are you happy with the rest of the bill beyond the nutrition title?

Peterson: Not really. I mean, I tried to... We started off this process, you know, and we worked through things on a bipartisan basis, trying to keep this thing together. I went along with some things in the conservation area that I don't really...am not that excited about, cutting spending in that area and consolidating things and so forth.

I was concerned about the adequacy of the safety net in Title 1. But I was convinced that we don't have any money, so we can't do anything. So we worked through things. But when we were doing that, we were not under as much stress of getting rid of the RFS or these trade situations, which I think put us in a much more precarious position in terms of the safety net.

So I've said this publicly, that the bill needs more money. We saved 130 billion since the last bill. I think we deserve some of that money back to fix this bill up so it does what needs to be done. But that's not in the cards.

And that's not the deal breaker. I mean, I was going along with this. But when they came in with the SNAP stuff, even though I warned them, they went ahead, and that was one thing. But the other thing, they just said, well, that's nonnegotiable. Well, that shut things down. I mean, it wasn't... I'm not the one that said it wasn't negotiable.

Adams: Are you expecting a vote next week?

Peterson: No. I think it'll probably be the week after. But I don't know. Maybe it'll be next week. Whatever, it's up to them. The chairman says that they're going to bring it up when they have 218 votes, so I don't know how they're going to do a whip count when people aren't here, you know, in Washington. And so whether they're going to be ready to move on this thing when they get back, if they've got an adequate whip count, I don't know. But I'm not in charge, so we'll see what happens.

Adams: Can you imagine any Democrats voting for it?

Peterson: No.

Adams: None?

Peterson: None.

Adams: All right, so we—

Peterson: I don't know what that effort was about. I mean, as a number of people have said, you know, I just won the award to be the most bipartisan member of Congress from an unaffiliated group, Georgetown University and the Lugar Foundation. As some people have said, if they can't work with me, they can't work with anybody. And I think that's pretty true, so...

Adams: All right.

Peterson: And I'd like to work this thing out, but if you have that as a nonnegotiable part of it, I just don't see where they're going with this.

Adams: We'll see what happens. Ranking Member of the House Ag Committee, Collin Peterson. Thanks as always, sir. We'll talk again soon.

Peterson: All right, thank you.

[End of recording.]