

## *Adams on Agriculture*

### **Interview with House Ag Committee Chair-elect Collin Peterson**

**November 8, 2018**

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

Adams: And welcome back. Broadcasting today and tomorrow from Kansas City, the National Association of Farm Broadcasting's 75<sup>th</sup> convention. Joining us now is the House Ag Committee Chair-elect, I think is the way we put it. That is Minnesota Congressman Collin Peterson. Good to have you back with us. And are you looking forward to being chair of the House Ag Committee again?

Peterson: Thank you, Mike. And I guess so. We'll see what happens.

Adams: Well, it certainly won't be new to you. You've been there before.

Peterson: Yeah, yeah. Well, my first thing is getting this farm bill done. That is my only one priority right now. I'm focused on that totally. I'm not worried about anything else. Let's get this thing done. So I talked to the secretary on Tuesday night. I talked to Mr. Conaway yesterday. And we're going to get together next Monday, Mike and I, and, you know, I want to get this thing wrapped up. All of the issues are out there. They're drafted, they're scored. It's just a matter of making the decisions as to what's going to be in the final bill. And we need to get this done as soon as possible.

Adams: How close do you think you are at this point?

Peterson: Well, you know, I think we're close, but I'm not in charge of anything.

Adams: Right. Not yet.

Peterson: I just think that the things that are being discussed now are kind of relatively small in the whole scheme of things, and I don't see why we can't resolve this. The bigger...you know, that's in conservation and commodity title and so forth.

But now, with what's happened with the election, the leverage, whatever leverage they did have on the SNAP stuff, I don't see that they have any leverage anymore, really. And the problem has been not me. The problem has been the Senate. Both Roberts and Stabenow are against what the Republicans put in the House bill. The Senate voted 30 to 68 against it. That's been part of the hang-up. I've been telling them for four months I'm willing to work with them on some of the waiver stuff, but I'm not

sure if the Senate is going to be in the mood to do that. So somehow or another that's got to get resolved.

The problem is not that we don't have work requirements. We've had them since '96. The problem is we've given out all these waivers, and it's been given out by Republican and Democrat administrations to Republican and Democrat governors, so everybody's culpable here. And if people aren't working, it's primarily because of that.

Adams: Other than the SNAP program and the worker requirements, do you feel you have consensus on the other issues, conservation and those other issues?

Peterson: Well, not completely. There's still some going back and forth. But I don't think what we're arguing about is worth holding anything up, so I've been pushing to try to get this done this week. But I don't know. It's just like trying to push a piece of spaghetti straight up. That's been cooked. So anyway, it's frustrating. And it's not me. I'm not holding anything up. So hopefully we'll get this done.

Adams: Do you have meetings set? Do you have meetings set? Do you have a timetable set yet?

Peterson: Well, the deal was we were going to try to have this ready by next Wednesday, could be voted on. That's what we talked about when we left, before the election. The staff is working on this. And I suggested to Mike yesterday that we get together Monday and try to, you know, face-to-face with the staff and try to push this thing through. But if that's the... If we don't get anyplace until then, then we're not going to be probably ready to move on it next week. And then if that's the case, then it's the following week, and then you've got Thanksgiving, and then, you know, it's just...

Adams: Right.

Peterson: So I don't know. I mean, it's... I want this done. I don't want this farm bill to be on my plate when I become the chairman. I don't want that. I want it done. And the farmers want it done. And so let's do it.

Adams: We're talking with the Chairman-elect of the House Agriculture Committee, Collin Peterson from Minnesota. So worst case scenario, you can't work something out, then do you see an extension of the current bill if it comes to that?

Peterson: Well, we'll have to... yeah, we'll have to do an extension at the end of the year, I think. There's no question at that point. I mean, right now the only thing that's held up is CRP and some of the conservation programs that don't have authorization, so they're shut down. But this time of year hardly anybody signs up for those anyway, so that's not a big deal. The

commodity title and so forth is, you know, if the farmers, in my part of the world, if they know what it is by January, they're good. So it hasn't been a crisis.

But if we're not going to get this done by the end of the year, then I think we have to talk about an extension. And if that's the case, an extension is almost as big of a problem as getting the bill done. It's not going to be a slam dunk. There's going to be people bringing things to the table and so forth. Who knows what it'll get tangled up in? It's just not a good... You know, nobody's talking, we haven't talked extension at all amongst us because none of us want that. But if that...if worst came to worst, you either do that or we're back to '49 law.

Adams: Right.

Peterson: Which I don't think is very workable. But, you know.

Adams: Let's look ahead to another issue. After the first of the year, and hopefully you get the farm bill done, and you'll be taking up in Congress the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement. Have you talked with many of your colleagues to get a feel for would they support it or not?

Peterson: I have not. I've not really been in a position to really talk to any of them about it. People need to understand that the Ag Committee really has no jurisdiction over this. This is a Ways & Means issue in the House. I understand there's some folks in the labor and the environmental area that are raising questions. I don't know if that's true or not, and how much impact that'll have.

All I can control is myself. I have looked at it enough to tell you that I'm going to vote for it. And I've told some of our leadership that I'm for it, like I've told Pelosi and I've told some others that I think it's not a bad deal. I don't think we... In agriculture it's no huge win. It's basically status quo. But at least we didn't get hurt. So I consider that a win. And I intend to vote for it. But whether it's going to be done or not, I don't know.

Adams: So beyond farm bill and USMCA—and these are two huge things, obviously—what else do you see after the first year, and you're chairman again, what do you see the committee working on next year?

Peterson: I haven't thought about it. As I said, I want to get this bill done, and that's really, basically, the only thing I've been thinking about. You know, it takes a while to get organized. It's going to take a couple months. You've got to get the committee assignments. The Ag Committee is usually the last one that gets the slots filled, so you got that going on. You've got to... The way it works, the minority gets a third of the staff, the majority gets

two-thirds, so there's going to be some switching. So they're going to have to downsize and we're going to have to hire up some people.

We're going to have, I assume, a fair amount of new members, and all of the new folks are not from the rural areas, and not from ag areas, very few of them. If you look at the map you can see my district sticks out like a sore thumb there in the middle of the country. I'm the only one left. So I've got work to do to get those folks up to speed, for the new people that don't know me, to get them to know who I am and be willing to work with me. I have no problem with the current members. I think all of them respect me and are willing to work with me and follow my leadership. But there's work to do there.

So I haven't thought about it. You know, I'll see what's on people's minds. We've got a lot of bright people on the committee and I'm going to try to elevate them and get them more involved, and get them more up to speed on everything because I'm 74 years old. At some point I'm going to say this is enough. I'm not saying it today, but, you know, we need to... So I'm going to be inclusive. I'm going to let members have more involvement, if you will, to try to get them more up to speed on what's going on within the committee.

Adams: Well, I always appreciate you taking time to be with us and keeping us up-to-date on these important issues. And look forward to talking with you and working with you in the future on these issues. Thank you very much.

Peterson: All right, thank you. Have fun out there in Kansas City.

Adams: Okay. Thanks a lot. The Chairman-elect of the House Agriculture Committee, Minnesota Congressman Collin Peterson.

*[End of recording.]*