



COMMITTEE FOR
STRONGER RURAL
COMMUNITIES

SMALL BUSINESS IN RURAL AMERICA: A REPORT CARD

MINNESOTA'S 7TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

The Committee for Stronger Rural Communities (CSRC) Small Business Report Card measures the record of individual lawmaker support for promoting the growth of small business activity and opportunity in rural America. In 2020, the Small Business in Rural America Report Card focuses on the voting record of U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson, MN-07.

Small business is a crucial part of the American economy, especially in rural areas that do not enjoy the benefits of job creation and tax revenue brought by large corporations. Many rural families depend on the paycheck earned working at a local, small business. Often, these small businesses are what keep younger people from leaving their home communities to seek work in urban areas.

While many Americans launch their small business on the strength of a good idea, whether a small business thrives or fails depends on much more. Is there adequate infrastructure, such as roadways to move products or people and reliable broadband? Are there trade barriers that prevent access to new markets or affordable goods? Or are cheap foreign-made goods undermining America's small businesses?

WHY REP. PETERSON?

The district represented by House Agriculture Committee Chairman Peterson is the largest by land mass in Minnesota, with a heavily rural population and a significant number of small businesses. In his position as Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, Rep. Peterson has been a leader on legislation to develop the growth of small businesses in rural communities.

The Chamber of Commerce agrees – giving Rep. Peterson both the Jefferson-Hamilton award and the Spirit of Enterprise award.

In this report card, the CSRC examines the record of Rep. Peterson in his work to promote and protect small businesses in Minnesota's 7th Congressional District.

LONG TERM OUTLOOK

Well before the COVID19 pandemic, rural businesses faced stiff challenges to stability and steady growth.

1. Rural areas do not always draw large-scale commercial investments, such as major construction projects, or major employers to support smaller local businesses that could sell products or services. By contrast, in urban areas, many small businesses focus solely on supporting major projects or employers.
2. Access to raw materials or new markets can be restricted in rural areas where there are limited shipping options. Many small businesses rely almost solely on the U.S. Postal Service, for instance, for regular shipments, because private shippers don't provide regular and reliable service in some rural communities.
3. Financial services can be limited in some rural areas, whether that's access to adequate capital through loans, or other basic services.
4. Small businesses in rural areas are often restricted due to lack of broadband access. While businesses in urban areas are able to quickly and reliably perform online transactions or otherwise tap web-based commercial services (such as storing data in the cloud), those opportunities are limited to small business owners in rural areas with no broadband. Members of Congress have many opportunities to level

the playing field between rural districts and urban/suburban districts, whether that's through legislation or oversight. It is the position of the CSRC that members of Congress representing rural communities should have a record of advocacy on behalf of small businesses, and the families that depend on them.

BIPARTISAN BUSINESS RECOGNITION FOR CONGRESSMAN COLLIN PETERSON

The voice of American business, the **U.S. Chamber of Commerce**, singled out Rep. Peterson for his record of bipartisan legislative leadership, honoring him with its prestigious **Jefferson-Hamilton Award** in June 2020 – for “demonstrating a willingness to work across the aisle in support of common objectives.” The Chamber also awarded him its **Spirit of Enterprise Award** in August 2020, citing Peterson's consistent record of supporting pro-growth, pro-business, job-creating policies.

IMPACT OF COVID-19

The global COVID19 pandemic places a massive new strain on our nation's entire economy. Rural communities are not immune to that, but by the nature of how rural communities are formed and operate – little population density, for instance – the impact of the pandemic and the required reaction to contain the spread are different than the impact and required reaction in urban areas. Congressman Peterson understands this and fought successfully to level the playing field for rural communities and their small businesses.

CRITERIA

The CSRC Small Business Report Card identified five specific areas where Congress could work to improve the outlook for rural businesses, and the workers who rely on them:

1. **Increase broadband coverage**, to increase opportunities for small businesses to tap into new markets and capabilities, but also for distance-learning, tele-health and other broadband-reliant services that improve both quality of life and quality of workforce.
2. **Improved transportation and postal support**, to boost access to raw materials and the ability to rapidly, reliably ship products to customers.
3. **Develop major investments**, such as public works projects or private construction, to encourage the growth of small businesses that support those projects.
4. **Better financial services, particularly in response to COVID19**, in the form of greater and more flexible forms of public support (Paycheck Protection Program), or other public underwriting.
5. **Extend trade policies that level the playing field with foreign competitors**, whether that's improving service at border crossings with Canada or large-scale trade deals with China.

The needs of Minnesota's 7th Congressional District have always been the focus of the work of Rep. Peterson. He has always made sure that as a lead architect of the Farm Bill that it promotes the growth and development of small businesses in MN-07 through economic development programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

However, Rep. Peterson has not limited his work to the USDA. He has weighed in on behalf of manufacturers in MN-07 hampered by tariff barriers. He has prodded other federal agencies to move quickly on the approval and funding of major construction projects, such as the Line 3 Pipeline, that could be major job creators and economic stimulators in the district. He succeeded in passing important legislation to reduce bureaucratic hurdles faced by small businesses seeking to obtain federally-backed loans from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Finally, in response to COVID19, Rep. Peterson has led on a number of fronts, from working with meatpacking plants to remain open safely, keeping workers employed but also safe, to supporting efforts to make the Paycheck Protection Program a more viable support effort for MN-07 employers.

THE LEGISLATIVE RECORD: 116TH CONGRESS

<p>The Reinvigorating Lending for the Future Act</p>	<p>Introduced June 29 2020, a companion bill passed the U.S. Senate Aug. 6, 2020</p>	<p>Bipartisan legislation that reduces barriers to lending for recipients of capitalization grants through the U.S. Economic Development Administration’s (EDA) Revolving Loan Fund Program.</p>	<p> Peterson is an author of this bipartisan bill with U.S. Rep. John Katko, (R-N.Y.)</p>
<p>Remote Recreational Small Business Interruption Program Act</p>	<p>Introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on July 29, 2020</p>	<p>Recognizing the need to support outdoor recreation businesses seeing declines due to COVID-19 restrictions, this bill puts small outdoor-based businesses on a level playing field with major corporations to obtain federal pandemic-related relief through 100 percent-forgiven loans administered by the Small Business Administration.</p>	<p> Peterson is an original author and sponsor of HR 7845, which is pending action before the House Small Business Committee.</p>
<p>Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act</p>	<p>Introduced May 26, 2020, became law June 5, 2020</p>	<p>Bipartisan bill to deliver relief for small businesses struggling as a result of the coronavirus by extending terms and flexibility of the Paycheck Protection Program.</p>	<p> Peterson supported the legislation and voted for its passage in the U.S. House of Representatives.</p>
<p>Reduction in Additional Duties on Certain Goods</p>	<p>Introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on July 16, 2020</p>	<p>This bipartisan bill directs the U.S. Trade Representative to extend the exclusion of certain goods, particularly material required by Minnesota manufacturers and medical equipment needed for coronavirus treatment, from additional Section 301 duties under the Trade Act of 1974. These are goods that are currently already excluded; the legislation would extend the exclusion for another year.</p>	<p> Peterson co-sponsored the legislation with Rep. Jackie Walorski, R-Ind.</p>
<p>Line 3 Pipeline Oversight</p>	<p>June 3, 2020</p>	<p>Pipeline extension project, under review by state authorities, that would create new construction jobs in rural Minnesota communities.</p>	<p> Peterson has supported the project.</p>
<p>Universal Broadband Act</p>	<p>Introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives May 5, 2020</p>	<p>This bipartisan bill supports the expansion of broadband by offering rural communities opportunities to access the Universal Service Fund (USF) contribution base.</p>	<p> Originally sponsored by Rep. Peterson and four GOP colleagues, the Universal Broadband Act of 2020 was referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee for further consideration.</p>
<p>Reducing Interest Rates on Small Business Administration Loans</p>	<p>March 4, 2020</p>	<p>The U.S. Small Business Administration offers loans to small businesses. Peterson has sought to reduce loan interest rates in light of the coronavirus-incurred economic disaster.</p>	<p> On March 24, 2020, Peterson led the bipartisan letter co-signed by 44 Members of Congress, and supported by seven national business groups, including the National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, calling on SBA to reduce loan rates.</p>

Rural Economic Development	March 2019	The Administration sought to eliminate new economic development programs and positions created by the 2018 Farm Bill.	 <p>In his role as Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, Peterson led the fight to prevent elimination of the USDA Rural Economic Development program and the Rural Energy program, protecting billions of dollars of important federal investments into rural communities.</p>
Promoting Rural Export Act of 2019	H.R. 5203, introduced to the U.S. House of Representatives on Nov. 20, 2019	This bipartisan legislation seeks to create a federally-funded Rural Export Center, dedicated to assisting rural businesses cut off from major travel and infrastructure networks in reaching new trade markets.	 <p>Peterson is the lead and author of this legislation, drawing GOP support from Rep. Kelly Armstrong of North Dakota. The bill was referred to House Committee on Foreign Affairs.</p>
U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement	December 2019	Announcement of a deal to approve the USMCA, in wake of NAFTA.	 <p>Peterson supported the deal, urging quick ratification as a benefit to the farmers, businesses and workers in Western Minnesota with increased trade to Canada.</p>

CONCLUSION

A Certified Public Accountant by profession, U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson was a small business owner in Detroit Lakes, Minn., when he entered public service. Over his time in public office, Rep. Peterson won important legislative battles on behalf of small businesses, particularly in rural communities like the ones that make up MN-07. He has shown his rural constituents a committed, bipartisan mindset to expanding opportunities for new businesses, for existing businesses to grow by leveling the playing field, and to support job creation for those who depend on small businesses to support their families.

Peterson acts to preserve and promote small businesses in Minnesota’s 7th Congressional District. He is an original author of bipartisan, bicameral legislation like the **Reinvigorating Lending for the Future Act**, the **Universal Broadband Act**, and a lead co-

sponsor of bipartisan legislation to provide **Minnesota businesses relief from Section 301 tariffs, co-leading a letter signed by 44 other members of Congress and supported by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers.**

He has led the fight to protect critical **rural economic development investment** directed by the Farm Bill, and urged federal and state regulators to **approve permits for construction of Pipeline 3** and other job-creating projects in northern Minnesota. Peterson pushed for a **new trade deal, the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement**, to benefit the businesses, farmers and workers in Western Minnesota who depend on thriving trade with Canada.

This Rural Report Card underscores Rep. Peterson’s leadership in promoting the growth of small business activity and opportunity in rural America. 🌱



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CSRC is a federal SuperPac that promotes the election of federal candidates who support policies that strengthen our nation’s rural communities. For more information, please contact us at contact@strongerruralcommunities.com.