



To: CSRC Donors and Supporters
From: CSRC Steering Committee
Date: June 10, 2020
Subject: MN07 State of the Race

Situational Analysis

Analysis of the current political landscape in Minnesota's 7th Congressional District tells us that certain elements of the race are firming up and moving in the right direction for Rep. Collin Peterson's re-election odds. While "inside the Beltway" chin-strokers are keeping this race in the "toss-up" column, we see several key developments in the district which increase our confidence in what will always be a tight race.

1. **Rep. Peterson's Campaign.** Peterson has always been a more traditional campaigner, with a self-effacing behavior which shows he is true to his regional roots. While he has always showed some modesty -- and even reluctance before committing to a re-election effort -- this cycle we see a congressman who demonstrates he is fully engaged and energized. To that end:
 - a. His latest FEC report shows he did his own professional opinion research late last year. Those numbers must have shown he was in positive territory (as our own numbers show; see below).
 - b. Peterson and his team are showing flexibility and creativity, hosting fundraisers on Zoom during the COVID-19 crisis.
 - c. He was quick to engage in a high-profile event at the Worthington meatpacking plant and stake out a true-to-form bipartisan, "fix-the-problem" position. **It is not a surprise that USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue spoke with Peterson earlier that day to flesh out the message and the plan, and that Peterson was joined not just by the Democratic governor, but by GOP Congressman Jim Hagedorn, whose 1st CD includes Worthington.** National stories like this show Peterson's value to the 7th CD, and his genuine bipartisan streak. When things need to get done, people turn to Collin to take the "bull by the horns."
2. **Michelle Fischbach's campaign.** The former state senate president is off to a shaky start. Consensus in the district is that she's not ready for prime time and is another example of how Beltway watchers only see things on paper but don't hear or see what's happening in the 7th CD.
 - a. Fischbach does not have a clear path to her party's nomination, even after winning the district's GOP endorsing convention. Both Dave Hughes, who ran and lost against Peterson two other times, and Dr. Noel Collis have filed paperwork to challenge Fischbach in the August primary. **District rank-and-file GOP voters are not unified behind Fischbach, and a messy late summer primary will hurt her fall general election prospects.**



- b. Despite the support of President Trump, the NRCC and the usual host of Minnesota GOP heavyweights, it still took Fischbach eight ballots to win her party's convention endorsement. **She is not a consensus candidate, and her support on the ground is narrow and limited.**
 - c. She stumbled in a media interview when she had to admit she had no idea of the current soybean price. In a district where farming is the lynchpin of the local economy, this is a **high-scale gaffe that has taken hold in the ag community** and will not go away.
 - d. The FEC complaint filed by Hughes, about Fischbach's husband and mother inappropriately directing their separate pro-life organizational resources into Fischbach's political campaign, has put a cloud over what should have been a plus for her. No matter the resolution of the FEC complaint, **it appears the Fischbach family is putting their personal agenda ahead of the movement**, possibly causing a split among pro-lifers (some who already question why the movement isn't either quiet on Peterson or endorsing him, considering his long and consistent record on the issue).
 - e. There are increasing signs of the typical tensions between local Minnesota Fischbach supporters and **NRCC DC consultants who don't "get" rural Minnesota**. There was a public kerfuffle about one of Fischbach's campaign staff harassing Hughes by phone and being forced out, and non-public whispers about heavy-handed tactics during the endorsement convention.
 - f. Fischbach's inclusion on the NRCC Young Guns is an **admission she cannot raise the resources she needs on her own**. The GOP knows she cannot raise the necessary support from district stakeholders, so are turning to ideologically-driven right-wing donors who have no interest or information on MN07.
3. **CSRC's effort is showing results.** The efforts of the CSRC to support Peterson's re-election are showing results. We are a positive factor in the race and helping move undecided voters toward Peterson.
- a. We are nearing our \$1 million target for fundraising. [We reported more than \\$540,000 to the FEC in April](#), and have raised more since. Historically, most Super PACs raise the bulk of their funding in the final 3-4 months of the election cycle, but we are demonstrating early and successful fundraising ability -- because Peterson is well-liked and respected, delivers results and has a solid bipartisan record.
 - b. Our most recent media buy, a two-week, [district-wide 60-second radio spot called Bull by the Horns](#), is creating real buzz in the 7th CD. The spot plays to Peterson's strength, and is a powerful reminder of his credibility and effectiveness on the issues that matter. By putting our money into this smart ad, we are showing there is an entity with strategic capability and resources to capitalize on this opportunity -- and those that will emerge in the months to come.
 - c. Despite nearly \$1 million spent against Peterson - funded by DC-based national Republican groups - Peterson's internal indicators and favorability remain strong. We have moved up among key demos, as we saw in our opinion research. Our latest poll (March 25-29) shows Peterson running 15 points higher than the president in net favorability among likely 7th CD voters, and leading Fischbach 4-1 in the same measurement.



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4. **Winning in November.** The fundamentals of MN07 will always make this a tight race. One thing is clear: Congressman Collin Peterson is the right guy to represent us. He is a pragmatic, independent voice who represents his constituents and the issues of rural communities. Understanding and anticipating the multi-million dollar assault planned by national Republicans who continue to make Peterson a key target, it will be critical that the CSRC and our allies provide a shield to underscore the achievements and values that make Peterson the strong, independent fighter for MN07, through and through.