

The Mike McFeely Show
KFGO Radio (Fargo, N.D.)

Mike McFeely with House Ag Committee Ranking Member Collin Peterson (D., Minn.)
June 21, 2013

Note: This is an unofficial transcript of an interview from The Mike McFeely Show (KFGO Radio, Fargo, N.D.).



Keith Good
FarmPolicy.com, Inc.
Champaign, IL
www.FarmPolicy.com

Mr. Mike McFeely: Representative Collin Peterson represents Minnesota's 7th Congressional District and he joins us on *The Mike McFeely Show* right now. Hello, Congressman Peterson. How are you?

Rep. Collin Peterson: I'm good. How are you doing?

Mr. McFeely: I'm doing okay. Things are not going so well in D.C. for the farm bill, though. The House yesterday killed it, a bipartisan killing, although Republicans are in control and they can pass it without Democratic help, so I put the onus there. But what's going on here? Where do we go from here? What's happening? Is there hope for a farm bill yet in 2013?

Rep. Peterson: Well, there's always hope. We have not come to a conclusion about what to do. There's been some ideas thrown out. And some people were getting pretty excited yesterday and about ready to blow everything up. And I was on the phone and got most everybody calmed down, I think.

So, you know, there was some talk about bringing the Senate bill up in the House. I have a problem with that. I've got problems with some of the Senate bill, and that's what the conference committee is for, to deal with that.

I think the best solution that I can come up with is to take the House Agriculture Committee bill, which was bipartisan, which had over 50 votes from the Democrats—[Steny Hoyer] thought there were 70. I don't think there were that many. But there were clearly enough votes, along with the Republicans, to pass what came out of the committee. Bring that bill to the Rules Committee and put it

on the floor, it'll pass and get to conference. I think that's the best solution, if people are willing to do it.

You know, what happened, it started with the dairy amendment, which got tangled up in the whole food stamp thing, and the idea, [they] put out misinformation that my dairy bill was going to raise the price of dairy products, and so a lot of Democrats defected and it passed by 300 and some votes, which was a shock. But right there I lost eight votes on the Democratic side just from that situation.

And then, you know, we had made a deal on food stamps where I agreed to more cuts than we had considered last year, but I thought we had a deal that there weren't going to be any other...that we were going to stand together to oppose any other changes in the food stamp area, but that's not what happened. And three amendments got approved, that each one of them peeled off more support, so we got down to 24 votes, and that wasn't enough.

Now people want to blame us, people want to blame the Republicans. Frankly, people are tired of the parties blaming each other, and I don't think we should even be talking about that. But people need to understand that when I passed the farm bill in 2008, I got 17 Republicans is all. So 24 was not what I expected, but it should have passed anyway. It didn't.

So we're going to go back to the drawing board. I talked to Lucas yesterday and tried to figure out some way we can bring this thing back, get it passed, get it into conference. We haven't worked for four years to give up now, so we're going to keep plugging.

Mr. McFeely: I know you don't want to blame one side or the other, Representative Peterson, but isn't it true that on the Republican side of the aisle there's a faction that is fixated on food stamps, on the SNAP program, and will do anything to make deep cuts to that area? I mean, is that a factual statement?

Rep. Peterson: Well, sure there are people there. There are people like that on the Republican side. But Mike, there's people on our side that say you can't cut a penny. And both of them are wrong. So, you know, there's plenty of blame to go around here.

But I think that the other thing that people should know is, you know, these amendments that passed, for example, the dairy amendment, over half the people that voted for the dairy amendment voted against the bill, so they put an amendment in the bill that cost me votes and they voted against the bill, the people that pushed this thing.

On this Sutherland amendment, which was the one that broke the camel's back, this is a Cantor deal, and he actually got up and spoke on this right before they [handed] the deal, which really torqued everybody off. All of the people, the 61 people that voted against the bill voted for that amendment, and no Democrats.

And they were adding amendments to this bill that were from people that weren't going to vote for it anyway. And the result is if we don't get this worked out, there will be no cuts in food stamps at all, because food stamps are permanently authorized. There will be no reform.

Mr. McFeely: That's the great irony of this, is that if nothing is done, everything's going to stay where it is.

Rep. Peterson: Yeah. And I mean, so that like the...with these people that, you know, the perfect is getting in the way of the good here, you know. So I don't know. I mean, this is a problem we have not just with the farm bill. We're having this...we've been running the government on continuing resolution for the last four years. We can't get anything through. We need to get immigration fixed. I don't know how we're going to get that done. Somehow or another we've got to get the right wing and the left wing out of running the show out there, and that's what's going on.

Mr. McFeely: Collin Peterson our guest on *The Mike McFeely Show*. He is a representative from Minnesota's 7th Congressional District. And you touched on this, but just to reiterate, so if nothing gets done, if nothing passes in 2013 for a farm bill, then what happens? Let the listeners know what is going to happen. Is it just a continuing thing?

Rep. Peterson: Well, first of all, crop insurance does not need authorization, so crop insurance will continue whether we have a farm bill or not. And in fact it wasn't part of any farm bill until 2008. So crop insurance goes on, and farmers will be thankful to hear that. Food stamps go on. They're permanently authorized. So nothing happens there.

There's conservation programs, rural development programs, farm credit programs. Some of those will not go forward because they don't have authorization or money, so there will be some of them that will be affected. There will be some conservation programs that go on because they're permanently authorized.

The commodity title, which is the grains, you know, wheat, corn, soybeans, dairy and so forth, if there is no bill by September 30th, we revert to '49 law, permanent law, which I left in the 2008 bill on purpose, for this very reason, to try to force people, if they wouldn't deal with it, to force them to deal with it. So what happens is that the permanent law kicks in, and it doesn't happen, I mean, it kicks in, but nothing happens until you harvest a crop.

And so on the dairy, that one goes till December 31st, so the first thing that happens on the 1st of January, because you harvest milk every day, the 1st of January the permanent law kicks in on dairy and it goes to \$39 a hundredweight, so it more than doubles what the farmers are going to get. Then in May, when we

harvest winter wheat down in Texas, the wheat prices go to the support price of \$16 a bushel, and on and on through the different commodities.

So letting it go to permanent law, the farmers will be happy for a while, but will be swamped with production and won't be able to get rid of it probably, so what it really means is we're going to have to extend the current law. And most of my farmers are okay with that because they keep getting direct payments, crop insurance goes on, the sugar program goes on. The dairy guys need a new deal, but they don't need what was done in the House yesterday.

Mr. McFeely: We talk about irony, and the direct payments are another irony of this.

Rep. Peterson: Yeah, right.

Mr. McFeely: If this thing doesn't pass—you know, everybody wants those to go away, or many people want those to go away. I think a vast majority agree that those changes need to be made. But then they won't be made if something isn't passed. It's baffling, and I'm sure it's even more baffling to you because you're there. Good God. Unbelievable.

Rep. Peterson: Well, I'm getting tired of having to explain this to everybody.

Mr. McFeely: Well, I know. I know. It's just wow. So you've been—and this is maybe a question for a different day, but I'll ask it right now—you're up for reelection, and there's a question of whether you're going to run again. I think you are, from some of the statements you've made, but does this make you second guess that? Does it make you think what the hell am I doing this every couple years for?

Rep. Peterson: Oh, yeah, there's no question about that, and I felt that way last session, too. But one thing, you know, I don't want to make any decisions until we get this farm bill put to bed. And so I'm not thinking about any of that. I'm just trying to figure out how we can get this thing done, get it in place, so farmers have five years of certainty, so they know what they're dealing with. So that's the first thing.

And if we get this farm bill passed, get it signed by the President, then after that there will be time to sit down and think about whether I want to keep doing this or not. So that's my process. And I've kind of done that every time. The Republicans are trying to force me into retiring or targeting me, one thing and another. All they've done is make me mad and make me more likely to run, so they're not being productive in what they're doing.

Mr. McFeely: I'm getting a lot of emails from the—

Rep. Peterson: Some of this crazy stuff they're—pardon?

Mr. McFeely: I'm getting a lot of emails from the National Republican Congressional Committee saying what a bad guy you are, so they're going after you pretty hard.

Rep. Peterson: Well, I know, but it's crazy because they can't pass this farm bill without my cooperation. I'm the key to helping them get this thing done. They wouldn't even have been as far as they were yesterday without me. And then they're attacking me. Now what sense does that make? I mean, the one guy they need to have help and they go after him, you know, so you wonder why things are screwed up.

Mr. McFeely: All right. Okay, Congressman, thank you. Thanks for taking time out on a Friday afternoon. We appreciate it. Keep working.

Rep. Peterson: All right.

Mr. McFeely: Yep, you got it. Collin Peterson, Minnesota's 7th Congressional District on *The Mike McFeely Show*.

[*End of recording.*]