

Background Information

MINNESOTA WAY/SPECIAL INTERESTS (Ten questions):

(Town hall in Hamel) Question:

"I would also like to thank you for your work on Alzheimer's.... But my question is in your last election you challenged your opponent to sign The People's Pledge, saying 'The people of this district deserve a race that's going to be about issues and about records.' Your opponent this year has signed the Minnesota Way pledge, which is to forego all special interest money, and sign The People's Pledge, to limit all outside spending, and also to commit to twice monthly public events that don't limit discussion. In this election, will you commit to the Minnesota Way pledge, and or The People's Pledge, and if not, what has changed since the last election?"

Paulsen Answer: "I'm not gonna talk about campaign stuff, other than I'll say this is that: the People's Pledge, which Terri Bonoff and I, which I'm sure that, was very different from this "Minnesota" pledge, because that referred to outside money only, right? And so, the majority of outside money spent so far in these races across the country, and that's a big challenge for all of us that's usually just raising and financing our own you know, efforts to support-running against our opponent. I would say this, though. I don't have the latitude of inheriting millions of dollars and spending it on my own campaign. *(Inaudible over boos of crowd)* So I don't have all that. And I'm assuming most of you wouldn't either. So outside influence money, I don't have a problem pushing back on that, we've seen that from the Minnesota past."

(Town hall in Hamel) Question:

"I am very thankful you had this townhall, I am very thankful that I get to ask one of the last questions. Congressman Paulsen, I believe that you are beholden to your corporate donors, which I have a list of. I believe that you do not listen to your constituents of the third district of Minnesota. There are many polls on our beliefs of the issues. How do you respond to us when hundreds of us are signing the Minnesota Way that says please be transparent please do not take PAC, lobbyist, or special interest money, and please vote with the majority of your constituents and not your corporate donors?"

Paulsen: "We may have a disagreement here, but first of all Corporations donate and a lot of them do alot, it allows them to contribute and regardless of where I got any support I always vote and do what is right for my constituents and thankfully Minnesotans vote for the person not the party. It's one of the reason we have such strong representation in both MN legislature and DC of folks that work on both sides that work together and part of that is just, I mean I am number 3 in the entire house of representatives on bipartisanship on sponsors of my bills and the reason that I take that approach is I think if you are going to be successful as a legislator, you want to have as many people sign on to your bills on both sides of the aisle. Now, and we met before and you and I have talked in our office um in

my office so um we maybe have talked about this issue directly. So I just think that that approach of building relationships and working across the aisle is the way to go. It makes no difference where certain groups support you or don't support you do what is right, you work with others and uh that's sort of the track record that I think speaks well to what Minnesotans expect and quite honestly it might be human trafficking or we've had good bipartisan support in a hurry or it may be an issue like the medical device tax which is a part of the affordable care act that does say like 29,000 jobs and hurt our state a bit but now we've been able to suspend that for a couple more years and that took 5 years before we were able to suspend that so sometimes it can take a little longer, so that's just my approach"

(Town hall in Chanhassen) Question:

"I've heard that you're concerned about Dean Phillips having millions of dollars to contribute towards his own campaign. And I'm wondering if you're aware that if you sign the Minnesota Way that that would eliminate that problem for you?"

Paulsen: "One, I'm not exactly familiar with the Minnesota Way, I know that we have to make sure we, this is an official event, so we're not gonna get into campaign stuff, but you're referring I think to maybe a challenge that has been made by my opponent, but some of these challenges have been made in the past as well that would prevent outside money from coming in to be an influence, and some candidates have used that effectively in certain states, and I supported that so then my challenge now is, you mentioned with an opponent who inherited millions of dollars, that he can spend that money. Now that campaign pledge would not prohibit him from doing that, though. Under that Minnesota Way. So keep in mind. Keep in mind."

(Town hall in Hamel) Question:

"... You've taken money from special interest. More money than almost any other member of congress. 8 Million dollars in the last ten years. However, in 2001, you said that 'even the appearance of special interest influence is enough to justify campaign finance reform.' I'm curious why you would say that now, but do the opposite now."

Paulsen: "I did make those records in 2001, particularly on the state campaign finance side, cause I was in the state legislature, obviously, and that's not to say we shouldn't have other campaign finance reforms debated and brought up, for instance, in Washington on the federal level on several proposals made in the past would include some groups and exclude some groups, so I would say any reforms done at the federal level should include everybody. So unions should be included, not at the expense of other interest, businesses that would have the opportunity to express free speech, and you know, the Supreme Court has ruled on this, since then, what was it, 2008 or 9, I can't remember, but essentially in that time frame that essentially it's allowed free speech to take place, so you like that or not, but we're sort of stuck with that system, which is kind of where we're at, from my perspective you know, it doesn't matter, I mean I have a lot of support that comes from individuals, from organizations, et cetera. But for me, it doesn't matter where

that support comes from, it's more important to just do what's right, support policies or initiatives that are right, regardless of where those resources come from. And that's, my general..."

(Town hall in Chanhassen) Question:

"Thank you so much for hosting us and for your service. I am here primarily concerned about gun sense and that question's been addressed, my follow-up question will be about your receipt of NRA money as well as other special interest groups, big pharmacy, big oil, from my understanding there's been quite a number of dollars, and I'm really concerned about your campaign financing, and I hope you'll could speak to your decision on what to take and what not to."

Paulsen: "Sure, so Big Pharma and Big Oil, I don't know what that has to do with guns, but anyways, good to share your view there, but anyway, look, I have a lotta folks that support me and support my policies that I work on across the board. In fact a lot of those groups may not like some of those positions I have proposed lately, so gun groups for instance have concern about gun violence restraining orders. So I always just do what's right for the community, what's right for the district, and that's how I vote, and I think bottom line is Minnesotans appreciate and they like that approach, and that's just what I continue to do. A big part of it also is just, and this is part of being a Minnesotan, y'know, you can joke about it where you're Minnesota nice, but I think that because our delegation gets along so well together it's enabled us to work together on some initiatives that have been important to the state. We got some room I think on some of the health care initiatives, cause we got some space on, we talk about drugs and pharmaceutical prices, having more generics available for market, making sure this rule is lifted so that pharmacists are able to talk to, for their prescription buyer, they're able to talk to them about a cash option, not under insurance, that may be cheaper. For the patient, might be a better way to go. Now, some interests may oppose that, but I think we should be looking into a policy change that makes that happen. Cause I think you should have a right to know if there's a better alternative for your pocket book and get the same result. So again, that doesn't influence me one iota."

(Town hall in Chanhassen) Question:

"I looked into some things and it comes out that you've taken more money from special interests groups than almost any other member of congress, over 8 million in the last ten years. Yet in 2001 you said that even the appearance of special interest influence was enough to justify campaign finance reform. Why has your position and perspective changed so much?"

Paulsen: "Well, we had this question too in Hamel, where we just were actually. So in 2001 that reference was when I was in the state legislature, right, and I didn't take any PAC or money even back then. But keep in mind, since that time frame we had a Supreme Court decision, right, that ruled that free speech is allowed and available for every organization and that money to be there and to have that influence. So you may not like it, but that's a

Supreme Court, and that's the law of the land. I would just say this, is that again, I'm not beholden to anyone, if there's a policy I don't agree with, I push ahead on it, regardless of where I've gotten support or the viewpoints that may be expressed strongly. But why should realtors, and there may be realtors in this room, who want to advocate for their personal issues and come in and meet with me, why should accountants who belong to the Minnesota CPA be able to have their free speech limited? I don't think they should. And so that's partly, again, I don't have the ability, I don't think we should go to this situation where people are self-funding their own races, I think you should have to have an opportunity to raise support from the public and from supporters and then obviously you have opponent against opponent. I definitely have issues with outside money coming and distorting all that, we've seen that happen year after year in Minnesota and other states."

(Town hall in Brooklyn Park) Question:

"You've taken more money from special interests than almost any other member of congress. over 8 million dollars in the last ten years, yet in 2001 you said even the appearance of special interest influence was enough to justify campaign finance reform. Why has your position and perspective changed so much?"

Paulsen: "Sounds like a similar question we had at the last meeting, actually, word for word. So a couple of things, number one, I did make that comment, so back in 2001 I was in the state legislature, and I had raised concerns about those types of dollars. Since then we've had number one, a Supreme Court ruling, right, that moved us in a different direction, number two, it doesn't matter where I get my support from different organizations. I support what's good for the district, what's good for the community. And that's the bottom line. And I've a number of instances in that respect. And that's what's more important, serving your institutes in that respect. And a lot of those organizations they have real people that belong to their, you know the realtors, belong to their company, you know the bankers, to their company, whatever it may be. And that's how they use and choose to provide their resources in supporting those that run for office.

(Town hall in Brooklyn Park) Question:

"As a voter in your district, and a mother of four boys, I would like to know, will you continue to accept donations from the National Rifle Association. Yes or no?"

Paulsen: "A couple of weeks ago, there were several of us that held a press conference for these gun violence restraining orders. And this is something that is a concept I think that could really reduce gun violence, it would have helped in the Parkland tragedy for instance that happened. There were a lot of- It gives another tool. So I would say again, giving another tool to law enforcement where they can actually step in and remove the firearms from someone who is perceived to be a danger to themselves or to other because a family member may recognize that. Unfortunately it's a policy that the NRA or gun advocates don't support, and I don't expect that they would give me

more contributions. They oppose my position on banning bump stocks, for instance, as an example. So these are all tragedies that have happened in the more recent future, and we responded by initiating and authoring some legislation. The good news is there's bipartisan support for it. The bad news is some of those organizations have significant clot still, where they're holding things up. So, I will say though we made progress on a couple things a couple months ago that the NRA did oppose, One was, and this goes back to the basic research function of the government, like in energy for instance, why shouldn't the government be allowed to do research on gun violence? That had been banned for decades. And so that was lifted, that's been formally lifted. And so we as policymakers, we can make better decisions if you get information like on that type of research, and say what would be the effective policies, in making a difference. And some states have already implemented these restraining orders to success. And so we're hoping that that will be the case going forward."

(Town Hall in Brooklyn Park) Question:

"I think this woman deserves a better answer, and so I'm going to ask you. If the NRA sends you a check, will you cash it, or send it back?"

Paulsen: "So I don't expect the NRA sending me any checks, so that's the way I'm going to answer. That's not getting out of answering."

(Town hall in Brooklyn Park) Question:

"Congressman Paulsen, I would still like an answer to the NRA question please."

Paulsen: "I've already answered that."

ACCESSIBILITY (Four Questions):

(Town hall in Chanhassen) Question:

"Well, I guess one of the main questions I have, so I've been here, I've lived in Edina for about 40 years, and I've tried desperately to talk to you and this is the first time I'm ever met you. Even though I've tried repeatedly. So if this is working so well for you, why haven't you done this before?"

Paulsen: "So, I'm just curious, when you say you've tried to meet with me, have you called the office?"

Constituent: "Yes, repeatedly"

Paulsen: "Yeah, because folks probably know I'm one of the only members of congress that does open office hours and meets with essentially almost anyone. I see some familiar faces in here. So those conversations are really good, and I understand you may disagree or have disagreements, but listening and getting the perspectives are always helpful."

Constituent: "But why haven't you done this before?"

Paulsen: "Well I do a variety of outreach meetings, so I've done the tele-town hall meetings since I was first elected, and I'm just gonna tell you those are way more popular, wildly popular, I, in fact, just last week, I had people

telling me 'don't do the regular town hall meetings, because I'm not gonna get my voice heard,' I understand that. I said, no, it's good, we'll do some of those, so I've always used those. There's more people, there's more variety, people appreciate it more, and it uses technology. Younger people like them too, so that's just the reality. Secondly, the Congress on Your Corner events, which are more small, mini session town hall meetings, lotta one-on-one connections with people, people enjoy those conversations. But so if you call the office, and just ask for Anna, and we'll set something up."

Constituent: "Yeah I've been spoken very rudely by your office"

Paulsen: "Well, I don't believe that."

(Town hall in Brooklyn Park) Question:

"My mother recently received US citizenship, and this year will be the first time she votes in the United States. She was not able to attend one of these meetings despite registering for all three. When will you hold a meeting in a venue large enough to hold all your constituents?"

Paulsen: "Well first of all, congratulations on her citizenship. I've been to several citizenship ceremonies myself, and there's nothing more heartfelt or rewarding when you see a family go through waving the flags after being sworn in, and I go to my college roommate, who went through that experience, and every other American who strives to come to the United States through immigration should have that opportunity, I believe, and I believe there's opportunity for the DACA children and others in that space. So look, I spend time, and I'm probably one of the only members of congress that does this, with open office hours and meet with anyone. So you know, I say almost anyone. There's value in that. And you may like to be in a group setting, I understand that, that's one of the reasons I thought we'd try that and do that, I have always done those telephone town halls since 2009, but I can't tell you how very popular they are, and so you reach more people, more flexibility, people don't have to come and worry about. People like them those are a big benefit to folks, so I'll just keep continuing to do that and work."

(Town hall in Brooklyn Park) Question:

"I just want to address real quickly about the phone town meetings, that you've had. I've answered the phone and said, 'I'm here,' and a robocall has said, 'Sorry we missed you,' and I'm going, 'No! I'm here! I'm here!', so I would appreciate it if there really were more meetings. And to that, I would ask, I really appreciate that you are listening to your constituents, and giving us the opportunity to listen to you, and I would ask if you'd be willing to have a debate with candidate Dean Phillips."

Paulsen: "There are laws, we have to use the voter registration phone numbers, what ever is incorporated that, that's all we can do, so you can't get a robocall warning, you can't do robocalls in Minnesota, that's illegal, so you have to have special permission to do the call in the way that we do it. But there's an issue and it's getting hot, so that doesn't make any sense, so we should check into it. And we have the numbers, we can track how many times

it was called, that's all recorded. So we can check in all that. Now, on the campaign side, which is separate from today, yeah, we're gonna have debates. Oh yeah, of course."

(Town hall in Brooklyn Park) Question:

"We've touched on this a little bit, but my question is different from what's been answered so far. We've heard tonight and in the past much about telephone town halls, your Congress on the corner, your office hours, but since we've heard about that I'd like to do it sort of just about meetings like tonight. Before today your last town hall was in 2011, as recently as March of this year you stated in the Eden Prairie news that you disfavor town hall meetings because people use them to grandstand. I'm quoting you hear, 'people turn them into a gotcha moment or shouting hall.' Given that history and position, can you tell us a little about the decision to now hold town halls?"

Paulsen: "Yeah, so, it is true, you've seen the spectacle being carried out across the country, right, and then you see on CNN and all these stations, so it would be easy to say, 'yeah, we're not gonna do that here,' but I thought, 'well, we've had quite a few folks ask to do a few of these, let's try it, let's see how it goes,' and you guys for the most part have been pretty good. The most raucous group out of the three, I'll say that, but I'm not gonna change how I've been interacting or connecting with folks, so I think the accessibility side is just really key and important, and helpful, it's helpful to me, whether you agree or not, and that's why I recognize some faces here, and some asked questions, and-"

Constituent: "But holding a town hall after seven years is changing how- Can you tell us why now you're having it?"

Paulsen: "Nothing's changed, I just thought, we'll give this venue an opportunity, because they asked, but they just haven't been as productive as having congress on your corner meetings, as having people not be interrupted, as I mentioned earlier this morning, I've had several people just a few weeks ago say, 'don't do those, cause I'm not gonna come to those, and I'm not gonna have to put up with a bunch of people shouting or yelling,' and again, I mean, that's their opinion, so there's different opinions different viewpoints, that's part of the importance I think of having civil discussions, civil discourse, and not waving banners and all that sort of stuff. But I do appreciate everyone being here, everyone coming, everyone taking the time to come. This takes time out of your schedule as well, and so it's constant effort, and I know that you can't please everybody and make everyone happy but what you can do is work your hardest and make sure you're instilling a belief that public service matters, that people should be involved in the government, that they should pay attention whether it's young people concerned about a Parkland shooting, or a lot of other pressing issues of the day. We get seven hundred emails and letters a day, in a highly educated community, I like to sign all of those personally, as many as I can every night, it can also be rewarding, so thanks for taking the time to come and engaging."