

U.S. Rep. Joe Neguse (D-CO) represents Colorado's Second Congressional District encompassing a vast region of Northwestern Colorado including Fort Collins, Loveland, and Boulder. Rep. Neguse was first elected during the 2018 midterm election cycle by a [hefty margin of votes](#) and can be grouped into the mass of Democratic representatives who made up the "[blue-wave](#)" trend that allowed Democrats to take control of the House. Rep. Neguse currently serves on the House Judiciary Committee, House Natural Resources Committee, House Rules Committee, and the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis. Among various caucus [leadership and membership roles](#), Rep. Neguse is vice-chair of the Progressive and Medicare for All Caucuses and Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, co-chair of the Refugee Caucus, and a member of the Black, LGBT Equality, and Pro-Choice caucuses.

In light of the Congressman's upcoming voting schedule on Capitol Hill, the following interview was conducted via email and addresses various political and legislative issues ranging from infrastructure to abortion rights.

General topics

Q: How specifically do you factor Fort Collins and its people into your work in Washington and at home?

Rep. Neguse: Through all of our work, I've strived to lead locally and listen first. That's why we've held a record number of town halls and traveled throughout the district time and time again to hear from teachers, firefighters, small business owners, local leaders and community members who each offer a unique perspective to our work. Many of the bills we've introduced in Congress come directly from our communities, from conversations and ideas that folks have shared with me as I met with communities in Larimer County and throughout our district.

Colorado is my home and, even though our legislative work takes place in Washington, our district is at the heart of everything I do in Congress. Everything we do is inspired by constituents and seeks to make a positive impact on the families and communities of the 2nd district.

Q: Is there any upcoming legislation, either by you or other legislators, that could have an important impact on Fort Collins?

Rep. Neguse: In Fort Collins and across the country we have an affordable housing crisis. Folks are being driven out of the places they call home as they are unable to afford home prices that have risen dramatically. Our plan, the [Housing Our Communities](#) plan, is a package of legislation that seeks to address the bureaucratic challenges that have exacerbated the affordable housing crisis. If passed, it would give us greater opportunities to develop and preserve affordable housing in our communities, helping more Fort Collins families find an affordable place to live.

As Co-Chair of the Bipartisan Wildfire Caucus, we are working to bring home federal resources to equip our community as they recover from the Cameron Peak Wildfire. Our plan to invest \$50 billion into our forests would support restoration work in the Cameron Peak burn scar, protect our watersheds, mitigate flooding and support public lands maintenance in Rocky Mountain National Park. We're also working to support our federal wildland firefighters. We recently passed two measures through Congress to provide mental health services and housing stipends for the firefighters who are putting their lives on the line to protect homes and families.

Q: Explain some of the work in Congress that you have done that you are most proud of.

Rep. Neguse: One of the bills I am most proud of introducing is [Ally's Act](#). In 2019, Ally – a 4th grader – from Broomfield, Colorado, wrote to my office to share about an issue she was having getting her insurance company to cover a specialized hearing device she needs to hear. Working with Ally, we were able to introduce a bill that would fix that issue and prevent future insurance discrimination for specialized hearing devices like bone-anchored hearing aids (BAHAs) and osseointegrated devices (OIDs), and we named the bill in Ally's honor. I'm so incredibly inspired by Ally's initiative and leadership to write our office and her work to advocate for the bill's passage. Similarly, last Congress, we worked with a group of constituents in Loveland to introduce and enact into law [legislation to authorize installation of a nation\[al\] women's suffrage monument](#) in our Nation's Capitol. Inspired by a local artist right here in our community, we were able to build support for this law, pass it through the House and send it to the President's desk in under two years' time. This effort will ensure there is an outdoor monument in Washington D.C where future generations can learn of the American suffrage movement and the sacrifices made to secure the right to vote for women.

Business and economic recovery

Q: Fort Collins businesses were hit hard by the pandemic, especially the restaurant sector which is a particular source of pride for Fort Collins. How are business development and the economy making a comeback in Fort Collins?

Rep. Neguse: Countless small businesses and music venues in Fort Collins and throughout our state have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic impacts. Fortunately, the [American Rescue Plan](#), passed by Congress in March, is providing much-needed resources to help small businesses keep their doors open, keep essential workers on the job, crush the virus and get our economy moving again. The American Rescue Plan provides targeted help for restaurants, music venues, and industries that have seen an outsized impact while Coloradans stayed home to help slow the spread. Additionally, our office is here to assist our local businesses in Larimer County to access appropriate grants and loans available through the American Rescue Plan. Help is here, and we hope all our local businesses take advantage of these resources as they can.

Q: What would the passage of the [Build Back Better Agenda](#) mean for Fort Collins specifically?

Rep. Neguse: We have been hard at work in Congress fighting to make bold, historic investments for Colorado's working families. The Build Back Better Plan will create jobs, cut taxes and lower costs for health care, prescription drugs, child care and higher education—ensuring that every American family and community can thrive. This plan makes transformational investments to tackle the climate crisis through the creation of a clean electricity standard, a major expansion of clean energy and EV tax credits and by investing in my Climate Conservation Corps proposal to put a new, diverse generation of Americans to work conserving our public lands and supporting wildfire prevention efforts.

We know the American people are hurting, and what is contained in the Build Back Better reconciliation package will address this pain. Women have been pushed out of the work force and need child care to get back to work. People need higher education to be able to access any jobs we create. Climate change is urgent and visible everywhere in devastation and needs our immediate action. We are still not out of the pandemic and people need health care to prevent death and disease.

This is a plan for our families, for our workers, and for our planet. It's critical we get it done for Fort Collins and communities across the country.

Climate change and the environment

Q: Environmentalism is an important issue for many voters here in Fort Collins. Since you have passed various legislation on climate action and serve on the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis and the House Natural Resources Committee, how do you see these policies affecting Fort Collins?

Rep. Neguse: Climate change is an existential threat. Here in Colorado, we see the impacts tangibly, through more frequent and extreme wildfires, like the Cameron Peak Fire in Larimer County, as well as in more intense flooding and climate-related weather events. That's why I've prioritized climate action since coming to Congress. I was honored to be appointed as the only member from the Rocky Mountain West to the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis, and over one-third of the bills I've introduced are focused on addressing the crisis, including proposals to invest in regenerative agriculture, expand clean energy, safeguard climate science and conserve our public lands — including the CORE Act, which became the first major Colorado wilderness legislation to pass the House in over a decade. Many of my proposals have since passed the House, including our plan to equip communities with resilient infrastructure.

As Chair of the U.S. Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, I have been pushing to launch a reimagined Civilian Conservation Corps inspired by the 1930s New-Deal era program. This new corps—a 21st Century CCC—would put people to work in good-paying jobs doing the work to prepare our communities for climate impacts, restore wild spaces, mitigate wildfire risk, and build out climate-friendly infrastructure. Additionally, as Co-Chair of the Bipartisan Wildfire Caucus, I am working to support our fire crews and bring in robust federal investments to support wildfire prevention and post-fire recovery work in the wake of last year's record-breaking wildfire season.

Q: What are your thoughts on the [Green New Deal](#)?

Rep. Neguse: Climate change is an existential threat that we need to begin tackling with bold action. The Green New Deal outlines a pathway for a full transition to 100 percent renewable electricity at the federal level and ensures that we leverage the skills and ingenuity of the American workforce in the process. There is no longer a debate about whether climate change is real, the only conversation left is how we reverse its course. We do not have time to wait. We are the generation that will heal our planet.

Racial injustice, inequality & police reform

Q: As you know, Fort Collins was active during the summer of 2020 when Black Lives Matter protests were occurring across the country. What impacts have you seen, or hope to see, made by the [George Floyd Justice in Policing Act](#) you introduced with the Congressional Black Caucus?

Rep. Neguse: Last summer, we witnessed a multicultural multiracial movement sweep across our nation, Coloradans of all backgrounds came together to demand justice and an end to the discrimination and bias that has permeated our policing system for far too long. The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, which we passed through the House in March, is a direct response to these calls for change. Weeks after George Floyd's murder, House Democrats worked to craft and pass major police reform legislation to meet the injustices we've witnessed throughout our nation with action. We now urge the Senate to answer the calls for change and justice that we have been witnessing. While there is no single policy prescription that will erase decades of systemic racism, it's time we create structural change with meaningful reforms like those outlined in the George Floyd bill.

Abortion, female bodily autonomy & Roe v. Wade

Q: Obviously, a big topic of concern for voters of both parties has to do with abortion and a pregnant person's right to bodily autonomy. I know you are a solid pro-choice Representative, having voted 'yea' on the recent passage of the [Women's Health Protection Act](#) in the House and earning a 100% rating from the Planned Parenthood Action Fund, but what are your thoughts on the Supreme Court's recent decision to allow [Texas S.B. 8](#) to go into effect?

Rep. Neguse: Texas's S.B. 8 law is unconstitutional, full stop. I was proud to vote in support of the Women's Health Protection Act last month to codify Roe v. Wade as the law of the land.

Public health, coronavirus & vaccines

Q: From the start of the pandemic, you have been a believer in science and an advocate for policies and practices that are in accordance with health experts' recommendations. What has been the most recognizable impact of the coronavirus on Fort Collins from your perspective?

Rep. Neguse: Almost 8,000 Coloradans have lost their lives to COVID-19. Those are neighbors, friends, and family members who—as we start the long road to recovering from this pandemic—we will miss dearly, and whose loss we feel deeply. Listening to the science and taking important steps, like wearing masks consistently and getting vaccinated, will help us ensure that we don't lose more of our community to this deadly virus.

Q: If you could speak directly to people who are still hesitant to get the vaccine, what would you tell them?

Rep. Neguse: I would say what I've been saying for a long time: this vaccine is safe and extremely effective. It will help keep you and your family safe. It's free and it will help us get back to normal more quickly.

Political partisanship, division & tribalism

Q: Nationally, our population and government have never been more divided than right now — a trend that seems to only grow with time. How does the current political climate affect your work in Congress?

Rep. Neguse: I full-heartedly believe we must work together to find solutions to our most pressing challenges and work to turn down the temperature in our politics, to restore trust in government and to create an environment where more people are motivated to participate and engage in our democracy. I've sought to do this at a community level, by launching our first-of-its-kind service town hall initiative, to bring community members of every political persuasion together to work for the common good of our community.

Q: What is an example from your congressional experience when you compromised on an issue?

Rep. Neguse: I was honored when last year the Lugar Institute identified me as the most bipartisan member of Colorado's House delegation. In Congress, I've worked in a bipartisan manner with my Republican colleagues, inviting them to see first-hand the Colorado experience, including hosting colleagues from both sides of the aisle for the first and only official field hearing of the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis right here in the 2nd District. I've worked collaboratively with others to craft legislation

wherever we can agree, including on regenerative agriculture, public lands conservation, funding for rural schools, and consumer protections.

The future

Q: The past 18 months have, to say the least, put quite a damper on people's hopes and expectations of the future. Many are uncertain and pessimistic as to whether or not we as a country, state, and community can fully rebound from it all. What are you most excited or hopeful about with regard to the future, both near and distant, for Fort Collins?

Rep. Neguse: Over the past year, while it's been a difficult one for our communities, I've been encouraged and inspired by the power of service and community we've witnessed throughout our state, and by our resilience in helping each other, coming together, and lending a hand.

From our food banks who have ramped up operations to serve hungry kids and families, to our nurses, first responders, firefighters and everyday heroes on the front lines to community organizations who have continued to serve our communities and care for our kids throughout these troubling times.

These are the values at the heart of public service and at the heart of governing. Whether it's buying groceries for an elderly neighbor, sharing with your friends information about getting vaccinated, or making a sacrifice to stay home and keep your loved ones safe, we've learned this year that we can all make an impact, and we can all be part of the change that is needed. Public service starts in our communities, seeing a need, leveraging the skills we have and figuring out how we can make a change. While we face a lot of challenges, Colorado is strong and resilient and with this same spirit of service and community, I believe we can find solutions and build a brighter future.