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Democratic Attorney General Keith Ellison and Republican challenger Ron Schutz debate on Oct. 2, 2026 at MPR News in St. Paul. PHOTO BY MAX NESTERAK/MINNESOTA REFORMER

Ron Schutz pledges to sell stocks amid AG race debate

Max Nesterak
MINNESOTA REFORMER

Republican Ron Schutz said if he's elected Minnesota attorney general, he will give up control of his vast stock portfolio and divest from any companies that are currently in litigation with the state.

Schutz made the commitment on Friday during an MPR News debate with Democratic Attorney General Keith Ellison, days after the *Reformer* reported on the potential conflicts of interest presented by his 174 individual stock holdings.

"I will divest from any stocks that I currently own from companies that are in litigation with the state. I will put the rest of it in a vehicle that I won't have any insight into," Schutz said, noting that his portfolio is already professionally managed by RBC Wealth Management.

During Friday's debate, the first in what's one of the most competitive statewide races, Ellison and Schutz also answered questions from MPR's Brian Bakst on fraud, the Trump administration, pardons and prediction markets.

During Friday's debate, the first in what's one of the most competitive statewide races, Ellison and Schutz also answered questions from MPR's Brian Bakst on fraud, the Trump administration, pardons and prediction markets.

Schutz said he would approach the job as a trial attorney — not a politician — leaning on his experience as a partner at a large national law firm. Schutz is not new to politics, though, having spent years as a Republican Party donor and conservative activist. He's a member of the Federalist Society and serves as a board member of the think tank Center of the American Experiment.

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House Majority Whip seeks reelection, focuses on nonpartisan work

James Kling
St. Cloud Times | USA TODAY NETWORK

Although U.S. Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Minn., has been the House Majority Whip since 2023, he said he's particularly proud of work he sees as nonpartisan.

That's why he started the Crypto Caucus in 2025 along with Democratic Rep. Ritchie Torres of New York, which he said is the easiest topic for him to argue as nonpartisan because those who use digital assets come from all parts of the political spectrum.

"When it comes to transportation and when it comes to agriculture, those are nonpartisan issues as well," he said. "When you bring back money to Minnesota for a road or a bridge, ... they are for everyone. They're not just for a particular political party."

"Specifically (for) St. Cloud, I'm proud of the \$7 million that we brought in for the Heatherwood Road improvements," he said.

The city of St. Cloud originally put in grant requests for the project in 2023, and the \$7 million grant was approved in 2025, with construction set to begin in 2027.

The roadway extension, located in south St. Cloud, will help ease congestion and create jobs, according to the original proposal. The number of jobs will depend on how much urban infill development is approved for construction once the roadway extension is complete.

Both Democratic U.S. Senators from Minnesota, Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith, also requested the earmark for the funding.

Budget and deficit

Separating himself from his Democratic colleagues, Emmer said the government spending cuts through HR 1, colloquially known as the Big Beautiful Bill, was just the start.

"It was like \$1.5 trillion over 10 years," he said. "It doesn't even scratch the surface. You really got to reinvent government as we go forward."

He said the budget, particularly the \$40 trillion debt, is among his top priorities to tackle.

Emmer has been in office since 2015 after about a decade in the state Capitol. He currently serves on the U.S. House Financial Services Committee, which he's also been on since 2015.

He said political divisiveness has gotten worse since 2020, which has made getting things done

See HOUSE, Page 4A

Minnesota students struggle to reach grade level since COVID-19 pandemic

Alyssa Chen
MINNESOTA REFORMER

Fewer than half of Minnesota students who take the state's standardized test are able to read and do math at grade-level expectations, according to data released Wednesday by the state's education department.

Performance on the test, called the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments, declined drastically over the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which schools closed or held classes remotely. Proficiency rates continue to be over 10 percentage points lower than before the pandemic, when over half of students were proficient in math and reading.

The exams are given in May to students in grades 3-8 in reading and math, with additional reading and math exams in grades 10 and 11, respectively. The results account for over 90% of students in the state, once opt-outs, absences and other reasons are accounted for.

Students and parents are able to opt out of exams. Around 4% of students or their parents opted out of the math exam, for example. Non-participation rates vary widely by school, making test scores much harder to interpret in some cases. In a few schools, over half of students opt out of the exam; on the extreme end, at Farmington High School, around 80% of juniors opted out of the math test.

The reading exams in 2026 are based off of new standards and differ from past exams, education officials said, making them not comparable to old results. The 2026 reading proficiency rate is over one percentage point lower than 2025.

"While results from updated assessments cannot be compared to previous versions, it is common for updated assessments to reflect a 'drop' in proficiency due to limited instruction time of the new standards," the department said in a press release.

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Seventh and eighth grade students work collaboratively on algebra problems in Ailee Reinhardt's math class Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 at Pioneer Ridge Middle School in Chaska, Minnesota. NICOLE NERI/MINNESOTA REFORMER

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