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H: 46° L: 34° | SUNNY BUT COOL

U deal spotlights leadership rifts

By EMMY MARTIN and ERIN ADLER
The Minnesota Star Tribune

Letters from Fairview, major donor intensify questions about university president, health system's future.

The new deal between Fairview Health Services and University of Minnesota Physicians, the doctors' group, has erupted into public turmoil, thrusting President Dr. Rebecca Cunningham into one of the most serious

trials of her year-old tenure as the university's top leader.

U officials blasted the doctors' agreement with Fairview as a "hostile takeover" that doesn't serve the state.

For Cunningham, the Fairview standoff represents both

a defining test and potential breaking point for the physician, who now faces growing concern from some doctors, donors and one of the state's largest hospital systems over her handling of the university's medical system.

While the U's Regents and others continue to support Cunningham's stance, her effort to assert control over a complex, politically sensitive health partnership has also exposed fractures inside her administration about her leadership style.

On Thursday, Fairview Health Services chief executive James Hereford sent Cunningham a letter obtained by the Minnesota Star Tribune that defended his system's partnership with the University of Minnesota Physicians (UMP) and accused

U leadership of undermining the stability of academic medicine.

He called the agreement between UMP and Fairview "a good deal" for all parties, including the U, and added that nearly 200 physicians have left UMP since 2024, "far outpacing historical norms."

SEE FAIRVIEW ON A6 »

Farewell to former Vice President Cheney



Among the bipartisan attendees at former Vice President Dick Cheney's funeral at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., on Thursday were former presidents George W. Bush and Joe Biden, along with former vice presidents Kamala Harris, Mike Pence, Al Gore and Dan Quayle. As vice president under Bush, Cheney transformed national security after the 9/11 attacks. **Story, A10**

Photo by JABIN BOTSFORD • The Washington Post

If ACA subsidies vanish, who takes biggest hit in state?

Without an extension by Congress, people on Minnesota's health insurance exchange will see costs increase, and in some places the rise could be dramatic.

By CHRISTOPHER SNOWBECK
The Minnesota Star Tribune

A married couple approaching retirement in Blue Earth County, with income fairly typical for their age, could get about \$18,000 worth of federal subsidies this year for their health insurance using the MNsure exchange.

All of that financial assistance could disappear in January — leaving the family with a \$25,000 increase in insurance

costs for 2026, state officials say — depending on the results of an ongoing debate in Congress.

Lawmakers are considering whether to extend pandemic-era enhancements to tax credits funded by the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA). The fate of the enhanced subsidies, scheduled to expire at the end of this year, was the key sticking point in this fall's government shutdown,

when some also highlighted new federal requirements that will limit access to Medicaid for people with low incomes.

While the Blue Earth County example might be an extreme case, health care advocates worry that if enhanced tax credits aren't renewed, people across Minnesota will see price increases averaging about \$3,400. Nearly 20,000 will lose

all subsidies, and some likely will go without insurance. They could get sicker from delaying treatments or create stress on hospital budgets by seeking free or discounted care. "If you don't have coverage, it doesn't mean that you're not going to get sick," said Lynn Blewett, a health policy professor at the University of Minnesota. **SEE ACA ON A6 »**

Octopus nears end of her curiosity-filled life

Story by CHRISTA LAWLER • The Minnesota Star Tribune
Great Lakes Aquarium photo

Fitzgerald, the Giant Pacific octopus at the Great Lakes Aquarium, has tucked herself into a cave in her salt-water tank, a single reddish arm covered in suckers barely visible from the dark corner.

She is protecting the thousands upon thousands of eggs she has begun laying, small white dots that line the floor and walls of her nest. It's a futile cause. The eggs aren't fertilized. But nature insists she hunker down and protect them, regardless, occasionally snatching a rock or plant from the enclosure and pulling it closer to her cave for protection from predators that don't exist here.

This period is called senescence — and it means the end of her life is near. "Now that she's in her egg-laying stage, she's been mostly just in her den," said Adam Lein, the main aquarist who works with Fitzgerald. **SEE OCTOPUS ON A6 »**



At Duluth aquarium, beloved Fitzgerald has begun laying eggs and hunkering in her nest, which she will do until her final days.

Trump plan would cede Ukrainian land to Russia

One GOP congressman calls it "a 1938 Munich."

By ILLIA NOVIKOV, AAMER MADHANI and CHRIS MEGERIAN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's plan for ending the war in Ukraine would cede land to Russia and limit the size of Kyiv's military, according to a draft obtained Thursday by the Associated Press.

The proposal, originating from negotiations between

Washington and Moscow, appeared decidedly favorable to Russia, which started the war nearly four years ago by invading its neighbor. If past is prologue, it would seem untenable for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who has opposed Trump's previous calls for territorial concessions.

There has also been resistance from European leaders, who are likely to decry the U.S. peace push as rewarding Russian President Vladimir Putin for his aggression, leaving him **SEE UKRAINE ON A3 »**

TOP NEWS

CDC website now contradicts scientific consensus that vaccines don't cause autism. **A2**

NATION & WORLD

Death toll reaches 33 in some of deadliest Israeli strikes in Gaza since ceasefire's start. **A4**

STATE & REGION

Man ID'd in fatal shooting on Leech Lake reservation in which a deputy was wounded. **A5**

SPORTS

Timberwolves star Anthony Edwards talks about his recent stretch of cold shooting. **C1**

BUSINESS

Deloitte's holiday survey finds most Minnesota shoppers don't plan to reduce spending. **D1**

VARIETY

With Sarah McLachlan at the Armory on Sunday, a look at alumnae of her Lilith Fair. **E1**

HAVE YOU HEARD?

Eighty years ago, historic trials for Nazi leaders who had survived the collapse of Hitler's regime began in Nuremberg, Germany. **A2**

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