

The Minnesota Star Tribune

2026 PULITZER PRIZE



FOR BREAKING NEWS

MONDAY, MAY 18, 2026

H: 69° L: 48° | STRONG THUNDERSTORMS LATE

MSP stands with \$263M expansion

Airport says Terminal 2 project is justified even as budget air travel industry struggles.

By **BILL LUKITSCH**
The Minnesota Star Tribune

A few things have changed since shovels hit the dirt outside Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport's Terminal 2.

Three carriers packed up and left, one of which ultimately went bust. Passenger traffic fell last year for the first time since the height of the pandemic. And on Wednesday, the biggest airline at the terminal — Sun Country — was officially bought by out-of-state peer Allegiant.

Despite the headwinds facing the budget airlines that operate from Terminal 2, airport officials are confident the \$263 million expansion is still a wise investment.

"We think there's a demand that's going to be here today and into the future," said Roy Fuhrmann, chief operating officer of the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC), which runs MSP.

The MAC started working on the expansion in 2024. Expected to wrap up next year, the project will add two jet bridges and extend the terminal by 168,000 square feet. Greenery will be added to the rooftop, and a glass jet bridge walkway will give passengers a last look across the tarmac before darting off somewhere else.

Yet the terminal's existing 14 gates are already underused. "Four to five times a day, this terminal is extremely busy," Fuhrmann said. "Then in between it gets a little quiet."

Airport officials plan to meet with Allegiant to discuss the airline's future needs, Fuhrmann said. Although airline mergers always create some uncertainty, he said Twin Cities customers may see more destinations if Allegiant takes advantage of gates that already sit dormant during calmer times of day.

Fuhrmann said Southwest or Frontier appear most likely to expand to the new gates, which are built to be shared between airlines.

The \$263 million price tag is being covered by a combination of state and federal grants, development bonds and a fee charged to passengers who board airplanes at MSP, said Bridget Rief, the MAC's vice president.

SEE TERMINAL ON A5 »

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Cost of Demuth's deals could be GOP endorsement



ELIZABETH FLORES • The Minnesota Star Tribune

House Speaker Lisa Demuth gavel in the session on Thursday. She leads a chamber with an even split of Republicans and Democrats.

Governor candidate's work in House may be hard sell to hard-line Republicans.

By **WALKER ORENSTEIN**
The Minnesota Star Tribune

House Speaker Lisa Demuth last week used her negotiating skills and narrow hold on power in the Minnesota House to help forge a complex bipartisan deal.

But as she campaigns for governor, the Cold Spring Republican now faces a tougher challenge: selling the deal to some conservative voters demanding

change, not compromise.

The GOP is set to endorse a candidate for governor later this month at the party convention in Duluth, where delegates will decide between Demuth and several other candidates, including retired health care executive Kendall Qualls and MyPillow CEO Mike Lindell.

Both have criticized Demuth's dealmaking in the tied House over the past two

years, saying she didn't go far enough to shrink government spending or crack down on fraud in Minnesota's social services programs. The budget announced Wednesday includes a one-time cut to car tab fees and property taxes wanted by Republicans, as well as some anti-fraud measures.

"This is small ball politics instead of big ball," Qualls said in an interview with the Minnesota Star Tribune. "The tab fees

could have been permanent instead of temporary."

Navigating this dynamic has been one of Demuth's biggest challenges this session. Unlike Qualls and Lindell, Demuth can actually pass GOP priorities into law and use those victories in her campaign. But she also must work with Democrats to get anything done in the closely divided Legislature.

The state House is evenly

SEE DEMUTH ON A5 »

SOARING PRICES TEST VOTERS' MONEY, PATIENCE

Americans are voicing concerns, but Trump has dismissed recent signals.

By **TONY ROMM** and **BEN CASSELMAN** • The New York Times

WASHINGTON - Swept into power by voters frustrated with the nation's economic trajectory, President Donald Trump promised at his inauguration to "bring prices down."

But that was January 2025, more than a year before the White House would forge ahead with an agenda that has sent inflation roaring back, testing the patience — and the finances — of a cost-wary American electorate once again.

For Trump, the nation's political and economic strains are laid bare in a series of dour reports released over the past two weeks. Consumer prices last month rose at their fastest clip in about three years, outpacing workers' wages, while businesses saw their costs increase at a rate not seen since 2022.

Americans are racking up more debt. Families are saving less. And a key measure of consumer confidence dipped to an all-time low this month. The anxiety has bled into recent political polls, which have registered broad public disapproval of Trump's handling of the economy.

At the heart of matter is the war with Iran, which sent the average gallon of gasoline to about \$4.52 nationally, according to AAA. That is more than a 40% jump from a year ago, an uptick that has cut across the global economy, affecting everything from the cost of workers' daily commutes to the prices of goods at grocery stores.

Yet, the president has largely dismissed those recent signals, telling reporters at one point last week: "I don't think about Americans' financial situation."

SEE TRUMP ON A8 »



JENNY KANE • The Associated Press

Gas prices have seen a more than 40% jump from a year ago, an uptick that has had ripple effects across the global economy.

GOP Senate hopeful has assault charge in his past

Aaron Brutger settled the case by pleading to disorderly conduct.

By **JENNY BERG**
The Minnesota Star Tribune

ST. CLOUD — A GOP-endorsed state Senate candidate from central Minnesota was arrested in 2009 after his former fiancée told police he had slammed a car door on her legs and strangled her until she lost consciousness during an argument.

Prosecutors charged Aaron Brutger, who was 26 at the time, with one felony count of domestic assault. Three months later, Brutger pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of disorderly conduct as part of a plea agreement.

The judge gave Brutger a

suspended sentence of 90 days that would be dropped on the condition that he remained law-abiding for a year, which he did. He was also fined \$50 and ordered to receive counseling, court documents show.

It's unclear whether GOP leaders or party delegates knew of the charges before endorsing him in February to run for the Senate District 13 seat. Republicans have held the seat for more than two decades.

Every Senate race is critical this fall because Democrats hold a one-vote majority in the chamber.

Brutger, now 42, first addressed the arrest on his campaign's Facebook page in March. He said he decided to enter politics after being "thrown into the court system" and then fighting for custody of his children. On his campaign website, he says

SEE BRUTGER ON A5 »

Wildfires burn throughout northern Minnesota

Families flee, homes destroyed as Walz declares emergency.

By **KIM HYATT, SOFIA BARNETT, and JANA HOLLINGSWORTH**
The Minnesota Star Tribune

Wildfires fueled by fierce winds and dry conditions spread across northern Minnesota over the weekend, forcing residents from the North Shore to the Brainerd Lakes area to evacuate.

Homes were destroyed on Hwy. 61 along Lake Superior. However, no homes were lost to a 1,200-acre blaze in Crow Wing County where Gov. Tim Walz declared a peacetime emergency and

mobilized the National Guard.

"Grateful to all those stepping into harm's way to keep their neighbors safe," Walz said in a Sunday social media post while noting all the state and local agencies responding to the fires.

A fire near Two Harbors — the Stewart Trail fire — had burned 355 acres and destroyed 34 structures, including eight homes, by Sunday morning, according to fire officials. The blaze was first detected Friday near Betty's Pies, the well-known restaurant two miles north of Two Harbors. It was 30% contained Saturday night.

Residents between Two Harbors and Castle Danger were

SEE WILDFIRES ON A5 »



Provided by Mandy and Doug Mitchell

A plane drops fire retardant Saturday to prevent fire from spreading along Hwy. 11 near Crosslake in northern Crow Wing County.

TOP NEWS
Drone strikes UAE nuclear plant as U.S., Iran indicate they're prepared to resume war. **A3**

NATION & WORLD
WHO declares global health emergency over Ebola outbreak in Congo, Uganda. **A2**

STATE & REGION
After report, lawmakers look for ways to expand hospital spending on charity care. **A4**

SPORTS
Wolves now see the need for a traditional point guard to help run a cohesive offense. **C1**

BUSINESS
Giant treats might seem like dinosaurs in anti-sugar era, but T-Rex Cookie Co. is thriving. **D1**

VARIETY
One eatery in Robbinsdale describes how the ICE surge forced it to scale back. **E1**

HAVE YOU HEARD?
A rare syndrome caused by tick bites that makes patients allergic to red meat is being seen in growing numbers in Duluth region. **A4**

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THE MINNESOTA STAR TRIBUNE
Minneapolis, St. Paul MN • Volume XLV • No. 44
May 18, 2026



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