NEW LIFE FOR MPLS. LOOK: MARY TYLER MOORE-INSPIRED COLLECTION LAUNCHING E1

The Minnesota Star Tribune

2026 PULITZER PRIZE FOR BREAKING NEWS

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2026 H: 60° L: 37° | MILD SUN

Fully in charge, DFL has big ambitions

But how to pay for affordability goals will test Klobuchar's hard line on taxes as governor.

By BRIANA BIERSCHBACH and RYAN FAIRCLOTH
The Minnesota Star Tribune

Minnesota Democrats swept back into full control of state government promising to make life more affordable, and Amy Klobuchar and DFL legislative leaders already agree lowering health care, child care and housing costs must come first.

Now comes the harder part: delivering on their promises with a tight budget and a governor-elect who has ruled out raising taxes.

"These are big, important issues, and some of them will cost money," incoming House Speaker Zack Stephenson said. "We'll just have to see where the budget's at."

That is the central challenge facing Democrats as they prepare to govern together in January.

Democrats used a historic budget surplus to enact a sweeping progressive agenda when they last held full control of Minnesota government in 2023 and 2024. Now, the moderate Klobuchar is promising a different approach, setting up a potential clash with more liberal lawmakers who are eager to address the rising cost of living without the financial cushion that fueled their ambitions three years ago.

"I think you're gonna see a very different trifecta," said state Sen. Nick Frentz, DFL-North Mankato, using the shorthand term for holding the governor's office and both legislative chambers. "I think you're gonna see a DFL that wants to govern with an eye on what the people say is their priorities."

Senate Majority Leader Erin Murphy, DFL-St. Paul, also drew a distinction between the coming session and Democrats' last stretch of unified control.

"We don't have a list of pent-up things that people want to pass," Murphy said. "Instead, we have a pretty significant list of problems and issues that Minnesotans are experiencing."

An affordability agenda, with limits

Incoming DFL leaders agree on the problems they want to tackle, but not necessarily how they should do it. Progressive lawmakers want to establish nearly universal child care and primary care while closing tax loopholes for the richest Minnesotans and large corporations.

Klobuchar has outlined a more incremental approach:

SEE DEMOCRATS ON A7 »

A LONG STORY IS ENDING FOR HISTORIC FRANKLIN LIBRARY



Space constraints, security incidents sped up plans to replace building serving Mpls. Native community.

Story by SUSAN DU • Photos by DILAN PAREKH • The Minnesota Star Tribune

Hennepin County has begun the process of decommissioning Franklin Library, a historic branch dedicated to the urban Indian community of south Minneapolis.

Library administrators are finalizing a contract with architectural and public engagement firms to define what services the library should provide and where a future building can be located.

With its decorative molding and grand staircase just inside the main entrance, Franklin is a classic Carnegie library built in 1914 as one of more than 1,600 around the country funded by the steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie. It's also one of the county's smallest libraries, despite being among the heaviest trafficked.

Located in the heart of the American Indian Cultural Corridor off two popular bus routes, Franklin Library is full almost every day. Dozens of public computers are in use constantly, and limited shelf space means staff must frequently rotate books in and out. Sparse seating sets up competition between families with children and homeless patrons who use the library as a daytime shelter from the elements. Armed security guards hovering near the main entrance frequently check for substance use in the bathroom stalls.



The Hennepin County Library system plans to move out of the historic Franklin Library building to a new location. Franklin is a classic Carnegie library built in 1914 as one of more than 1,600 around the U.S. funded by steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie.

Last spring, there were volatile protests at Franklin Library after private security contractors handcuffed a patron to a fence and pepper sprayed witnesses.

County Commissioner Angela Conley, who represents the district where the library is located, acknowledged recent conflicts and attributed them to the pains of trying to balance complex community demands in a constrained space.

"There's been incidences, there's been lots of things happening, there are constituents reaching out to me about getting into the library," she said. "We want it to be a space that's welcoming to all, and I think the community deserves that, too."

On a recent rainy morning, Franklin Library patrons filled the main level, typing at computers with only the

SEE LIBRARY ON A7 »

Relentless stumping works for Flanagan

Her Senate victory was built by a tireless style.

By ALLISON KITE
The Minnesota Star Tribune

At a campaign stop in far western Minnesota last year, two farmers approached Peggy Flanagan. They were Republicans who had previously voted for President Donald Trump.

"Listen, we don't agree with you on everything, but you're a tough cookie," they told her, "that's why we're here."

Looking back, Flanagan said, "that was when I felt like we could really win this thing."

Yellow Medicine County still went for Flanagan's Republican opponent, Michele Tafoya. But the moment crystallized the depth and breadth of the frustration voters felt with the Trump administration.

On Tuesday, that anger – over the war in Iran, tariffs, immigration crackdowns and the spiraling cost of living – led Democrats across the country to a historic wave. States that Trump won by double-digit margins sent Democrats to the U.S. Senate for the first time in decades or, in the case of Kansas, nearly a century.

Among those riding that

SEE FLANAGAN ON A5 »

In House, Democrats emphasize health care

Legislation to stop war in Iran also is a priority.

By KEVIN FREKING
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON - House Democratic leaders are placing an early emphasis on health care as they discuss their immediate priorities upon the swearing-in of the new Congress on Jan. 3.

Early votes in the House next year are expected to focus on boosting Medicaid and restoring an enhanced tax subsidy that is designed to lower the cost of Affordable Care Act health plans for millions of enrollees.

Democrats are also promising swift action on legislation to stop the war with Iran and to reverse some of President Donald Trump's trade tariffs.

"We're going to get out of the gate fast," said New York Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, the Democratic leader who is in line to become the next House speaker.

The legislative flurry carries enormous stakes for Democrats as they seek to translate their sweeping victories in the midterms – their numbers will exceed 250 in the 435-member

SEE DEMOCRATS ON A5 »

For Voyageurs National Park, a new boss and plenty of challenges

By BOB TIMMONS
The Minnesota Star Tribune

Minnesota's single national park has a new boss.

Jennifer Onufer, a veteran federal lands employee, began her new position last week at Voyageurs National Park, headquartered in International Falls.

Onufer's arrival marks a new era for Voyageurs, which has been without a superintendent for nearly a year and a half. Though lightly visited compared with other, better-known national parks, it is one of the jewels of Minnesota's border country, with massive lakes and hundreds of islands. The park had about 206,300 visits in 2025.

While her most recent work was in northern California, Onufer said Minnesota "is a bit like coming home" after growing up in northern New York state.

"I am pleased to be returning to the northern border," she added in an email to the Minnesota Star Tribune.

Her appointment also is a reminder of recent challenges at the park and within the National Park Service (NPS) that runs it.

Key park partners say they are hoping Onufer's hiring signals stability. They witnessed Trump administration-led cuts beginning in 2025, including firings and hiring freezes that affected park staff and colleagues at NPS units across the country.

The nonprofit National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) said the NPS had 12,600 full-time employees by the end of 2025, or a 24% decline from the beginning of the year.

"We do know that NPS is still over 4,000 permanent staff below what they had in December 2024," NPCA

SEE VOYAGEURS ON A7 »



GARRETT PETERSON • National Park Service
Jennifer Onufer has been named the new superintendent at Voyageurs National Park in northern Minnesota.

THE HEART AND VOICE OF THE NORTH | Subscriptions: 612-673-4343 or go to startribune.com/subscribe | THE MINNESOTA STAR TRIBUNE Minneapolis, St. Paul MN • Volume XLV • No. 219 • November 9, 2026 | Online: startribune.com • News tips: 612-673-4414 • Comments: 612-673-4000