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ELECTION 2026

Lisa Demuth wins Republican strawpoll

Speaker of the Minnesota House claims 32 percent of caucus vote

Speaker of the House Lisa Demuth (R-Cold Spring), who represents District 13A in the Minnesota House, won the strawpoll at the 2026 precinct caucuses on Tuesday, Feb. 3.

More than 10 Republican candidates received votes in the strawpoll, led by Demuth (5,827, or 31.86 percent). Kendall Qualls finished second (4,624, or 25.28 percent), followed by Mike Lindell, known as the "My Pillow" guy (3,235, or 17.69 percent).

Scott Jensen, the 2022 GOP candidate finished fourth (1,185, or 6.48 percent) and then dropped out of the race, announcing a campaign for state auditor instead.

"Undecided" finished fifth (1,046, or 5.72 percent), followed by: Rep. Kristin Robbins (776, or 4.24 percent); Phil Parrish (728, or 3.98 percent); Patrick Knight (362, or 1.98 percent); Jeff Johnson (139, or 0.76 percent); Rep. Peggy Bennett (112, or 0.61 percent); Brad Kohler (78, or 0.43 percent); Raul Estrada (62, or 0.34 percent); John Krhin (59, or 0.32 percent); and write-ins (56, or 0.31 percent).

Speaker of the House Lisa Demuth (R-Cold Spring) was the leading vote-getter in the Republican strawpoll for governor last week.

"Thank you to the thousands of grassroots conservatives who came out to caucus tonight and delivered an excellent result for our campaign," said Demuth in a press release. "This is just the first step in the process, but tonight shows that momentum is behind the Demuth-Wilson ticket."

After serving 11 years on the Rocori School Board, Demuth was elected to represent District 13A in 2018 and has been re-elected three times to the Minnesota House. She served as an assistant minority leader in 2021-22, as the House Minority Leader in 2023-24, and is currently the Speaker of the House (2025-26).

She kicked off her gubernatorial campaign in November and named Ryan Wilson as her lieutenant governor pick that month, too.

"In just three months since I announced my campaign for governor, our team has focused our efforts on organizing and empowering Minnesotans who are looking for a strong conservative and proven leader to get our state back on track after two disastrous terms of Tim Walz. We know Amy Klobuchar would give us nothing more than a rubber stamp Walz third term," continued Demuth.

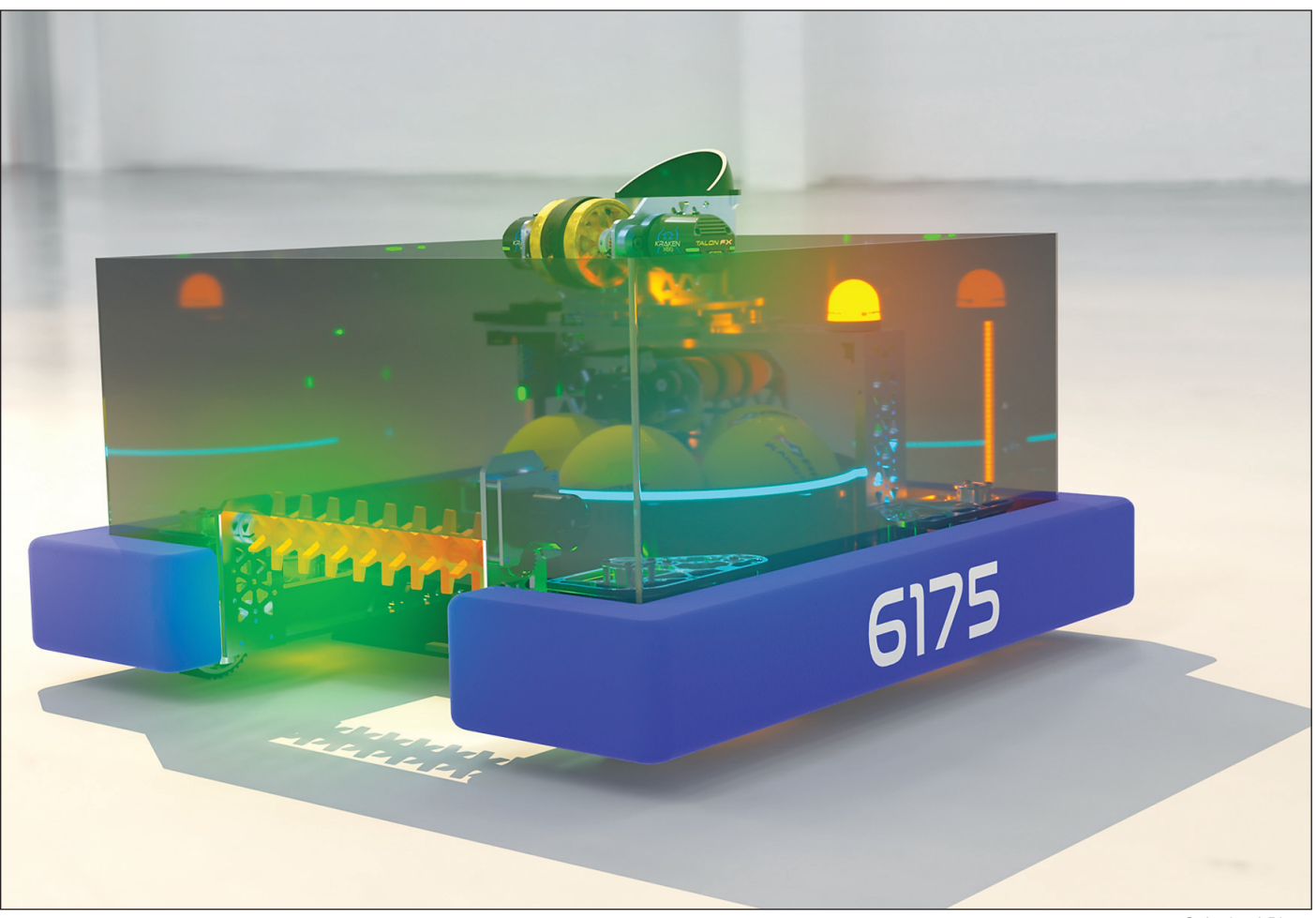
"Over the next several weeks I will continue to travel the state and converse with delegates to earn their support leading up to the Republican Party of Minnesota's statewide endorsement convention. With more cash on hand than any candidate in the race, we are ready to win the endorsement and beat Amy Klobuchar this November," she said.

Minnesota DFL Party Chair Richard Carlbom said this about Demuth's win in the strawpoll: "Lisa Demuth has fully embraced the most destructive Trump policies, from the tariffs that have devastated Minnesota's working families to Operation Metro Surge. As Trump unleashed his retribution campaign on Minnesota, Demuth defended Donald Trump instead of her state and blamed local law enforcement for the crisis. She has continued to chase Trump's endorsement – even as his agenda increases prices and explodes health care costs for Minnesotans. Lisa Demuth has chosen Trump over our state, and Minnesotans won't forget it."

With Gov. Tim Walz (DFL-Mankato) reversing course and deciding not to run for a third term, Sen. Amy Klobuchar (DFL-Minneapolis) recently announced her gubernatorial campaign and won the DFL strawpoll at the precinct caucuses, which reported more than 30,000 DFL participants in the state.

Klobuchar, a lawyer, was elected Hennepin County Attorney in 1998, serving as the chief prosecutor in the state's largest county from 1999 to 2007. In 2006, she was elected to the U.S. Senate, replacing Mark Dayton and becoming Minnesota's first female elected Senator. She was re-elected in 2012, 2018, and 2024 and is serving her fourth term in the U.S. Senate.

Both the DFL and Republican parties will hold their state conventions in May 2026, where they could endorse a candidate for governor. The statewide primary will be held in August 2026, where voters will decide the names on the ballot for the general election in November 2026.



Submitted Photo

This 3-D rendering was used to design the EV-W's robotics team's robot for their 2026 competition season.

EVW ROBOTICS

EV-W "Mystery Machine" preparing to fire

Robotics team building robot for 2026 season

By Ava VanderBeek

Mike Hesse, the co-head coach with Rob Flaschenriem, is entering his tenth year of coaching at EV-W robotics. Within the last few years, he has taken on a bigger role, allowing Flaschenriem and Hesse to work together to mentor the students and make better team decisions.

"I started in 2017, where I took on a small role helping teach CAD design and machining," said Hesse.

"I was drawn into the robotics program after the first season. I felt that with my manufacturing and design engineering background, I could help move the team forward in using modern-day tools to design and make robots," explained Hesse. "I really like being able to share the manufacturing side of things with the students," he continued.

In recent years, the EV-W robotics program has evolved into a year-round effort. The offseason has been devoted to learning new technologies and techniques. "I try to work with the students who have an interest in learning the new tech to advance our team's capabilities," Hesse explained.

In November 2025, the team started to meet a few times a week to review the robot from the previous year. "In this review, we try to understand why things worked and didn't work to better the team's knowledge for future seasons," stated Hesse.

As the competitive season came closer, the teaching process begins with new students. "This, again, is just a couple of nights a week to work with new students and students who want to learn more about specific things," said Hesse.

When the season officially started in January, the team learned the objective of the game and started meeting every day to design and build their robot. From January to April, the team will participate in various competitions. Throughout that time, they continue to work on and improve their robot.

This year, the objective of the game shows a resemblance to the objective of the 2017 robotics season. "This year's game is a 'shooter' game," said Hesse. With hundreds of six-inch yellow foam balls scattered on their playing field, teams need to move the foam balls to their scoring area and shoot them into an elevated goal that is six-feet high.

"We have scoring time windows, which means we can only score when our side of the field is active. It will be a game that our drive teams need to pay extra attention to the clock and always be ready to score. The goal is to be able to score a minimum of 360 balls in the match, with each ball being worth one point," Hesse explained.

Then, at the end of the match, there is a climbing apparatus up to three different levels. The higher the robot can climb, the more points it will be worth.

Each practice, the EV-W students meet in the woodshop and separate into groups. Some focus on the design on the computers, while others

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STATE GOVERNMENT

As legislative session nears, lawmakers prep state response to ICE

DFLers considering new laws but face Republican and legal scrutiny

By Cleo Krejci and Matthew Blake, MinnPost

Rep. Jamie Long (DFL-Minneapolis) understands the sense of hopelessness some constituents feel as concerns mount about illegal conduct by the masked federal immigration agents who have roved his southwest Minneapolis district, and elsewhere in the Twin Cities, for weeks.

As Operation Metro Surge enters its third month, he's among the DFL state lawmakers who are hoping the Minnesota legislative session that begins on Tuesday, Feb. 17, will yield new laws to hold federal agents accountable.

Long is co-authoring a bill that would let Minnesotans sue federal law enforcement officers in response to constitutional violations. Other potential DFL proposals could bar federal immigration agents from covering their faces and limit their access to hospitals and schools. Many emerging bills are inspired by similar legislation in other states, and most are likely to face Republican opposition and legal challenges.

"We have limits, for sure, on what we can do versus the federal government," Long said in an interview. "But bills like the one I'm proposing, I think help get around that by making sure that we are enforcing basic rights that belong to everyone."

Here is an early look at proposed legislative responses to an immigration enforcement action that has upended Minnesota civic life.

Minnesota DFLers looking to California, Illinois laws

Legislation being crafted by DFLers is virtually identical to laws passed in other blue states that saw earlier surges of federal immigration agents, like California and Illinois. The meatiest is a proposal that would give someone the right to file a lawsuit against federal law enforcement officers in response to constitutional violations. Long plans to propose it along with Rep. Bobby Champion (DFL-Minneapolis) and Sen. Omar Fateh (DFL-Minneapolis). Long said the law would allow someone to sue if federal agents break down their door without a warrant, or detain them illegally, as some examples.

"What we're trying to do is protect against the abuses and overreach that we've seen from poorly-trained agents, and frankly from the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security, that are telling their agents 'Go forward, you have no consequences,'" said Long, the #2 ranking member of the Minnesota House's DFL caucus and an attorney at Mitchell Hamline Public Health Law Center.

Sen. Lindsey Port (DFL-Burnsville) is likely to introduce a companion measure banning federal agents from wearing face coverings. (And, removing federal immigration agents' masks is one of several conditions that lawmakers in Congress are negotiating in a budget standoff.)

And at a town hall on Tuesday, Jan. 27 (the same event where a Minneapolis resident doused Rep Ilhan Omar (DFL-Minneapolis with apple cider vinegar), Sen. Esther Agbaje (DFL-Minneapolis) drew hearty applause when she floated a ban on federal officials using chemical irritants.

Champion and Agbaje mentioned potentially using legislation to assist renters who are afraid to go to work because of federal immigration agents. Laws could also help businesses whose workforce and clientele have been eviscerated because of these fears.

There would be no legal roadblocks with these actions. But there would be financial obstacles with the state facing a gloomy budget forecast. "We're going to look at whether we have the wherewithal," Champion said at the town hall. "And when I say wherewithal I mean money."

DFL legislators also want clearer limitations on immigration enforcement actions in hospitals and schools. At a press conference on Tuedday, Jan. 20, physicians from across the state detailed instances of people pursued by federal immigration agents inside medical settings, violating patient privacy, and making patients and staff too fearful to leave home.

"There was always a Minnesota understanding of how law enforcement acts in healthcare settings," said Sen. Matt Klein (DFL-Mendota Heights), a physician of 35 years. "But now that we see that violated repeatedly, we should at least codify what best practices are."

Here, too, Minnesota would follow California's lead. Gov. Gavin Newsom (D-California) signed a law in September 2025 that bars federal immigration officials from entering private areas of hospitals

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EDEN VALLEY WATKINS
VOICE
103 STEARNS AVE. E.,
P.O. BOX 7,
EDEN VALLEY, MN 55329
PHONE: 888-223-1371
EMAIL: EDITOR@EVWVOICE.COM
WWW.EVWVOICE.COM
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