[LIGHT MUSIC]

NINA MOINI: Minnesota was part of the national blue wave, with Democrats here holding their lock on statewide offices and likely expanding their control of the state legislature. Democrats are set to control the governor's office, the House, and Senate with Amy Klobuchar at the helm. She'll be the first female governor in Minnesota history. Klobuchar promised to be a transformative governor in her victory speech.

AMY KLOBUCHAR: In Minnesota, Trust is not given. It is earned. It comes with expectations, and that is results. And we will deliver results, results that you can see and feel in your life. And we will do it with our legislature.

NINA MOINI: Our Dana Ferguson joins me now to talk about what this election means for Minnesotans. Thanks for being with us, Dana.

DANA FERGUSON: Yeah, no problem, Nina.

NINA MOINI: I know you had a long night last night. The DFL has regained that trifecta control, meaning control of the governorship, a House, and Senate. What's the difference from the last trifecta about four years ago now?

DANA FERGUSON: Yeah, we see Democrats coming into the House and the Senate with much bigger majorities than they had back in 2023 and 2024. And obviously, we're going to have a different governor than we did at that time. Governor Tim Walz is stepping aside. Governor Amy Klobuchar is going to be coming in. And we heard a little bit of a different tone from her.

Whereas Governor Walz sort of allowed the DFL legislature to tee up pretty much everything that DFLers wanted in that last trifecta and he signed almost everything into law, we heard Klobuchar last night say, you're not always going to be happy with me, fellow DFLers. There are going to be times where you're going to be upset with the decisions that I make. She was trying to strike more of a bipartisan, conciliatory tone.

NINA MOINI: What do you think about this idea of she really wants to get things done? She wants people to see and to feel what she's doing in their pockets. And that's really what everybody wants, right, are results really as quickly as possible. Do you think she's under some pressure there?

DANA FERGUSON: I think so. And she's put herself under a little bit of pressure. She's put out several multi-point plans around housing, health care, all sorts of different things that list out like these are all the metrics that we want to accomplish.

And last night, she said, I'm going to do all of this. This is what we're committing to get done. And it's a heavy lift. It's a lot of items that she's trying to do. I think that it'll help her, having a DFL legislature there to back her up in some of this. But anything that requires any sort of a price tag is going to be tricky because there's not going to be a ton of money for the legislature to spread around, and some of the things she wants to do will cost money.

NINA MOINI: Let's talk about Republicans. I mean, they suffered pretty big losses. What are you hearing about how they're regrouping, moving forward, knowing they won't have control?

DANA FERGUSON: Yeah, it's a really difficult thing to how they're going to reset after this. They had a pretty strong case for themselves in wanting to fight fraud after Governor Walz's administration. But that wasn't enough to blunt the blue wave that came through. Folks were really motivated by frustration with the Trump administration following up on Operation Metro Surge here in the Twin Cities and beyond in Minnesota.

So I think they're going to come together and try to figure out, what does a Republican Party look like after President Donald Trump is out of the White House? And in Minnesota, what sort of leadership could be effective for them?

NINA MOINI: And not everything is settled from this election. Which races are you keeping an eye on that some of them could be headed for a recount?

DANA FERGUSON: Yeah, I think we at least three legislative races are going to be going to a recount. The closest of those is up in Moorhead, a state Senate seat where they're separated by four votes. Bonkers. Another one, in the Stillwater area, that's closer to about 40, and then a House seat where they're separated by 22 votes. So those are pretty much automatic recounts. And then in congressional district, one we're expecting a recount as well.

NINA MOINI: And that's why they say every vote matters.

DANA FERGUSON: Right, exactly.

NINA MOINI: Thanks so much, Dana. Thanks for all your work.

DANA FERGUSON: Thanks, Nina.

NINA MOINI: That was politics reporter Dana Ferguson. Again, we expect Governor-elect Amy Klobuchar to speak early this afternoon about plans for her transition into office. We're going to bring you that live when it happens right here in the 1 o'clock hour.

We'll turn now to DFL House Leader Zack Stephenson for more on what Democrats look to do with this full control of the legislature. He represents the Northwestern Twin Cities suburbs of Anoka and Coon Rapids. Representative Stephenson, thanks for your time.

ZACK STEPHENSON: Thanks for having me.

NINA MOINI: As we just heard, Governor-elect Klobuchar is indicating she may do things maybe differently. And you're in line to become House Speaker. How will you approach the relationship with Klobuchar? Have you had a chance to speak with her yet?

ZACK STEPHENSON: Of course I've had a chance to speak with Governor-elect Klobuchar, and I think we're going to have a great team between the governor and the House DFL majority. We're both going to be laser focused on affordability for Minnesotans all across the state, who have been struggling with the increasing costs of health care and housing and energy and gas and food, all driven by a reckless Trump administration in Washington, DC. I think there's going to be a lot of unity.

NINA MOINI: Can we talk about some of your top priorities? Not much was able to get done last session, or not as much as folks would have liked, because both of the chambers were so almost evenly split. So what is the top priority for you looking ahead to next year's session with, again, this full Democratic control of the legislature?

ZACK STEPHENSON: Well, not to be a broken record, but we are going to be completely focused on affordability. We're going to be completely focused on driving down the cost of living, of helping people to afford their health care, their prescription drugs, housing.

We're 100,000 units of housing short in the metro area alone. And housing is a crisis in Greater Minnesota as well. So there's a lot of work to do there, energy, food. We need to make people's lives more affordable.

So many Minnesotans are struggling. They see the billionaire class getting richer and richer, and they see their prospects getting harder and harder. We need to reverse that trend.

NINA MOINI: Do you feel a sense of pressure? I was talking with my colleague Dana Ferguson, to really deliver. I mean, this blue wave being in the excitement of it all is one thing, but people really are ready to see some results, which is pretty clear.

ZACK STEPHENSON: The pressure that I feel is from all the conversations I had with people around my district who are really struggling. When I was door knocking in Anoka a few weeks ago, I talked to a woman who told me that she has to make a choice between sleeping indoors and paying for health insurance, and she chooses to sleep indoors.

In Minnesota, one of the wealthiest states in the wealthiest country that's ever existed, that should not be happening. So that's what gives us urgency. The fact that real people across Minnesota are struggling. We need to deliver for them.

NINA MOINI: Can you give an example of just a few of the specific proposals that you will be pushing for that are going to make a real difference in the lives of Minnesotans when it comes to cost of living? I mean, you look at the price of gas. That's not something that can really be controlled. What can the state legislature do for Minnesotans?

ZACK STEPHENSON: Well, it starts with health care. There's a lot of things we can do on health care. And we have rolled out proposals for universal primary care, for cracking down on big pharma to bring down the cost of prescription drugs.

We've rolled out proposals to help make health insurance more affordable and to try and limit the ability of health insurance companies to stand between you and your doctor. We have rolled out proposals in the area of food affordability to get rid of the terrible-- excuse me, practice of surveillance pricing, which is where companies use a combination of surveillance video and AI to raise the price of goods that you might be interested in buying.

So there's just a host of things we can do. I mentioned housing a minute ago. We need to build a lot more housing all across the state of Minnesota. That will bring down costs for folks. So there's a lot of work that we can do to address this cost-of-living crisis right away.

NINA MOINI: Let's talk about gun control while I have you, another big priority for you and your party. Senator Klobuchar, governor-elect, mentioned that the day of the election was actually the birthday of Harper Moyski, one of the victims of the Annunciation church and school shooting. As you know, the Moyski family firmly planted support behind Klobuchar and had accused Speaker Demuth of holding up the legislation that would have allowed a passing of a ban of some assault-style weapons. Where's that going to go this session?

ZACK STEPHENSON: It will be a priority for House DFLers to take meaningful action to prevent gun violence in Minnesota. This is a personal issue for us. My predecessor, friend and mentor Melissa Hortman, was murdered in an act of gun violence just over a year ago.

So all of the members of our caucus have felt the impacts of gun violence in Minnesota, and we are eager to do something to stem the tide of gun violence that's impacting Minnesota. And this is an example of a place where there is a lot of unity on the DFL side of the aisle, from Governor-elect Klobuchar through the legislature. And I am optimistic that we will take quick action on gun violence prevention when we start the legislative session in January.

NINA MOINI: Yeah. And in this few minutes that we have to talk, we're mentioning some of these such difficult and awful events that Minnesotans have experienced. Minnesotans, some are still reeling from what happened with the federal immigration enforcement, a surge of agents into Minnesota. What kinds of support and port and relief will you be considering this session to address economic, social, educational, mental health and other impacts of that surge?

ZACK STEPHENSON: Yeah. Operation Metro Surge was an absolute catastrophe and contributed to one of the worst years in the history of the state of Minnesota. And House Democrats tried very hard last year to take aggressive action in response to Operation Metro Surge to put guardrails on ICE, to eliminate their most abusive, most absurd tactics, including sending ICE agents into elementary schools. We should ban that.

Minnesotans should have the ability to vindicate their rights in court if they get trampled on by a federal official. We tried to fight for that. It was blocked by House Republicans with a majority. We can pass bills like that, and we can take forward steps on the issues that you mentioned, whether it's mental health care or helping to advance our education system. There's certainly a lot of work to be done.

NINA MOINI: We know that at the national level, there was this blue wave, that midterms are often seen as a referendum on the current president or the incumbent. But on the state level, we know that there isn't a big surplus like there was the last time Democrats had a trifecta. So I think people are wondering, are Democrats actually going to be able to deliver? What can you tell people to ensure them that you will be able to move the needle so that in two years from now, things don't flip over again?

ZACK STEPHENSON: Yeah, Democrats are absolutely focused here in the Minnesota House of Representatives on delivering for the people of Minnesota. And there's absolutely things that we can do. I've mentioned several of them in our talk today, on health care, on prescription drugs, on housing, on food affordability. We have a full agenda ready and raring to go. And we know how to pass bills. We know how to get things done, and we will start doing that right away in January.

NINA MOINI: Thanks very much for your time, House Leader Stephenson.

ZACK STEPHENSON: Thank you.

NINA MOINI: That was Democratic House Leader Zack Stephenson.