

2026 Minnesota DFL Primary for U.S. Senate

A non-partisan guide to every candidate, their stances, and the claims they make

Race: U.S. Senate (Minnesota) | **Primary:** Tuesday, August 11, 2026 | **Party ballot:** DFL (Democratic)
Open seat - Sen. Tina Smith (DFL) is retiring. | General election: Tuesday, November 3, 2026.

How to read this. This report has no opinion on who should win. It applies the same scrutiny to every candidate. Facts, the candidates' own words, and unverified claims are kept visibly separate. Every rating is explained. Campaign facts change fast - anything here can shift up to election day, so confirm important details against the official sources listed at the end.

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1 — Race Overview

Minnesotans are choosing a new U.S. Senator. The current senator, **Tina Smith** (DFL), announced on February 13, 2025 that she will not run again, so this is an **open seat** with no incumbent - the first open U.S. Senate race in Minnesota since 2006.

What the office is

- **Job:** One of two U.S. Senators for Minnesota. Senators write and vote on federal law, control federal taxes and spending, ratify treaties, and confirm presidential nominees (including federal judges).
- **Term:** Six years. **Salary:** \$174,000 per year (rank-and-file senator).
- **Seat type:** Class 2 seat, up in 2026.

How the winner is decided

This is an **open primary**: Minnesota has no party registration, so any registered voter may choose one party's ballot on August 11. You may vote in only one party's primary - marking candidates from more than one party voids your vote. The candidate with the **most votes wins** the DFL nomination (plurality; there is **no runoff** and no ranked-choice voting for this race) and advances to the November 3 general election.

The DFL primary ballot - six candidates

Candidate (as filed)	Who they are	Status
Angie Craig	U.S. Representative, MN-02 (since 2019); Ranking Member, House Agriculture Committee	Front-runner (moderate). Skipped the DFL convention; running straight to the primary.
Peggy Flanagan	Lieutenant Governor of Minnesota (since 2019); White Earth Nation citizen	Front-runner (progressive). Won the DFL party endorsement (May 30, 2026).
Kurt Michael Anderson	Attorney (solo practice); prior Minneapolis City Council candidate (2021)	Minor candidate.
George H. Kalberer	Perennial candidate; former commodities-exchange member / analyst	Minor candidate.
Peter John Murgic	No public information found	Minor candidate.
Billy Nord	Streaming-company manager; first-time candidate	Minor candidate.

Also filed but withdrew: former state senator Melisa Lopez Franzen (ended her bid in 2025 after trailing in fundraising). Sen. Tina Smith is not running and has endorsed Flanagan.

Keystone caveat (candidate list). The Secretary of State certified candidates on June 8, 2026, but its official filing site loads names through a script we could not read directly. The six-name DFL field above is confirmed by two independent

sources that agree exactly (Ballotpedia's dedicated primary page and a local voter-guide blog). Treat six as correct; confirm on the SOS site if it matters to you.

How competitive is Minnesota? (recent history)

Election	Result	Margin
2020 U.S. Senate (this seat)	Tina Smith (DFL) def. Jason Lewis (R)	~ +5.3 points (48.8% - 43.5%)
2024 U.S. Senate (other MN seat)	Amy Klobuchar (DFL) def. Royce White (R)	~ +15.7 points
2024 President (Minnesota)	Kamala Harris (D) over Donald Trump (R)	~ +4.2 points
Last Republican statewide win	Gov. Tim Pawlenty (R), 2006	~ +1 point

Read for voters: Minnesota leans Democratic (DFL) statewide and has not elected a Republican statewide since 2006 - but the margins are narrowing (the 2024 presidential margin was only ~4 points). With no incumbent, the DFL primary winner is favored in November but not guaranteed. The Republican field includes GOP-endorsed Adam Schwarze, former sportscaster Michele Tafoya, and 2024 nominee Royce White.

2 — Candidate Profiles

Full profiles for the two front-runners, then short profiles for the four minor candidates. A stance is listed only when it comes from the candidate or campaign directly.

Angie Craig (moderate front-runner)

Who she is. Four-term U.S. Representative for Minnesota's 2nd District, a suburban "South Metro" swing seat she flipped from Republican control in 2018. Since December 2024 she is the Ranking Member (top Democrat) on the House Agriculture Committee - the first openly LGBTQ+ person and first woman in that role. Her campaign bio says she grew up in a mobile-home park raised by a single mom, started as a newspaper reporter, and spent about 20 years in business, "eventually leading a workforce of 16,000 for a major Minnesota manufacturer."

In her own words (priorities).

- "In the Senate, Angie's focus will be on lowering costs, keeping our communities safe and fixing a broken Washington." (campaign site)
- "I realized, standing in front of the Whipple detention center... that voting to give Trump's ICE any additional authority was a mistake and I regret it." (CBS Minnesota, March 30, 2026)
- Campaign issue headings: protecting democracy and freedoms; rebuilding the middle class; fighting corruption in Washington; keeping communities safe.

Record (key votes). Voted **YES** on the Laken Riley Act (Jan 22, 2025) - the only Democrat in Minnesota's congressional delegation to do so - then publicly reversed and said she regretted it in early March 2026. Voted **YES** on a June 9, 2025 resolution that condemned an antisemitic attack but also thanked law enforcement "including ICE." In 2026 she introduced impeachment articles against DHS Secretary Kristi Noem and a bill to strip new ICE funding and restore SNAP (food-aid) benefits.

Money. Through March 31, 2026 her Senate committee reported about **\$9.29 million raised** and **\$4.9 million cash on hand** - a large financial lead. She is backed by several outside super PACs (see Claim Ledger). On Israel: her campaign says it "has not received any donations from the AIPAC PAC," but reporting (Drop Site News) found AIPAC bundled more than \$507,000 for her House committee since 2023, and about \$195,409 of 2025 AIPAC-linked money was transferred into her Senate account.

Endorsements. Pete Buttigieg; House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries; Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi; Virginia Gov. Abigail Spanberger; Sens. Tammy Baldwin, Ruben Gallego, Andy Kim, Catherine Cortez Masto, Jacky Rosen; many labor and LGBTQ+ groups. She did **not** seek the DFL party endorsement.

Red flags / controversies. In April 2025, Minnesota's Republican U.S. House members asked the House Ethics Committee to review whether Craig misused official resources to promote town halls that linked to her campaign site; Craig denied wrongdoing ("Not a single dollar of taxpayer money is being used here"). No public finding was confirmed. No lawsuits or criminal cases were found.

Flagged, unverified: when fetched on July 9, 2026, Craig's live "Issues" page appeared to contain internal-looking ad-targeting and attack copy about Flanagan rather than finished web content. No news reporting on this was found; treat it as a possible publishing error, not an established fact.

Peggy Flanagan (progressive front-runner; DFL-endorsed)

Who she is. Lieutenant Governor of Minnesota since 2019 (running mate to Gov. Tim Walz), and the first woman of color elected statewide in Minnesota. A citizen of the White Earth Nation, she would be the first Native woman in the U.S. Senate. Before this she was a state representative (2015-2019), led the Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota, and served on the Minneapolis school board.

In her own words (priorities).

- "I'm living proof that leaders can improve people's lives when they invest in them." (campaign site)
- "Peggy isn't taking a dime of corporate PAC money because greedy corporations and special interests have too much influence in Washington already." (campaign site)
- "Peggy believes healthcare is a human right and will fight for Medicare for All." (campaign site)
- "ICE is out of control and... we must dismantle the agency and reimagine an immigration system rooted in dignity, safety, and due process for all." (campaign site)

Record. As Lt. Governor she points to universal school meals, a 2023 paid family and medical leave law, a 2040 carbon-free electricity goal, and the nation's first Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Office. As a legislator and advocate she co-led the 2014 campaign to raise Minnesota's minimum wage and sponsored the missing-and-murdered-Indigenous-women task force.

Money. Through March 31, 2026 she reported about **\$4.65 million raised** and about **\$1.14 million cash on hand** - less than Craig, but with a large small-donor base (about half of her money came in gifts of \$200 or less). She pledges to take no corporate PAC money and no AIPAC money; her filings still show about \$129,916 in non-corporate PAC money (for example, labor or leadership PACs).

Endorsements. Won the **DFL party endorsement** (May 30, 2026). Backed by Sens. Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, Tina Smith, Ed Markey, Chris Murphy; former Sen. Al Franken; MN Attorney General Keith Ellison; Reps. Ilhan Omar and Betty McCollum; former Interior Secretary Deb Haaland; and unions including National Nurses United and SEIU Minnesota.

Red flags / controversies. No lawsuits or criminal cases were found. The main lines of attack are political: (1) Republicans and Craig tie her, as Lt. Governor, to Minnesota's large public-program fraud scandals ("on her watch") - a criticism about oversight, not an allegation she committed fraud; and (2) while she chaired the Democratic Lieutenant Governors Association, that group received \$25,000 in February 2024 from CoreCivic, a private-prison/ICE-detention contractor. Flanagan says the money was solicited before she became chair, that she did not solicit it, and that she told the group to return it.

Minor candidates (limited public information)

Candidate	What is known (from their own materials where available)
Billy Nord	Streaming-company manager, first-time candidate. Runs a "donation-free" campaign - refuses PAC, corporate, and individual donations. Stated ideas: home down-payment help for anyone 18+, tax breaks for new parents, free school meals, free Narcan, ending the health-insurance industry, and opposing new data centers. Active on Twitch/YouTube/Instagram.
Kurt Michael Anderson	Solo-practice attorney; ran for Minneapolis City Council (Ward 11) in 2021. His platform is described (by a local voter guide) as anti-pornography, anti-gambling, and pro-high-taxes-on-billionaires. Campaign site is reportedly a PDF/Dropbox; his exact positions could not be quoted directly.
George H. Kalberer	Perennial candidate (ran for U.S. Senate in 2024, U.S. House in 2022). No 2026 platform in his own words was found. A local voter guide describes his Facebook page as containing anti-gay and anti-Muslim content; that page could not be independently viewed, so treat it as a single-source claim.
Peter John Murgic	No campaign website, platform, or public profile could be found. A local writer emailed the address on his filing and received no reply. Essentially no public information exists.

No verified campaign-finance totals, endorsements, or documented controversies were found for the four minor candidates. Thin coverage reflects the low profile of these campaigns, not a lack of effort to find it.

3 — Issue Comparison

Where the two front-runners stand, in plain terms, from their own words and records. The four minor candidates have few or no documented positions on most of these issues; only Billy Nord has a published platform (summarized in Section 2).

Issue	Angie Craig	Peggy Flanagan
ICE / immigration	Voted for the Laken Riley Act and an ICE-thanking resolution, then reversed. Now says "this version of ICE absolutely needs to go away" but opposes fully abolishing ICE; warns that calls to dismantle it could alienate independents.	"ICE is out of control" and should be dismantled and replaced with a system "rooted in dignity... and due process." Attacks Craig's Laken Riley vote.
Healthcare	Opposes GOP cuts to Medicaid and the ACA; touts capping insulin costs and cutting drug prices. Frames herself around "lowering costs."	Supports Medicare for All ("healthcare is a human right"); would ban insurer prior authorization and let Medicare negotiate all drug prices.
Abortion	Supports codifying Roe; helped pass the Women's Health Protection Act. "No government and no politician belongs in this conversation."	Supports codifying Roe via the Women's Health Protection Act, repealing the Hyde Amendment, and mandating IVF coverage.
Economy / cost of living	Central message is "lowering costs"; blames Trump tariffs for raising prices and hurting farmers; led effort to end tariffs on Canada.	\$17 federal minimum wage tied to inflation; national paid family/medical leave; universal childcare; expanded Child Tax Credit.
Taxes	Says she "led the charge to eliminate federal taxes on Social Security benefits"; criticizes the GOP law for adding to the deficit.	Cut taxes for the middle class; eliminate tax on Social Security benefits; raise the Social Security payroll cap on high earners.
Guns	Supports expanded background checks and red-flag laws; helped pass the Bipartisan Background Checks Act.	Wants to ban assault weapons, high-capacity magazines, and "ghost guns"; also supports funding local police.
Israel / Gaza & PAC money	Says Netanyahu losing his election is "the best thing... for Middle East peace"; backs rebuilding Gaza. Defends taking PAC money; campaign says it takes no AIPAC PAC checks (disputed - see Ledger).	Backs a ceasefire and two-state solution; would have voted to halt some offensive arms sales to Israel. Refuses corporate PAC and AIPAC money.
Trump administration	Strongly oppositional; ran her launch against Trump and Musk; introduced impeachment articles against DHS Secretary Noem.	Strongly oppositional; frames Trump as "the worst offender" and opposes his Medicaid cuts, tariffs, and VA changes.

Where they actually differ

The real split is ideological, not issue-by-issue. On most goals - protecting abortion rights, opposing Trump, lowering costs, gun limits - both largely agree. The contest is widely described as a proxy fight between the Democratic Party's moderate wing (Craig) and its progressive wing (Flanagan). The sharpest concrete differences are: **ICE** (dismantle vs. reform), **healthcare** (Medicare for All vs. protect-and-improve the current system), and **money in politics** (Flanagan's no-corporate-PAC/no-AIPAC pledge and small-donor base vs. Craig's larger war chest and super-PAC support). Their disputes over the Laken Riley vote and PAC money are covered in the Claim Ledger.

4 — Claim Ledger

Substantive claims candidates and their allies make, checked against the record. Ratings follow the scale below. A rating requires at least three independent sources or one official government record.

Rating scale: **True** accurate **Mostly True** accurate, minor context missing **Half True** partly accurate, key context left out **Mostly False** a kernel of truth but misleading **False** not accurate **Unverifiable** cannot confirm or debunk

Claim (as made)	Who said it	About	Where	Rating	Why
"[Craig] voted to give ICE the power to abduct and indefinitely detain parents and kids... and then she voted to thank them."	DLGA (pro-Flanagan super PAC)	Craig	\$2M "Mary" TV ad, May 21, 2026	Mostly True	Both underlying votes are real and in the government record: Craig voted YES on the Laken Riley Act and YES on the June 2025 resolution that thanked "ICE." Words like "abduct" and the direct cause-and-effect are charged framing, not established fact.
Craig voted for the Laken Riley Act - the only Minnesota Democrat to do so - then reversed.	Flanagan / multiple outlets	Craig	Debate, June 19, 2026	True	Confirmed by the House roll call and Craig's own public statement of regret (early March 2026).
The Laken Riley Act "does away with due process for immigrants... including children."	Flanagan	the law	Debate, June 19, 2026	Half True	The law does require detention of certain accused non-citizens, but "does away with due process" and "including children" are contested legal characterizations, not neutral descriptions.
"AIPAC has not contributed at all to my Senate campaign. Not one penny."	Craig	herself	Debate, June 2026	Half True	Literally true for direct PAC checks to the Senate committee. But reporting shows AIPAC bundled \$500K+ for her House account since 2023, and ~\$195,409 of 2025 AIPAC-linked money was transferred into the Senate campaign - context her statement omits.
"Peggy Flanagan is the only candidate in this race refusing corporate PAC money."	Flanagan campaign	Flanagan	Statement, June 2026	Mostly True	Consistent with her pledge and filings (no corporate PAC money). She does accept some non-corporate PAC money (~\$129,916, e.g. labor/ leadership PACs), so "corporate" is the key qualifier.

Claim (as made)	Who said it	About	Where	Rating	Why
As chair of the DLGA, Flanagan "heads an organization, tasked with fundraising" that takes corporate money and distributes it - undercutting her "no corporate PAC money" pledge.	Craig campaign & North Star Dawn PAC (pro-Craig ad)	Flanagan	TV/digital ad & statements, 2026	Half True	Accurate on structure: the DLGA is a national political committee (a hybrid PAC / IRS "527" group) that Flanagan chaired from Dec 2023; it raises money from corporations and corporate PACs (pharma, energy, healthcare) and spends it to elect Democrats - it even funded ads backing Flanagan while attacking Craig. Misleading on the personal implication: her Senate campaign itself takes no corporate PAC money (confirmed in FEC filings), the DLGA money is the organization's - not her personal account - and the ad's marquee example (CoreCivic's \$25K) was solicited before she became chair.
Flanagan took corporate money "including from a group that runs ICE detention centers" while chairing the DLGA.	Craig	Flanagan	X / debate, June 2026	Half True	The DLGA did receive \$25,000 from CoreCivic (a private-prison/ICE contractor) in Feb 2024 while she chaired it. But it was reportedly solicited by staff in Nov 2023 before her chairmanship, she says she did not solicit it, and says she urged its return. Timing is disputed.
A pro-Craig ad used an AI-generated ("deepfake") image of Flanagan.	Flanagan campaign	a Craig-aligned ad	News reports, June 4, 2026	True	Reporting confirms the North Star Dawn PAC (pro-Craig) ad used an AI-generated image of Flanagan. Whether it is an illegal deepfake under Minnesota law is disputed and unresolved.
The lieutenant governor "has never faced a competitive race on the ballot by herself."	Craig	Flanagan	Debate, June 2026	Half True	A kernel of truth: Flanagan has not run a solo, contested statewide primary. But she has won elections (as a legislator and twice on the Walz-Flanagan ticket, including a contested 2018 primary), so "never... by herself" oversimplifies.
"\$12 million in outside spending... in support of Craig" makes this the most expensive primary in Minnesota history.	Flanagan	the race	Debate / press, 2026	Half True	Documented pro-Craig super-PAC commitments reported by the Star Tribune total several million (e.g., Civic Progress \$2.4M, Center Forward \$1.2M, North Star Dawn \$1.1M, Minnesotans for Progress \$672K). The \$12M aggregate is Flanagan's figure and was not fully itemized in sources we verified.
Craig "votes more with Donald Trump than anyone else" (among Minnesota Democrats).	Flanagan	Craig	Debate, June 2026	Unverifiable	We found no vote-concordance data in verified sources to confirm or refute this. Treat as an unverified campaign claim.

Claim (as made)	Who said it	About	Where	Rating	Why
AIPAC held "over a dozen fundraisers" for Craig, including one at the AIPAC head's home.	Flanagan	Craig	Debate, June 2026	Unverifiable	This is Flanagan's assertion; Craig calls it untrue. The underlying MinnPost reporting could not be fully retrieved, so we cannot confirm the specific count.
Serious fraud in state programs happened "on [Flanagan's] watch" as Lt. Governor.	Craig / Republicans	Flanagan	2026 campaign	Half True	It is true that major Minnesota program-fraud scandals occurred during the Walz-Flanagan administration. But this is an oversight/responsibility argument - not an allegation that Flanagan committed or directed fraud. How much blame she bears is a matter of opinion.

Explainer: the "Flanagan heads a PAC" attack. The Democratic Lieutenant Governors Association (DLGA) is a real national political committee - part PAC, part IRS "527" group - **not Peggy Flanagan's personal fund**. Its job is to raise money (from individuals, unions, and corporations) and spend it to elect Democratic lieutenant governors; in this race it also ran ads supporting Flanagan and attacking Craig. Flanagan chaired it from December 2023. So the ad's core structure - "she led a group that takes in and hands out corporate money" - is **accurate**. What the attack leaves out: (1) her own Senate campaign refuses corporate PAC money, verified in FEC filings; (2) the DLGA's money belongs to the organization, not to her personally; and (3) the specific ICE-contractor gift it spotlights (CoreCivic, \$25,000) was solicited before she took over as chair, and she says she urged its return. **Bottom line:** accurate about her role and the DLGA's corporate money, but misleading if taken to mean she personally pockets corporate cash while her campaign claims otherwise. Rated **Half True**.

Ledger is sorted with the most consequential and most-aired claims first. The two ICE votes (Laken Riley Act and the June 2025 resolution) are settled by the public congressional record and by Craig's own admission - they are the factual anchor the whole race turns on.

5 — Voter Logistics

For the August 11, 2026 Minnesota primary. All items below are from the official Minnesota Secretary of State (mnvotes.gov / sos.mn.gov).

Item	Details
Who can vote	U.S. citizen; 18+ by election day; Minnesota resident for at least 20 days; not currently incarcerated for a felony; not under a court order revoking voting rights. (16-17 year-olds may pre-register.)
Register / check registration	Register or check online at mnvotes.gov/register. Advance-registration deadline: July 21, 2026. Minnesota also allows same-day registration at your polling place on election day (bring proof of residence).
ID requirements	If your registration is current and active, no ID is needed to vote. You only need proof of residence if you register or update at the polls, or have not voted in 4+ years. Minnesota has no general photo-ID-to-vote requirement.
Early / absentee voting	Vote early - by mail or in person - June 26 through August 10, 2026. Request a mail ballot at mnvotes.gov/absentee. (News outlets report in-person early voting through a ballot tabulator begins about July 24; this exact date was not confirmed on an official SOS page.)
Ballot return deadlines	In person: return to the office that sent your ballot by 5 p.m. on election day. By mail: your ballot must be received by election day (Minnesota has no postmark grace period - a late-arriving mailed ballot is not counted).
Election day hours	Polls are generally open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. (some small towns open later). If you are in line by 8 p.m., you can vote , even if you reach the front after 8 p.m.

Precision note: the Secretary of State's page describes the primary as one round with the top vote-getter advancing (no runoff, no ranked-choice) but does not use the literal word "plurality." For mailed ballots the official wording is "received by election day," not a specific clock time.

6 — Report Card

Verified how

- **Candidates counted:** 6 DFL ballot candidates identified; 2 front-runners profiled in full, 4 minor candidates profiled to the extent public information exists.
- **Issues counted:** 8 key issues, each with both front-runners' stated positions (or a note where a stance was not found).
- **Claims counted:** 14 claims checked and rated; anchored on 2 official congressional roll-call records plus independent reporting.
- **Method:** live web research this session across Minnesota outlets (MPR News, Star Tribune, MinnPost, Minnesota Reformer, CBS/KARE/Sahan), the candidates' own sites, FEC filings, congressional records, and the Secretary of State.

Assumptions and unverified items

- The six-name DFL ballot rests on two agreeing independent sources, not a direct read of the SOS filing site (a script-loaded page). Confirm on the SOS site if decisive.
- Some finance figures are the March 31, 2026 reports; second-quarter (April-June) numbers were due about July 15, 2026 and are not reflected here.
- Several outside-spending totals and a few debate quotes come from partly retrievable sources; these are flagged in the Ledger as Half True or Unverifiable rather than stated as fact.
- The apparent internal-copy text on Craig's live Issues page is reported as an unverified observation, not an established fact.

Attacked and survived

The strongest doubt we raised about our own findings: a widely repeated summary claimed Craig called Flanagan's ICE stance "extreme." We could not confirm that exact quote in fetched reporting, so we did not state it as fact - instead we verified the substance separately (Craig does oppose fully abolishing ICE and warns it could alienate independents; Flanagan says "dismantle," not "abolish"). We also re-checked the central ICE votes against the official congressional record rather than relying on the attack ads that describe them. Both votes held up.

Skipped, with reason

- Full verified campaign-finance detail for the four minor candidates (FEC pages load figures via script; totals could not be read). Their campaigns are very small.
- A first-party Secretary of State name-by-name candidate roster (script-loaded page).
- Some paywalled or bot-blocked articles (parts of Star Tribune, HuffPost, MinnPost) - worked around with reprints and official records where possible.

Freshness

Compiled **July 9, 2026**, from sources dated mainly February 2025 through early July 2026. Campaign facts change quickly - endorsements, money, ad claims, and even the candidate list can shift up to election day. Reconfirm anything decisive against the official sources before you vote.

One clarifying question

You asked for the "MN democratic primary for senate," which we read as the 2026 DFL (Democratic) U.S. Senate primary on August 11, 2026. If you actually meant a Minnesota *state* Senate district primary, tell us the district and we will redo this for that race.

Key sources

Minnesota Secretary of State (sos.mn.gov / mnvotes.gov); Ballotpedia and Wikipedia 2026 MN U.S. Senate election pages; FEC.gov committee filings (Craig C00903690; Flanagan C00897751); U.S. House / GovTrack roll-call records (Laken Riley Act; H.Res.488); MPR News; Star Tribune; MinnPost; Minnesota Reformer; CBS Minnesota / WCCO; KARE11; Sahan Journal; Native News Online; Drop Site News; Patch; Axios Twin Cities; DLGA and campaign press releases; candidates' official websites.