

Klobuchar

FOR GOVERNOR

Expanding Minnesota's Rural and Agricultural Economy

The current federal across-the-board tariffs, volatile input costs, and cuts to rural health care have created major headwinds for our entire state, especially in rural Minnesota. These headwinds may well be constants, but they can't be an excuse for not moving forward economically in Minnesota. As Governor, Amy Klobuchar will work with rural businesses and farmers to expand our rural economy by growing and producing more products, finding new markets, inventing things, and exporting to the world. That means partnering with rural businesses and helping them grow, expanding new markets and uses of products like biofuels, building local fertilizer production, supporting local food infrastructure, launching a Minnesota Innovation Network to cultivate new ideas across our state, and lowering the cost of farming. This released plan has a particular focus on agriculture, with more to come as Klobuchar will outline other plans, including for other economic sectors, in the future.

This builds on Amy Klobuchar's work in the U.S. Senate, where she has repeatedly reached across the aisle to deliver for rural Minnesota – teaming up with Senator John Hoeven (R-ND) to help rural businesses break into new international markets, working with Senator Deb Fischer (R-NE) to make E15 available year-round to support farmers and bring down fuel costs, advancing the bipartisan *Farm to Fly Act* with Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS) to expand sustainable aviation fuel and open new markets for farmers, and championing biomanufacturing to turn Minnesota crops into the products of the future. The Agriculture Committee was the first committee Klobuchar asked to be on in the Senate and as a member of the committee and current Ranking Member, she has worked with her colleagues to pass three bipartisan farm bills into law and is working on a fourth. And, as a senior member of the Senate Commerce Committee, she has put a major focus on workforce training, energy development, rural exports, and tourism in Greater Minnesota.

Klobuchar's running mate, former Fergus Falls Mayor Ben Schierer, has extensive experience in rural economic development. As mayor, he worked to revitalize the Fergus Falls riverfront and bring local businesses back downtown. A former small business owner, he currently works with the West Central Initiative, a regional nonprofit dedicated to economic development.

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1. Expand Minnesota's Rural Economy

Expand rural Minnesota businesses.

- **Increase markets for rural businesses.** Partner with manufacturers, medical employers, and other businesses across Greater Minnesota to help them expand markets and grow. Work with the U.S. Small Business Administration, the federal Foreign Commercial Service, the Minnesota Trade Office (MTO) within the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), and the IRRRB, to open new domestic and international markets for rural businesses and recruit new businesses in Greater Minnesota. This builds on Senator Klobuchar's bipartisan legislative work with Senator John Hoeven (R-ND) to help small-town and rural businesses reach international markets and grow exports.
- **Connect rural businesses to international markets.** Make sure rural interests are included in any efforts to recruit and expand business opportunities with other countries. Put a special emphasis on export training for rural and small businesses, including farmers, ranchers, manufacturers, and innovators.
- **Cut red tape for rural businesses.** Give rural employers timely, predictable answers from state government so they can plan, expand, and build; pair the comprehensive permitting review and "One-Stop Shop" enrollment portal with firm response timelines and a single point of contact for a clear yes-or-no on permits, licenses, and land, without lowering health, safety, or environmental standards. Work with the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise Minnesota, and the trades to streamline permitting and encourage expansions, relocations, and startups.
- **Expand access to state land for local development.** Create a clear process for cities to acquire state-owned and tax-forfeited land for housing, commercial, and industrial development.
- **Promote and expand tourism across our state.** Promote rural Minnesota, including our parks and trails, agritourism, farm-to-table restaurants, breweries, museums, music venues, theaters, and – to mention a few – iconic sites like Bemidji's Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox, Ironworld, Redhead Mountain Bike Park, the Central Lakes Region, Lake Superior, multiple river attractions, Mississippi River cruises, Tribal historic sites, and the world's only SPAM Museum through Explore Minnesota. As a long-time lead of the bipartisan Senate Travel and Tourism Caucus and the lead author of multiple pieces of passed legislation on tourism, Senator Klobuchar will have a unique perspective on how to expand tourism in our state.

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Establish a Minnesota Innovation Network.

- **Launch a Minnesota Innovation Network.** Build a coordinated statewide system connecting Minnesota businesses across our state to universities, research centers, and incubators, as well as agencies and nonprofits like the IRRRB, AURI, and nonprofit development organizations. Create hubs in advanced manufacturing, energy, health care, and agriculture so that good ideas everywhere have a shot of becoming reality. Build on University of Minnesota research and outreach centers to research, develop, and scale technologies that make Minnesota farms and other rural businesses more profitable and resilient.

Expand markets for Minnesota products.

- **Make Minnesota the leader of the Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) industry.** As the co-chair of the bipartisan U.S. Senate SAF Caucus, Senator Klobuchar has been an advocate for extending the 45Z clean fuel tax credit. Use the Minnesota SAF Production Credit as well as federal incentives to expand existing and attract new companies that will convert Minnesota-grown feedstocks into low-carbon jet fuel. Partner with major airlines at MSP Airport and feedstock processing facilities to make Minnesota a primary supplier for the sustainable-flight market and a new value-added stream for grain farmers.
- **Grow bio-based manufacturing from Minnesota crops.** Turn corn, soybeans, sugar beets, and their byproducts into higher-value bio-based products such as bioplastics and packaging, biochemicals, adhesives, and building materials. Apply a state purchasing preference for bio-based goods (building on the federal BioPreferred model), and connect growers and processors with the University of Minnesota, the Minnesota Innovation Network, and the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute to scale processing and add value to farm products in the state.
- **Support biofuel production** and new innovations that turn agricultural products like corn and soybeans into high-demand energy products.
- **Grow Minnesota's hemp industry.** Create local jobs and new markets for farmers by increasing the use of industrial hemp and continuing safe regulation of hemp-derived recreational products. Direct MnDOT and state agencies to use bio-based (hemp-fiber) materials when they meet specs (e.g., erosion-control), creating stable in-state industrial hemp demand.
- **Support sustainable practices** by expanding incentives for precision agriculture, helping farmers apply inputs more precisely, saving money and protecting soil and water, with priority for projects that partner with innovation hubs. Expand voluntary, incentive-based programs that help farmers deliver ecosystem services, such as Minnesota's soil-health equipment grants.

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Strengthen local food processing and infrastructure.

- **Expand local and regional meat processing**, creating new opportunities for farmers to market their products. Build on successes in meat processing to build more capacity across other product types.
- **Strengthen the food supply chain** with regional food hubs, warehouses where small farmers aggregate product for sale to hospitals, universities, and other public institutions, bridging the gap between a family farm and a large institution. Expand support for local farmers markets and increase institutional purchases of local food for schools, child-care centers, and hospitals through Minnesota Grown and Farm to School.
- **Support Minnesota Grown** to help producers brand and market local products.

Lower the cost of farming.

- **Lower costs for farmers and make farming easier.** Expand the farm equipment sales-tax exemption to include fencing and grain-bin equipment, protect full first-year tax deductions for major farm equipment and machinery purchases, and update state programs so farms can access the resources meant for them.
- **Build local fertilizer production and storage** to create price stability for farmers by backing efforts to manufacture key inputs, including green ammonia, using renewable energy.
- **Expand on-farm energy**, supporting the development of on-farm solar, wind, and methane digesters.

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2. Help Families Live and Thrive in Greater Minnesota

Kids who grow up in rural Minnesota should be able to stay in rural Minnesota – but right now, too many can't. Employers struggle to recruit workers who can't always find a place to live. Parents can't take or keep jobs when there's no child care nearby. And families won't put down roots in communities where they can't access health care – yet rural hospitals and clinics are at risk of closing because of new Trump administration cuts. Amy Klobuchar knows that one-size-fits-all solutions don't work for rural communities, and she will work to close these gaps: building more homes, expanding child care options, protecting rural health care, creating new opportunities for apprenticeships and one- to four-year degree programs and beyond in everything from health care to hospitality to agriculture to mining and manufacturing, and supporting beginning farmers so that Minnesotans can afford to live, work, and raise a family in rural Minnesota.

Lower rural housing costs.

- Lower rural housing costs. Work with the private sector to build more homes in rural areas by giving local developers the capital, incentives, and tools to build by launching a Rural Housing Loan Fund and making the State Housing Tax Credit permanent. Work with rural communities to develop and implement comprehensive housing plans using resources from the bipartisan legislation that Klobuchar wrote and became law as part of the *21st Century ROAD to Housing Act*. Put underused buildings and land back to work, rehabilitate vacant and abandoned buildings, and use state-owned surplus property for housing. Read more about Amy Klobuchar's plan for housing here: AmyKlobuchar.com/housing.

Strengthen rural health care access.

- Recognize that one size does *not* fit all for health care. Stabilize critical access hospitals and clinics in Greater Minnesota by supporting and prioritizing modernization and upgrading infrastructure. Create a workforce pipeline by recruiting and training doctors, nurses, and medical technicians specifically for underserved rural areas. Support rural hospitals at risk of closing by protecting their 340B discount from efforts to restrict it. Lower prescription drug costs by leveraging the state's purchasing power to negotiate directly with manufacturers and pass the savings on to patients.

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Increase access to affordable child care in rural communities.

- Expand rural child care by building on the great examples that already exist in rural Minnesota, from Luverne to the Iron Range, from Austin to Warroad, including expanding existing child care providers and supporting innovative models of care such as child care “pods.” Expedite state training and retention resources for communities with the most acute child care shortages, and help small child care providers reduce overhead while preventing fraud and waste with access to a child care operations hub.

Prepare Minnesota’s rural workforce for the future.

- Build real on-ramps to good jobs by adding 10,000 apprenticeship and skills training opportunities, especially in teaching, health care, public safety, and the trades. Raise academic achievement across Minnesota using evidence-based reading and math curricula that have been proven to work in districts across the country – including in states such as Mississippi and Alabama – to increase reading and math skills. Keep students on task by banning cell phones in K-12 classrooms and work with school districts on screen time limits. Open the doors to college and credentials by expanding community college and one- to four-year degree pathways that connect directly to in-demand careers. Read Klobuchar’s full plan to expand Minnesota’s workforce here: AmyKlobuchar.com/workforce.

Recruit talent and residents to Greater Minnesota.

- Build on the Explore Minnesota for Business that attracts new residents and workers to rural communities.

Support beginning farmers.

- Coordinate resources for them and strengthening FarmLink. Provide a single point of contact to help new farmers navigate federal grants and loans, conservation programs, and state funding, while ensuring that farmers can count on programs like Minnesota’s Beginning Farmer Tax Credit. Match retiring farmers with new producers who can continue to work the land, including offering state-backed good-faith mediation to facilitate long-term leases or land transfers without costly legal fees.

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Advocate for immigration reform at the federal level.

- Our farms, dairies, and processing plants can't run without workers, and a broken federal immigration system is holding Minnesota's rural economy back in many sectors, including farming. Amy Klobuchar has led bipartisan efforts in the Senate to fix it. She'll keep pushing for reforms that give farmers and employers a stable, legal workforce and the certainty they need to plan and grow. This is a federal responsibility, and she won't stop working until we get it done.

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3. Keep Rural Minnesota Competitive and Connected

Rural Minnesota's economic strength depends on whether its people and businesses can get online, get their goods to market, and get a fair deal. Too many rural communities are still waiting for reliable broadband, watching roads and bridges deteriorate, and navigating a maze of government programs. As governor, Amy Klobuchar will work to keep rural Minnesota competitive and connected – to markets, schools, and government – with good broadband, infrastructure, and workable supply chains. That means finishing the job on universal broadband; modernizing rural roads, bridges, and transportation infrastructure, including ports; making it easier for farmers and small businesses to access the programs they need; and fighting for fair prices for rural consumers and grocers alike.

Complete the rural broadband buildout.

- Fully fund the Border-to-Border Broadband program by maximizing federal broadband (BEAD) funding secured by Senator Klobuchar to reach every corner of our state.

Modernize rural roads, bridges, rail, ports, airports, and water systems.

- This includes always improving the excellent rail and port infrastructure that carries Iron Range iron ore, agricultural, and other products to the Port of Duluth and out to market. Use project bundling to combine multiple small bridge and road repairs into single contracts, cutting paperwork and overhead, and attracting more competitive private bids.

Make government work for rural Minnesota.

- That means establishing a “One-Stop Shop” Enrollment Portal where farmers can apply for state (RIM) grants all at once to cut down on paperwork while preventing fraud. It also includes comprehensive permitting review so rural businesses can count on timely, predictable decisions to plan and complete projects, without lowering standards. And it means helping counties administer food assistance by combining and consolidating SNAP administrative functions and upgrading technology to reduce costs and paperwork, improving the program for Minnesotans and rural grocers.

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4. Keep the Farm Safety Net Strong

While Minnesota continues to be the 6th-largest agricultural producer in the country, generating \$100 billion each year and supporting nearly 400,000 jobs, our farmers are being squeezed from every direction at once. Nationally, farm bankruptcies have reached a five-year high and twice as many Minnesota farmers are using our state's Farmer-Lender Mediation Program to stave off bankruptcy. They deserve a governor who has their back. As governor, Amy Klobuchar will work to keep the agriculture safety net strong during difficult economic times. That includes expanding low-interest emergency loans for farmers facing market volatility, bolstering Minnesota's veterinary response to animal disease outbreaks, strengthening farmer-lender mediation, and protecting the biosecurity programs that keep Minnesota's livestock producers in business.

As our U.S. Senator, Amy Klobuchar has long led bipartisan efforts to strengthen the farm safety net, having worked to pass three farm bills into law and creating new U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) animal disease programs. With Senator John Cornyn (R-TX), she authored the *Animal Disease and Disaster Prevention, Surveillance, and Rapid Response Act*, passed in the 2018 Farm Bill, to create three programs, including a stockpile of foot-and-mouth disease vaccines. As lead Ranking Member on the Senate Agriculture Committee, she has continued to press the USDA on threats such as the avian flu and New World screwworm.

Broaden the Rural Finance Authority.

- Offer more no-interest and low-interest loans for farmers facing extreme market volatility, trade disruptions, disease outbreaks, and weather. Expand the existing Disaster Recovery Loan framework to allow criteria beyond physical weather damage to qualify for loans and ensure growers can count on loans upon a confirmed avian flu detection.

Expand the number of Minnesota veterinarians.

- Work with the Veterinary Reserve Corps, a network of private-sector veterinarians trained by the state to mobilize immediately during a suspected animal disease outbreak. Senator Klobuchar founded the bipartisan Senate Veterinary Medicine Caucus with Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS).

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Strengthen farmer–lender mediation.

- Help farmers facing bankruptcy or other financial stress reach an agreement with their lender, keep farming, and have mental health support.

Protect Minnesota’s livestock producers.

- Expand and make permanent the AGRI Protect biosecurity grants and raise the per–farm cap so producers can afford barn–scale upgrades. Minnesota is the nation’s top turkey state, and avian flu has hit hard, with roughly 1.2 million commercial birds lost in 2025, with new outbreaks this year. Higher caps also help unlock federal indemnity now that audits are required before restocking.

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References

Elements of this plan are contained in legislation introduced by Minnesota legislators of both parties, including:

- **Expand Minnesota's Rural Economy:** *Sen. Gene Dornink (R-Austin), Sen. Heather Gustafson (DFL-Vadnais Heights), Sen. John A. Hoffman (DFL-Brooklyn Park), Sen. Mark Johnson (R-East Grand Forks), Sen. Mary Kunesch (DFL-Fridley), Sen. Robert Kupec (DFL-Moorhead), Sen. Aric Putnam (DFL-St. Cloud), Sen. Judy Seeberger (DFL-Cottage Grove), Sen. Bill Weber (R-Worthington), Sen. Torrey Westrom (R-Alexandria), Rep. Keith Allen (R-Kenyon), Rep. Paul Anderson (R-Starbuck), Rep. John Burkel (R-Badger), Rep. Rick Hansen (DFL-South St. Paul), Rep. Josh Heintzeman (R-Nisswa), Rep. Heather Keeler (DFL-Moorhead), Rep. Fue Lee (DFL-Minneapolis), Rep. Nathan Nelson (R-Hinckley), Rep. Andy Smith (DFL-Rochester), and Rep. Nolan West (R-Blaine).*
- **Help Families Live and Thrive in Greater Minnesota:** *Sen. Julia Coleman (R-Waconia), Sen. Steve Cwudzinski (DFL-Eden Prairie), Sen. Gene Dornink (R-Austin), Sen. Grant Hauschild (DFL-Hermantown), Sen. Karin Housley (R-Stillwater), Sen. Robert Kupec (DFL-Moorhead), Sen. Alice Mann (DFL-Edina), Sen. Erin Maye Quade (DFL-Apple Valley), Sen. Zaynab Mohamed (DFL-Minneapolis), Sen. Carla Nelson (R-Rochester), Sen. Aric Putnam (DFL-St. Cloud), Sen. Bill Weber (R-Worthington), Sen. Cheryl Youakim (DFL-Hopkins), Rep. Jeff Backer (R-Browns Valley), Rep. Dave Baker (R-Willmar), Rep. Ben Bakeberg (R-Jordan), Rep. Robert Bierman (DFL-Apple Valley), Rep. Brion Curran (DFL-White Bear Lake), Rep. Alex Falconer (DFL-Eden Prairie), Rep. Bobbie Harder (R-Henderson), Rep. Josiah Hill (DFL-Stillwater), Rep. Spencer Igo (R-Wabana Township), Rep. Pete Johnson (DFL-Duluth), Rep. Heather Keeler (DFL-Moorhead), Rep. Carlie Kotyza-Witthuhn (DFL-Eden Prairie), Rep. Ron Kresha (R-Little Falls), Rep. Danny Nadeau (R-Rogers), Rep. Samantha Sencer-Mura (DFL-Minneapolis), Rep. Zack Stephenson (DFL-Coon Rapids), Rep. Brad Tabke (DFL-Shakopee), and Rep. Samantha Vang (DFL-Brooklyn Center).*
- **Keep Rural Minnesota Competitive and Connected:** *Sen. Gary Dahms (R-Redwood Falls), Sen. Gene Dornink (R-Austin), Sen. Robert D. Farnsworth (R-Hibbing), Sen. Heather Gustafson (DFL-Vadnais Heights), Sen. Grant Hauschild (DFL-Hermantown), Sen. John Jasinski (R-Owatonna), Sen. Robert Kupec (DFL-Moorhead), Sen. Aric Putnam (DFL-St. Cloud), Rep. Paul Anderson (R-Starbuck), Rep. John Burkel (R-Badger), Rep. Steve Gander (R-East Grand Forks), Rep. Rick Hansen (DFL-South St. Paul), Rep. Heather Keeler (DFL-Moorhead), Rep. Nathan Nelson (R-Hinckley), Rep. Kari Rehrauer (DFL-Coon Rapids), Rep. Andy Smith (DFL-Rochester), and Rep. Samantha Vang (DFL-Brooklyn Center).*
- **Keep the Farm Safety Net Strong:** *Sen. Gene Dornink (R-Austin), Sen. Grant Hauschild (DFL-Hermantown), Sen. Mary Kunesch (DFL-Fridley), Sen. Aric Putnam (DFL-St. Cloud), Sen. Bill Weber (R-Worthington), Rep. Keith Allen (R-Kenyon), Rep. Paul Anderson (R-Starbuck), Rep. John Burkel (R-Badger), Rep. Rick Hansen (DFL-South St. Paul), Rep. Heather Keeler (DFL-Moorhead), Rep. Nathan Nelson (R-Hinckley), and Rep. Andy Smith (DFL-Rochester).*

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References (continued)

Other elements of this plan are informed by Senator Klobuchar’s legislative record to strengthen rural economies, support farmers and manufacturers, and create jobs across rural communities. This includes the *Promoting Rural Exports Act* to help rural businesses reach new markets, the *Restoring Brand USA Act* which passed into law and strengthened the tourism industry, and the *VISIT USA Act* to attract more international visitors. Her efforts to grow Minnesota’s agricultural and manufacturing economy include the *Securing America’s Fuels Act*, the *Agricultural Biorefinery Innovation and Opportunity (Ag BIO) Act*, the *Biomanufacturing and Jobs Act*, and the *Affordable and Secure Food Act*. She has also championed stronger supply chains through the *Ocean Shipping Reform Act*, which became law in 2022, and advanced animal health and agricultural resilience through the *Animal Disease and Disaster Prevention, Surveillance, and Rapid Response Act*, enacted as part of the 2018 Farm Bill.