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Puri To Lead House Dems Through Divided Government

As the next leader of House Democrats, [Rep. Ranjeev Puri](#) is prioritizing unity.

Democratic members of the 103rd Legislature elected Puri (D-Canton) to serve as minority leader during the 2025-2026 term during a caucus meeting after session on Thursday. They elected [Rep. John Fitzgerald](#) (D-Wyoming) as minority floor leader.

House [Speaker Joe Tate](#) (D-Detroit) announced earlier this week that he would not seek reelection for caucus leadership following Democrats' loss of the majority during the November election.

Tate is the first speaker since to go from speaker in one term to a non-leadership role in the following term since Speaker William Ryan. After a six-year run as speaker from 1969-74, Ryan decided to step aside as speaker and remained in the House until 1982.

Puri, the current majority whip, was elected to the House in 2020. He is the current chair of the [House Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee](#) .

"It's an extremely humbling moment to be selected by your peers," he said. "Each one of my colleagues has been elected to represent a district of roughly 100,000 people, to come here to be a strong voice and be the best representative that they can for that. I want to re-envision how we make up the caucus and how decisions are made, and by doing so, by trusting and empowering more members to help with making those decisions... to craft the best narrative that we can for House Democrats."

Puri's unity message comes as Democrats conclude one of the more dysfunctional terms a House majority caucus has had.

Multiple Democratic sources tracking the race described Puri's win as a statement to those in the caucus who caused problems for Tate even going back to when he faced a challenge led by Ann Arbor progressives for speaker two years ago.

Senate [Majority Leader Winnie Brinks](#) (D-Grand Rapids) praised Puri as the choice to lead the caucus in a statement.

"I know Democratic Leader-elect Puri to be a steady voice, a hardworking lawmaker and an effective leader amongst his peers. He is a consensus builder and a person of strong character, traits that are all the more important during a time of divided government," she said. "I know that together, the Democratic caucuses will present a bold platform that reflects our core values of economic fairness and opportunity for all."

[Governor Gretchen Whitmer](#) also reflected on the last term under Tate's leadership and looked ahead to Puri's role as minority leader in a statement.

"Over the last two years, with the first Democratic trifecta in 40 years led by Speaker Joe Tate, we got a lot done. We cut taxes for retirees and working families, started feeding all public school students free breakfast and lunch, kept fixing more of the damn roads, built more housing, repealed our 1931 abortion ban, protected civil rights for the LGBTQ+ community, and created thousands of good-paying manufacturing, construction, and clean energy jobs," she said. "We still have a lot of work to do, so let's close out the last few months of the year strong and hit the ground running in 2025 to keep growing our economy and delivering on the issues that make a real difference in people's lives. With the new majority in the legislature, our focus remains the same, and I look forward to working with Leader-elect Ranjeev Puri to get things done."

Puri said he wants to change the culture of the caucus and said that he was open to working with organization structure experts to make the needed adjustments.

Fitzgerald said as minority floor leader he hopes to build more pathways for collaboration.

"We're going to continue to support and uphold the values of our caucus and look for new opportunities and specific ways that we're going to bridge that gap," he said.

Although Democrats worked hard and ran strong campaigns this election, Puri said the gravity at the top of the ticket was too much to overcome, and Dems didn't deliver the right message.

"Looking forward, I just think that's something that we also want to reassess in making sure that we are bringing the right messaging," he said. "In 2026, Michigan I going to be a national Democratic darling. There's going to be a lot of eyeballs on recapturing this Democratic trifecta. And as House Democrats, I think we look forward to playing a very strong role in making that vision come true."

Prior to the leadership vote, Puri said the caucus discussed the rules changes proposed by some members of the caucus last week. He said the conversation was productive, and that he was supportive of the initiative (See [Gongwer Michigan Report, October 31, 2024](#)).

"People were very desperate to find a way to bridge the divides that existed and finding a way to galvanize and finding a way to bring up these voices and unify these voices of the caucus," he said.

"As we go into this new position, I think it's going to be extremely prudent that we make every effort to regain the majority back and to just reshape the way that the culture and things work here," Puri said prior to the vote. "For the next two years, we are going to galvanize the caucus to make sure that we're uplifting the voice of each one of the 52 members that are part of our caucus. Each one of these members has been elected by 100,000 members to be the voice in Lansing, so it's really important to me that we collectively come together to figure out how Democrats can come with the right messaging to make sure that the gavel comes back into our hands."

Puri was not originally considering a run for leadership, but said he was convinced by support from within his caucus and from stakeholders.

The role of minority leader is to be an obstructionist, Puri said, but despite that House Democrats will work as a bridge between the chamber's Republican majority, Democrats in the Senate majority and the governor's office.

"We want to be a bridge to making sure the legislation that comes out of this chamber meets the needs of the Senate and the Governor," he said. "We just lost majority, but we learned a thing or two the last two years. It's not as easy as people think to get 56 votes in your own party, and there's often going to be times when the other side might not be able to get those 56 votes... We're sitting here. We're willing to be partners."

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