

NEWS RELEASE



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Minnesota Grocers Association Presents 2026 MGA Legislator of the Year Awards

St. Paul, MN – March 5, 2026 – The Minnesota Grocers Association (MGA) presented its 2026 MGA Legislator of the Year awards to **Representative Dave Baker** (R – Willmar) and **Senator Susan Pha** (D – Brooklyn Center) at its annual Legislative Dinner on February 24, at The University Club in St. Paul, MN. Each year, the MGA recognizes lawmakers who demonstrate exceptional leadership and commitment to Minnesota’s food industry.

Senator Pha received the honor for her leadership in advancing the Minnesota Grocers Association Foundation’s Carts to Careers initiative. As chief author of the Senate legislation, Sen. Pha championed the proposal in the Senate Jobs and Economic Development Committee and worked diligently behind the scenes to ensure the program was included in the final Jobs omnibus bill. Her efforts helped secure additional funding for the next two years, allowing the program to continue supporting workforce training and professional development opportunities for employees of MGA member companies.

Representative Baker also played a key role in securing passage of the Carts to Careers funding in the House. As Co-Chair of the House Workforce, Labor, and Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee, he recognized the program’s importance to both the food industry and Minnesota’s workforce. A former grocer himself, Rep. Baker has consistently been a strong advocate for Minnesota businesses and for policies that help create a welcoming environment where businesses and families can thrive.

“Senator Pha and Representative Baker are great examples of the kind of leadership that we should all value in St. Paul. They are thoughtful, collaborative, and willing to work across party lines to do good work for the people of Minnesota,” said Patrick Garofalo, President of the MGA. “The MGA and Minnesota’s food industry are grateful to have the support of such quality people and legislators. They are both extremely deserving of this recognition.”

The Minnesota Grocers Association congratulates Representative Baker and Senator Pha on being named the 2026 MGA Legislators of the Year and thanks them for their continued dedication to Minnesota’s food community.

The Minnesota Grocers Association (MGA) is the only state trade association that represents the food industry of Minnesota from farm to fork. We are a legacy organization, having served the industry for over 125 years. We have over 250 retail, manufacturer, and wholesale members supporting nearly 1,300 locations statewide. Our member companies employ over 150,000 union and non-union Minnesotans. We actively advance the common interest of all those engaged in any aspect of the food industry as a leader and advocate in government affairs.

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Picture 1: Representative Dave Baker (R – Willmar) and Patrick Garofalo, MGA President

Picture 2: Senator Susan Pha (D – Brooklyn Center) and Patrick Garofalo, MGA President