NPR:

House Democrats are turning to a new generation of leaders to take the helm in the next Congress, and are poised to make history as they elect a new slate on Wednesday. Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., 52, is running unopposed to serve as House Minority Leader starting in January. He is 30 years younger than House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and will become the first Black person to lead a major political party in Congress. Pelosi announced earlier this month she would remain in Congress, but not run for the leadership post she has held atop the Democratic caucus for nearly two decades after Republicans gained a razor thin majority in the 2022 midterms. Talking to reporters the night before the caucus vote, Jeffries said he hasn't had time to reflect on the historical marker. Focusing on "the outside narratives or the magnitude of the moment" would take away from his work planning how to shift the caucus from the majority to its new minority posture in January, he said. He is expected to be elected as the minority leader along with Rep. Katherine Clark, D-Mass., as his number two, and and Rep. Pete Aguilar, D-Calif as the third ranking leader. The new leadership team taking over should "lean in hard and do the best damn job we can for the people," he said. Sponsor Message Jeffries added it's important for Congress to "look like the American people." He added, "when we get an opportunity as diverse leaders to serve in positions of consequence, the most meaningful thing we can do in the space is do an incredibly good job — that hopefully will encourage others to think about public service and alleviate concerns that folks who are skeptical may have about the ability of every type of American to operate successfully at the highest levels." Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., who is 82 and the current third ranking Democratic leader said the shift taking place with Pelosi, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and himself not running for the most senior posts has been in the works for several years. "I think that it was pretty clear to everybody that Pelosi, Hoyer and myself would be making an exit from the leadership very soon, either under our own, or somebody carried us out," Clyburn said. Clyburn called the low drama leadership change that House Democrats are expected to execute relatively quickly after a team that held power for roughly 15 years an "evolution." Typically, coveted leadership posts rarely open up and contested races can get personal with camps working furiously to secure votes in a race decided via a secret ballot. Sponsor Message "I have studied history long enough to know that evolutions are much better than revolutions," Clyburn said. "And I think that anybody watching their caucus, our caucus over the years, could see the evolving leadership." Jeffries said after Democrats won back the majority in 2018 he, Clark, and Aguilar talked about joining the leadership table then and using the period to demonstrate they were up to the task to eventually move up the leadership ladder. A new generation vows bottom up leadership style Rep Jason Crow, D-Colo., told NPR "one thing I've learned in leadership is that you don't get to choose your moment. The moment presents itself, and it's up to you to decide how and when you're going to lead." Crow said Jeffries has a "bottom up style of leadership," adding, "one of his greatest strengths is recognizing the tremendous talent around him." Pelosi held a very narrow majority during this session of Congress, and the divisions between progressives and centrists often spilled into the open and stalled action on top priorities. Those on the left often wanted bolder policy proposals and more generous federal spending, while centrists argued for positions they maintained were more in step with voters in purple districts they represented and helped the party regain the majority in 2018. Jeffries told reporters there's "nothing more unifying then being in the majority" and said he and his colleagues are squarely focused on taking back the gavel in 2024. He acknowledged the caucus is "a big family, and an enthusiastic family and sometimes a noisy family." In a veiled reference to the House GOP conference and its allegiance to former President Donald Trump, Jeffries added "I'd much rather be a coalition than a cult." One younger House Democrat, Rep. Nanette Barragan, D-Calif., who was elected in 2016, told NPR she was excited about the major shift in who will lead her party in the House. She pointed out that she and Jeffries come from similar backgrounds, with working class parents. "He understands what it's like to be a person of color, the discrimination that we face — as he likes to say it's about standing up for the left behind and the folks who aren't really having that say at the table." She said his style is to listen to the various factions inside the caucus and said he's traveled extensively around the country to visit with lawmakers in their districts. Sponsor Message Jeffries served as impeachment manager and legislator Pelosi tapped Jeffries to serve as an impeachment manager for the Senate trial in January of 2020 — a high profile position for those who would prosecute their case on national television. Crow was on the team and recounted a tense moment during the Senate trial when a protestor burst into the chamber during Jeffries' presentation and it was unclear if he had a weapon or would threaten the lawmakers inside. As the Capitol Police worked to remove the person Crow looked up at Jeffries, who "stopped, he collected himself, he quoted a scripture verse about how the Lord will protect his flock and stand by you. And then he picked right up where he left off and finished presenting his case. It just is one illustration of how he handles things and stays calm under pressure." Jeffries also showcased his Brooklyn roots during the trial when responding to Trump's lawyer who asked the House impeachment managers why they were even there pushing their case. He quoted Biggie Smalls, the rapper from his neighborhood known as "the Notorious B.I.G." as he finished his closing statement about the president's abuse of power saying, "and if you don't know, now you know." Crow said that episode shows that Jeffries Hakeem "knows where he's going, but he also knows where he's from. And I think that's important as a person and as important as a leader to never forget your background, never forget who you are." In working with House GOP leaders, Jeffries will keep an "open mind" Jeffries said he has an "open mind" in terms of his relationship with the top House Republican, Rep. Kevin McCarthy, D-Calif., who was nominated to serve as the speaker. McCarthy is still working to secure the votes he needs to be elected by the full House in January after easily defeating his own challenge inside the GOP conference. Jeffries said he has more experience with the incoming Majority Leader, Rep. Steve Scalise, R-Louisiana, and said he would look for areas of common ground. But he stressed that McCarthy has a lot of members who he considers "extreme" and he is prepared to oppose and GOP efforts to push far right policies.

New York Times:

Democratic and Republican leaders in Congress vowed on Tuesday to pass legislation averting a nationwide rail strike, saying they agreed with President Biden that a work stoppage during the holidays next month would disrupt shipping and deal a devastating blow to the nation’s economy. The rare bipartisan promise to act came as some of the nation’s largest business groups warned of dire consequences from a rail shutdown. Mr. Biden, who had promised to be the most pro-union president in the country’s history, said the federal government must short-circuit collective bargaining in this case for the good of the country as a whole. “It’s not an easy call, but I think we have to do it,” he told the top four lawmakers from both parties during a meeting at the White House on Tuesday morning, as the Dec. 9 strike deadline loomed. “The economy is at risk.” Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the House would vote Wednesday on a tentative agreement that Mr. Biden’s administration had helped negotiate between rail companies and the unions earlier this year. The agreement raised wages but lacked provisions for paid medical or family leave. ADVERTISEMENT Continue reading the main story Late Tuesday, facing substantial frustration among progressives who demanded that the offer include paid leave, Ms. Pelosi said she would also bring up a separate proposal to add seven days of paid sick leave to the agreement. It is unclear whether Republicans in the Senate would agree to such an addition, but the plan to hold a vote illustrated the degree of discontent among pro-union liberals about the agreement Mr. Biden had struck. “They demand the basic dignity of paid sick days. I stand with them,” Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Democrat of New York, said on Twitter. “If Congress intervenes, it should be to have workers’ backs and secure their demands in legislation.” Dig deeper into the moment. Special offer: Subscribe for $1 a week. Senate leaders said they would work to pass legislation to avert the strike quickly after it passes the House, as expected. Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the minority leader, told reporters that “we’re going to need to pass a bill,” suggesting that Republicans did not intend to try to block such a move. Representative Kevin McCarthy of California, the House minority leader, said, “I think it will pass.” If it does, it will be bittersweet for Mr. Biden, who has built a decades-long political career by stressing his support for unions in their battles against management. Aides said the president had been reluctant to override the will of union workers, but ultimately changed his mind when three of his cabinet secretaries told him that negotiations had broken down and a strike seemed inevitable. Officials said Mr. Biden concluded that the effects of a strike, including hundreds of thousands of lost jobs, would be too damaging. Frozen train lines would snap supply chains for commodities like lumber, coal and chemicals, and delay deliveries of automobiles and other consumer goods, driving up prices even further. Editors’ Picks Will Exercising With a Cold Make You Sicker? ‘Avatar’ and the Mystery of the Vanishing Blockbuster The Cake Recipe That Was a Secret for Two Decades Continue reading the main story ADVERTISEMENT Continue reading the main story The American Trucking Associations, an industry group, recently estimated that relying on trucks to work around a rail stoppage would require more than 450,000 additional vehicles — a practical impossibility given the shortage of equipment and drivers. Understand the Railroad Labor Talks Card 1 of 5 Averting a shutdown. Congressional leaders vowed to prevent a nationwide rail strike, agreeing with President Biden that it could freeze a critical piece of the economy and potentially fuel further inflation in the United States. Here is what to know: Why are rail workers threatening to strike? Unions representing tens of thousands of workers said they planned to strike if a labor agreement with the freight rail companies employing them wasn’t reached. The workers are mostly concerned with their grueling, unpredictable schedules that make it difficult to attend medical visits or family events. Wasn’t there an agreement reached in September? The White House helped broker a tentative deal in September, but the proposal failed to win the approval of the workers at all of the unions involved. Many workers said that that deal did not address the deeper issue underlying their concerns: a business model that seeks to minimize labor costs and results in chronic understaffing. What was in that proposal? Under that agreement, new contracts would include a 24 percent increase in wages over five years and a payout of $11,000 upon ratification. Workers would also receive an additional paid day off as well as the ability to attend medical appointments without penalty. What’s at stake for the economy? Rail freight is the centerpiece of the global supply chain. A strike would slow down the circulation of key goods within the United States and with overseas trading partners. A disruption to the rail transport of crude oil, gasoline and diesel, meanwhile, could push up gas prices and drive further inflation. “There will be those who disagree and there will certainly be those who are frustrated at this decision,” said Celeste Drake, the deputy director for labor issues at the National Economic Council. “But you know, in the end this is the president standing with all Americans.” This was not the resolution the president had hoped for. Mr. Biden’s call for Congress to act followed months of negotiations by the administration’s top labor officials with the railway companies and their unions, who have been locked in a bitter dispute over wages, sick leave, work schedules and other quality of life issues. Negotiations in September, led by Labor Secretary Martin J. Walsh, ended with the tentative agreement that would raise wages by nearly 25 percent between 2020, when the last contract expired, and 2024. But it has proved contentious among rail workers who argue that it does not go far enough to resolve what they say are punishing schedules that upend their personal lives and their health. Eight unions voted to support that agreement, but four did not. The legislation under consideration would impose the deal on all 12 unions, effectively forcing union employees to continue working. With the railroad companies unable to reach agreements with all of their unions, Mr. Biden decided to force a deal on the parties. Some union leaders backed the move as necessary, but others said rank-and-file members would be angry at Mr. Biden for blocking their ability to demand a better deal. Under the Railway Labor Act, union employees who refuse to work after Congress acts would be conducting an illegal “wildcat” strike and could be replaced by the companies. ADVERTISEMENT Continue reading the main story Greg Regan, the head of the AFL-CIO’s transportation department, said that while the rail workers’ frustration was legitimate, the options available to their unions and to the White House are heavily constrained by the Labor Act. He said the major rail carriers grasp these limits well and exploit them as a source of leverage. “I totally understand the frustration with the White House and Congress taking the vote out of working members’ hands, stopping them from utilizing their biggest leverage,” Mr. Regan said. “I do think that some of the anger is lost on where it should be directed — at the railroads.” After winning the White House, Mr. Biden was quick to oust Trump appointees whom union officials regarded as hostile and to scrap Trump-era rules that they had opposed. A pandemic relief bill that Mr. Biden signed early in his presidency ticked off several labor priorities, including hundreds of billions of dollars in aid to cities and states, a boon to public-sector unions, and tens of billions to supplement failing union pension funds. The climate, health care and tax bill Mr. Biden signed in August includes incentives for builders of clean energy projects to pay union-scale wages. Steve Rosenthal, the former political director for the AFL-CIO and a longtime union strategist, said asking Congress to step in was an “awkward” moment for the president. “He starts with an enormous amount of good will and trust among the labor movement,” Mr. Rosenthal said. “I would have to guess that in some ways, it’s tougher for him because he does understand the ins and outs of the process better than most.” Though many union members are likely to be upset by the prospect of congressional action, some union leaders may quietly prefer that intervention to come in December rather than in January, when the House comes under Republican control and may be more likely to back a skimpier deal. Lawmakers in both parties appeared ready to support the move, with reservations. Some Republicans objected that the Biden administration was asking Congress to take action on something it should have handled, while other lawmakers acknowledged they were hesitant to get involved in a labor dispute and force workers to accept an agreement they found inadequate. ADVERTISEMENT Continue reading the main story But it appeared that the threat of the economic damage of a strike, as inflation remains high, was enough to push some lawmakers toward supporting the resolution. “I wish that the president were more hands-on with this issue and able to handle it without coming to Congress,” said Senator Rob Portman, Republican of Ohio. “But I don’t think we should be irresponsible and leave the possibility out there of a major strike.” In the hours before Ms. Pelosi announced she would hold a second vote on paid sick leave, some lawmakers said they would not support a measure ending the threat of a strike if it does not include stronger paid medical leave benefits for workers. “At a time of record profits in the rail industry, it’s unacceptable that rail workers have ZERO guaranteed paid sick days,” Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, said on Twitter. By law, Congress has the authority to intervene in a rail labor dispute in a variety of ways, including by enacting a deal directly through legislation — whether it be the agreement that some unions already have voted down, or a less generous proposal that a presidential board issued over the summer. The president has previously argued against congressional action in railway labor disputes, arguing that it unfairly interferes with union bargaining efforts. He was one of only six senators to vote against the legislation that ended the 1992 strike. Ms. Pelosi also expressed frustration on Tuesday about being asked to overrule the wishes of union workers who want a better deal. ADVERTISEMENT Continue reading the main story “I don’t like going against the ability of unions to strike,” Ms. Pelosi said. “But weighing the equities, we must avoid a strike. Jobs will be lost. Even union jobs will be lost.” Matt Shay, the president and chief executive of the National Retail Federation, a lobbying group for retailers, warned that failing to resolve the labor dispute would be “devastating for our economy,” adding: “It’s the worst possible time for this to happen.” The railroad industry immediately threw its support behind Mr. Biden’s call for legislation. “No one benefits from a rail work stoppage — not our customers, not rail employees and not the American economy,” Ian Jefferies, the chief executive of the Association of American Railroads, which represents major carriers, said in a statement. “Now is the appropriate time for Congress to pass legislation.”

The Washington Post

“You get two sides with the fried chicken,” says my server at my happy spot in Petworth. “Collards,” I start to respond before I’m cut off by an eavesdropper at the bar. “And the great, REAL mashed potatoes,” she practically demands. And so began yet another meal at one of my favorite Washington monuments, opened in 1967 by Al and Adrienne Carter and sold 10 years ago to Barry Dindyal, a native of Guyana who grew up eating Indian food. Wisely, he kept most of the soul food script he inherited; cleverly, the chef added a few dishes of his own, including a dusky gold shrimp curry that’s the taste equivalent of a quilt in winter, warmth in the form of hot coconut milk, fresh ginger and garlic bathing steamed shrimp. The fried chicken is superb in its simplicity, moist of flesh and crisp in a jacket that gets its lift from paprika and garlic and onion powder. If the collards could have used a shake of vinegar last time, I appreciate that they rely on onions and garlic instead of meat for their savor. The woman at the bar was right: The potatoes mashed with generous amounts of butter and cream (and roasted garlic for oomph) are bodacious. Dish after dish reminds me why I keep returning to this Southern outpost that could be confused for a house if it weren’t for a banner outside. Lamb chops, cooked the color you ask and paired with a salad, can be enjoyed as a starter for $16.50. If I’m not eating chicken, I’m probably inhaling fried whiting, punched up with pepper, and creamy-fresh coleslaw. Meanwhile, the bountiful fried spinach salad, dappled with sweet yogurt and tamarind chutney, pays homage to the palak chaat made famous by Rasika. The coin-operated jukebox of yore has been replaced by one that’s connected to the internet. “We’re in the future now,” jokes a server. The delicious predictability of the modest dining room extends to the community. I rarely go that I don’t see — or hear — radio legend Kojo Nnamdi in the mix. He’s the guy chasing back dinner with 15-year-old El Dorado rum from his native Guyana.