Diamantis takes the witness stand

Former official testifies in own defense on corruption charges

By Ken Dixon, Peter Yankowski

STAFF WRITERS

BRIDGEPORT — Konstantinos "Kosta" Diamantis took the witness stand Thursday afternoon at his corruption trial in a highstakes attempt to refute and cast doubt on the 21 federal charges he faces that could send him to prison for 20 years.

The alleged payoffs from contractors were "fees,"

Diamantis testified, for networking with contractors

During the testimony, defense attorney Norman Pattis quizzed Diamantis about the ins-and-outs of the process by which school districts could obtain reimbursement from the state for construction projects.

Pattis later questioned Diamantis whether he had ever taken money from either Sal Monarca, owner of Acranom, a masonry firm in Middlefield, or John Duffy, his former brotherin-law who was an executive at the company.

Diamantis admitted he had done so, accepting payments from Duffy "five or six times," with the amounts ranging from about \$3,000 to \$7,000. He testified to also accepting \$25,000 to \$30,000 spread over a handful payments from Monarca. Diamantis said that payment was for

making an introduction between Acranom and another individual.

"Did you at any point attempt to use your influence as a state official to get paid?" Pattis asked him.

"No," Diamantis replied.
Under further direct
questioning from Pattis,
Diamantis recalled a Tolland school with a crumbling foundation that required an engineer with experience in the mineral
Diamantis continues on A4



Milo Jacobs/For Hearst Connecticut Media

In this courtroom sketch, Kosta Diamantis, left, and defense attorney Norman Pattis stand in U.S. District Court in Bridgeport during trial on Wednesday.

Sen. Blumenthal accuses Noem of violating Hatch Act

By Jordan Nathaniel Fenster

STAFF WRITER

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., called Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem's video being played in airports around the country "probably the most blatant violation of the Hatch Act in my experience and in recent memory" during a Wednesday interview.

"Using air travelers as a captive audience in this way is not only blatantly illegal, but it is really immoral," Blumenthal said. "It uses the airports as a propaganda tool, and I think is grounds for further action against the Secretary of Homeland Security."

The video, featuring Noem, blames congressional Democrats for the ongoing government shutdown. Airports around the country have been instructed to play the video on a continuous loop, though some, including Bradley International Airport and Westchester County Airport, have not done so.

Blumenthal and his Democratic colleagues ar-Noem continues on A4



Andreas Yilma/Hearst Connecticut Media

State Sen. Jorge Cabrera speaks Wednesday afternoon at a New Haven Immigrants Coalition press conference along with local, state officials as well as pastors and organization leaders at the Keefe Community Center.

Girl likely died weeks after being pulled from school

By Lisa Backus
STAFF WRITER

NEW BRITAIN — Jacqueline Torres-Garcia likely died within weeks of being withdrawn from city schools, which were provided notice that she would be homeschooled after moving to Farmington in August 2024, police and a school official said.

The 11-year-old's body was found in an "advanced state of decomposition" in a container in New Britain last week. Police believe she was abused and malnourished before her death, which they estimate occurred in fall 2024.

Prior to that, she had attended New Britain schools from kindergarten through fifth grade, according to New Britain Superintendent of Schools Tony Gasper. "On August 26, 2024, which would have been Jacqueline's first day of sixth grade, her mother, Karla Garcia, filed an official Notification of Withdrawal



Courtesy of the New Britain

Jacqueline "Mimi"
Torres-Garcia, 11, was
subjected to abuse
before she died
sometime last fall,
police in New Britain
and Farmington say.

INSIDE:

Suspects in death of New Britain girl have criminal backgrounds. A3

Out of New Britain School District form stating that the student's new address would be in Farmington," Gasper said in a statement. "On that same day, Garcia filed a Notice of Intent: Instruction of Student at Garcia continues on A4

'Chaos in our town'

Officials: ICE raids Hamden car wash taking custody of as many as eight people

By Liz Hardaway and Andreas Yilma

STAFF WRITERS

HAMDEN — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement raided a local car wash Wednesday morning, taking custody of as many as eight people, officials said.

An official with the Hamden mayor's office said the raid took place at Optimo Car Wash on Dixwell Avenue near Third and Fourth streets. The operation was believed to have concluded by around 10:30 a.m.

The official said seven or eight people were taken into custody, at least a few with school-age children. Officials were trying to determine where the children attend school so they could be notified.

Mayor Lauren Garrett held a news conference at the Keefe Community Center Wednesday afternoon about the incident. She was joined by Hamden Town Clerk Karimah Mickens, Hamden Chief of Police Edward Page Reynolds and members of the state delegation as well as local officials and community leaders.

"One of my biggest concerns is that there was a mother and father who were taken," the mayor said during the afternoon news conference. "Their children are in school. We don't know which community. We don't know how to contact that school. We're still trying to find out how to get in touch with this family so that their kids don't go to an empty house when they get off of school."

ICE officials did not immedi-

ately respond to a request for comment and information about the raid.

Connecticut Students for a

Connecticut Students for a Dream Executive Director Tabitha Sookdeo said they stand with the Hamden community.

"Our children are not OK. Our youth are not OK. There are students, there are children who are not going to school right now be-

ICE continues on A6

"So what I call on us as a community is to stand up because this is not just an immigration issue. This is a Black and a brown person issue and this is Hamden issue, this is a Connecticut issue."

Tabitha Sookdeo, executive director, Connecticut Students for a Dream

Vince McMahon gets special probation in reckless driving case

By Ethan Fry and Pat Tomlinson

STAFF WRITERS

STAMFORD — A judge on Thursday granted an application from Vince McMahon, cofounder and former CEO of the WWE, for a pretrial probationary program in his reckless driving case.

McMahon appeared briefly at state Superior Court in Stamford Thursday before Judge Gary White along with his attorney, Mark Sherman, nearly two months after he applied for the accelerated rehabilitation program in connection with the July 24 crash on the Merritt Parkway.

In an accident report, Connecticut State Police said the crash happened at 9:22 a.m. Police said McMahon was driving his 2024 Bentley Continental in the right lane of the parkway, also known as Route 15, north near Exit 41 in Westport when he collided with the rear of a BMW and then the

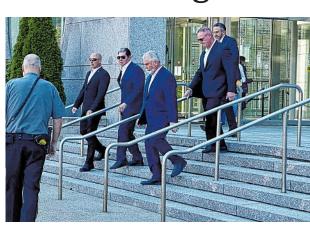
median. A Ford Fusion driving on the south side of the highway hit some debris that had been projected over the center median, and it then struck the guardrail on the northbound side.

There were no injuries, and neither of the other drivers were in court Thursday or objected to McMahon's application for the program. Sherman said he sent apology notes on behalf of McMahon to the other drivers.

Deputy Assistant

State's Attorney Eileen
Ornousky said McMahon
was driving in excess of
90 mph at the time of the
crash, but did not object
to the program since McMahon was fully covered
by insurance.
The judge granted the

The judge granted the program for a period of one year on the condition that McMahon make a \$1,000 charitable contribution and only drive if properly licensed and insured. Charges of reckless driving and following *McMahon continues on A4*



H John Voorhees III / Hearst Connecticut Media

H John Voorhees III / Hearst Connecticut Me Vince McMahon leaves state Superior Court in Stamford Thursday morning.

| Advice/puzzles | B10 |
|----------------|------------|
| Business | A10 |
| Classified | .B6 |



© 2025 Hearst Media Services CT

