

# STAMFORD ADVOCATE

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## State pension spending nears \$3B

The top earner pulled in more than \$400,000 in 2025

By Paul Hughes  
STAFF WRITER

State spending on pensions for retired government workers and surviving beneficiaries rose to a record \$2.75 billion in the 2025 fiscal year, according to the latest annual state data.

The 2025 total represented a \$500 million increase from the previous fiscal year and a more than \$1 billion increase from the 2015 fiscal year

based on annual reporting from the Office of the State Comptroller.

Retiree pensions and benefits represent a significant portion of the state budget. The \$2.75 billion in pension payments and the \$737.9 million appropriation for the cost of retired state employee health care combined represented 13% of the adopted 2025 budget of nearly \$26 billion.

State retirees received almost \$25 billion in pen-

sion payments between the 2015 and 2025 fiscal years, according to state data. Pension payments topped the \$2 billion in the 2018 fiscal year. While spending on state pensions has been climbing closer to \$3 billion in recent years, the state Office of Policy and Management expects pension costs to shrink through the 2030 fiscal year, but projects retiree health costs will grow by 40%. The comptroller's office

administers six primary state-run pension plans. The state also sponsors a retirement system for public school educators. The Office of the State Treasurer is responsible for investing state pension fund assets.

The State Employees Retirement System is the pension system for the large majority of state employees. The SERS plan paid benefits to 57,650 retirees and beneficiaries in



Hearst Connecticut Media file photo  
State spending on pensions for retired Connecticut government workers and surviving beneficiaries is approaching \$3 billion, according to state data.

*Pensions continues on A4*

## Stamford park eyed for upgrades



Ned Gerard/Hearst Connecticut Media

Hatch Field Park in Stamford is seen on March 11. The deteriorated park needs \$2.5 million in renovations, officials said.

### Deteriorated Hatch Field Park needs \$2.5M in renovations

By Shaniece Holmes-Brown  
STAFF WRITER

STAMFORD — Stamford officials said after years of deterioration, renovating the play area at Hatch Field Park is essential to make it safer and more accessible for children.

Director of Operations Matthew Quinones said the project “will consist of a variety of different improvements, to include resurfacing of the basketball court, all new playground and play

equipment, a new water feature, splash pad, new tree planting, and new surfacing.”

Quinones said there's been short-term work done at the park in the past, but the upcoming renovation is an overdue, long-term investment.

“I think we saw some further deterioration during the summer last year, with some of the surfacing beginning to come up and cause concern around tripping hazards, so we addressed that to try and kind of mitigate the further spread of that deterioration,”  
*Hatch Field continues on A4*



A city official said there is concern about “tripping hazards,” adding that Hatch Field “has been a target for us to renovate, given the lack of investment over really a decade, plus.”

## Lamont seeks high school math overhaul

By Natasha Sokoloff  
STAFF WRITER

Connecticut high schools may be on the verge of a math makeover that teachers and experts say will finally align class with the modern world.

The way the state approaches teaching math has not kept up with what students need, school resource gaps and the evolving workforce, according to a new report by ConnCAN, a statewide education advocacy organization.

“What we're preparing students for is much different than what we were preparing students for prior to 2000,” said Robin Moore, a professional learning specialist at EdAdvance and an officer in the Connecticut Council of Leaders of Mathematics. “What we're finding instead is that many more jobs are requiring students to have knowledge of statistics and probability.”

Gov. Ned Lamont is backing efforts this legislative session to revamp math curriculum in high

*Math bill continues on A6*



Tyler Sizemore/Hearst Connecticut Media  
A Stamford Parks Department employee clears leaves using a leaf blower at Scalzi Park in Stamford on Dec. 10, 2020.

## Gas-powered leaf blower ban coming, just not yet

The good news for landscapers and lush-lawn lovers is that Connecticut state lawmakers will not vote in the coming weeks to ban the sale of portable leaf blowers powered by gasoline starting in 2029.

A ban will not reach the floor of the state House or Senate, or even see a committee vote, let alone pass.

But it's out there, in a bill that drew hundreds of people arguing for and against it earlier this month. And not just a sales ban. Senate Bill 319, as written,

*Haar continues on A7*



Dan Haar

COMMENTARY

## ‘It makes a huge difference to our community’

Neighborhood solves a decades-long mystery over its beach closures

By Austin Mirmina  
STAFF WRITER

BRANFORD — The people of Short Beach wanted answers.

For decades, high bacteria levels repeatedly shut down the public beach in this Branford community, frustrating some residents who lived steps from the water but often hesitated to swim in it.



Ned Gerard/Hearst Connecticut Media

The environmental group Save the Sound ranked Clark Avenue Beach in Branford — also called Johnson's Beach — among the four worst beaches out of 37 it monitored between 2016 and 2021. But it earned a B in the group's latest beach report.

Study after study dating to the 1990s failed to pinpoint the source. Urban legends about who — or what — was behind the pollution spread through the neighborhood. Many suspected a leaky septic system or sewage problem somewhere nearby.

Determined to solve the mystery, residents teamed with scientists, local health officials and environmental groups to investigate. The culprit surprised everyone: Dog poop.

The discovery led to a neighborhood-wide campaign — and a cheeky slogan — that has since restored both the beach's

*Beach continues on A7*

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Weather: Mostly cloudy, becoming windier and cooler. High: 43. Low: 26. Page A10