

Ned Lamont vs. Ryan Fazio

Taxes, affordability and the race for Connecticut governor

By Paul Hughes
STAFF WRITER

The victory of Gov. Ned Lamont in Tuesday's Democratic primary sets up a November general election showdown between the incumbent and Republican state Sen. Ryan Fazio.

Lamont defeated Hamden state Rep. Josh Elliott, capping a 12-week primary campaign that began after Elliott won



25% of the vote at the Democratic State Convention, enough to qualify for the ballot.

During those three months, Fazio was able to concentrate on the Nov. 3 election after securing the Republican nomination for governor in mid-May. Lamont, meanwhile, split

his time and resources defending against a challenge from within his own party and campaigning against his Republican gubernatorial opponent.

But now the primary bout is over and the main event begins: It's two-term incumbent Lamont against first-time gubernatorial nominee Fazio, with the governor's office on the line.

Cost-of-living issues

will dominate the 2026 gubernatorial campaign, with affordability likely emerging as a central theme for both campaigns.

While Connecticut is a high-wage state, basic expenses consume a significant share of household income, particularly for renters, lower- and middle-income households, and families paying for childcare. Connecticut

Governor continues on A4



Republican challenger Ryan Fazio, left, and Gov. Ned Lamont, the two-term incumbent Democrat, are facing off in the race for governor.



Tom Worthley, extension professor of forest sustainability, holds a white oak seedling at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, Thursday, July 30. The seedling is one of dozens grown from acorns collected beneath trees that were already standing during the American Revolution. Others came from acorns collected under a white oak near the Nathan Hale Schoolhouse in East Haddam that is recognized as a descendant of the original Charter Oak.

These tiny seedlings could live for 500 years

Some trace their roots to Connecticut's Charter Oak

By Jordan Nathaniel Fenster
STAFF WRITER

Behind a metal laboratory building on University of Connecticut's Storrs campus, about 100 white oak seedlings are beginning what could be a 500-year life.

Some grew from acorns

collected beneath trees that were already standing during the American Revolution. Others came from a white oak beside the Nathan Hale Schoolhouse in East Haddam that is recognized as a descendant of the original Charter Oak, lore that's deeply rooted in the state's history.

For now, they sit in plastic

flats behind the lab, only a few inches tall.

"My goal is that everybody in the state of Connecticut should know how to identify a white oak tree," said Thomas Worthley, a UConn Extension professor and forestry specialist.

The seedlings are part history lesson and part forestry intervention. UConn hopes to

use them to preserve the lineage and symbolism of Connecticut's state tree while drawing attention to a less visible problem: Oaks still dominate the state's forests, but too few young trees are surviving to replace them.

Without fire, storms, logging or deliberate forest management

Seedlings continues on A5

Home prices surge in Connecticut

By Alexander Soule
STAFF WRITER

As Connecticut primary voters headed to the polls Tuesday with home prices still a hot-button issue, a new report shows Connecticut had the second largest jump in home prices in the country as of June, with Fairfield County leading the largest population centers for price escalation in the spring market of 2026.

Over 12 months through June, Connecticut real estate prices were up 6%, Cotality reported, behind only Illinois. Over the shorter interval of the spring market between April and June, Fairfield

Homes continues on A4

Doctors say vacation could help you live longer

By Tracey O'Shaughnessy
STAFF WRITER

If you feel like you need a vacation, join the club.

Nearly half of American workers don't use their paid time off, according to a 2023 Pew Research. That amounts to losing six days per worker each year, according to Pew.

The reason, said Traci Cipriano a psychologist at UConn Health? "They're workaholics."

Americans have a curious relationship with vacations. Those who have access to the most vacations—upper-income, college-edu-

Vacation continues on A6

Conn. wage hike approaches as inflation eases

By Alexander Soule
STAFF WRITER

As Connecticut's lowest earners look ahead to raises in January, they may be getting a needed break on another front, with new inflation data showing overall consumer costs rose only slightly in July — a welcome development that benefits many, including those on fixed income programs like Social Security.

The Consumer Price Index rose a tenth of a percentage point in July, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported Wednesday, leaving overall consumer prices up 3.4% over the past 12 months.

The Senior Citizens League, a Virginia-based advocacy group, issued a revised forecast on

Wednesday of a 3.6% cost-of-living adjustment for Social Security in 2027, which would be the highest since 2023 and coming on the heels of a 2.8% upward adjustment this year. The Social Security Administration is expected to announce the 2027 COLA change in mid-October.

Last week, Gov. Ned Lamont's administration announced the state's minimum wage would rise 54 cents an hour, a recalculation pegged to inflation after a 2019 law. More than 170,000 Connecticut families listed a woman earner as the head of household for tax purposes who was working one or more jobs at the minimum wage, according to Dante Bartolomeo, Connecticut commissioner of labor, who addressed costs during a news conference last week in West

Hartford.

"Low-wage workers often feel increased costs first, the hardest, as a greater percentage of their household budgets is impacted," Bartolomeo said. "We don't want to leave those lower-wage workers behind, so as all costs grow, this is an additional \$21.60 per week for somebody working 40 hours."

Connecticut has yet to get significant relief on one critical point this summer — gas prices, which rocketed up after Iran bottled up tankers in the Strait of Hormuz after the Trump administration unleashed a bombing blitz in an attempt to thwart Iran's nuclear programs.

AAA reported an average Connecticut price of \$4.09 for a gallon of regular gas as of Wednesday.

Inflation continues on A6



The produce section in July at Wegmans in Norwalk. Prices of fruits and vegetables were up 5.1% nationally from July 2025 to lead all food categories for inflation, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates released Wednesday, but overall inflation was up only negligibly.