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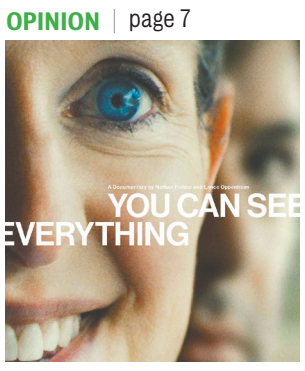
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UCONN FOOTBALL RECAP

UConn played and lost to Air Force, 35-26.

Haunted HEEP cancelled

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UConn's 2024 Haunted HEEP event, hosted by the Office of Sustainability. The event was cancelled this year due to a limited supply of resources. PHOTO COURTESY OF UCONN'S OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

The University of Connecticut Office of Sustainability has cancelled its annual Haunted Hillside Environmental Education Park (HEEP) event this year due to a limited supply of resources, Experiential Learning Programs Manager Betsy Mortensen said in an interview with The Daily Campus on Friday.

According to the Office of Sustainability's website, the Haunted HEEP, which was established in 2020, is a free one-mile spooky walk through UConn's Hillside Environmental Education Park.

"Every year, groups of students plunge into the shadows, daring to explore the creepy scenes set up along the one-mile Red Trial of the HEEP," according to its website.

The Haunted HEEP, which Mortensen said is a good way to introduce students to green spaces on campus, requires extensive time and resources, including recruiting around 100 volunteers, preparing the trail, advertising and obtaining police officers for crowd control.

Mortensen said the Office of Sustainability is designed to have four executive positions, two of which — an administrative coordinator and a communication, outreach and education coordinator — currently remain vacant, making it difficult to plan and organize an event of this size.

The department is currently staffed by two employees: Mortensen and the Office of Sustainability Director Patrick McKee.

"It's just a huge undertaking with only half the staff," Mortensen said. "It's too much."

The lack of available staff is in line with UConn's upper budgetary issues following the lack of funding from the federal government, Mortensen said.

"I know that a lot of departments are facing very similar challenges," she said.

Mortensen said the decision to cancel the event was made over the summer when the department rehauled its internship program.

The program shifted its focus from whole-campus engagement to independent sustainability projects, Mortensen said. She said the transition will allow the interns to pursue individual sustainability interests.

In 2024, the Haunted HEEP attracted 1,360 guests, nearly double the attendance of the previous year. Of those in attendance, 89% had never been to the HEEP before, and 90% said they intended to visit on their own in the future, Mortensen said.

"It's a very beloved event," she said.

Mortensen said the event will return next year depending on the available resources of the department.

The Office of Sustainability is happy to look for partners or student groups who are interested in taking over the event, Mortensen said.

SPORTS EVENTS OF THE WEEK

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
Monday | 5 p.m. | Hartford

MEN'S BASKETBALL
Monday | 9 p.m. | Hartford

MEN'S HOCKEY
Thursday | Time | Place

WOMEN'S HOCKEY
Thursday | 2 p.m. | Chestnut Hill, Mass.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
Thursday | 6:30 p.m. | Ann Arbor, Mich.

WOMEN'S SWIM
Friday | 4 p.m. | Chestnut Hill, Mass.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL
Friday | 5 p.m. | South Orange, N.J.

WOMEN'S HOCKEY
Friday | 6 p.m. | Storrs

MEN'S SOCCER
Friday | 7 p.m. | Storrs

MEN'S BASKETBALL
Friday | 8 p.m. | Boston, Mass.

Congressional candidates spar over campaign finances

by Kevin Guinan
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Candidates for Connecticut's 2nd Congressional District lambasted each other about political funding at a debate held by the Connecticut Examiner last Monday.

Connecticut College hosted the debate between Rep. Joe Courtney, the incumbent 73-year-old Democrat, and his 37-year-old Republican competitor, George Patrick Austin.

During the debate, Courtney was criticized by Austin for accepting money from the political action committee American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) when discussing college affordability.

Austin said the donations could have influenced Courtney to vote for the Protect Economic and Academic Freedom Act. The legislation would cut aid from institutions which vote to divest aid from Israel.

Austin is a first-time congressional candidate from Suffield who owns a small business and is a contractor with a bachelor's degree in construction management, according to his biography on the local candidate's website.

Courtney traded Austin's concern over campaign contributions by discussing Austin's inclusion in a Sept. 11 letter by the Campaign Legal Center about 66 U.S. House of Representatives candidates who haven't filed their personal financial disclosure reports due for midterms on May 15.

"Guys I'm busy, we're understaffed and we're underfunded," Austin said to a heckling audience at the debate in response to not completing the report required to run by the 1978 Ethics in Government Act. "I didn't get around to it, not because I'm trying to hide anything."

Anyone who falsifies or fails to file information required by the Ethics in Government Act is subject to a fine of up to $11,000, according to the House ethics committee. Courtney said he has already filed a complaint about Austin.

"This guy dropped a $240,000 money bomb into his campaign. That is the biggest self-funded contribution in the history of this district," Courtney said. Austin's federal election commission filings said the candidate took a $240,000 loan out for his campaign and received a total of $314,977 between Sept. 1, 2025, and Oct. 14.

The two candidates also gave contrasting answers about issues facing the state like affordability, artificial intelligence legislation and immigration. While both Courtney and Austin agreed that these topics were problems the state was facing, the candidates found different sources to blame for those problems.

Austin highlighted AI regulations from the beginning of the debate, marking it as one of his core policy agendas as he proposed ideas like marketing prohibitions for kids and a "kill switch" for human control. Despite this, he said he opposed bans or mandates on AI companies.

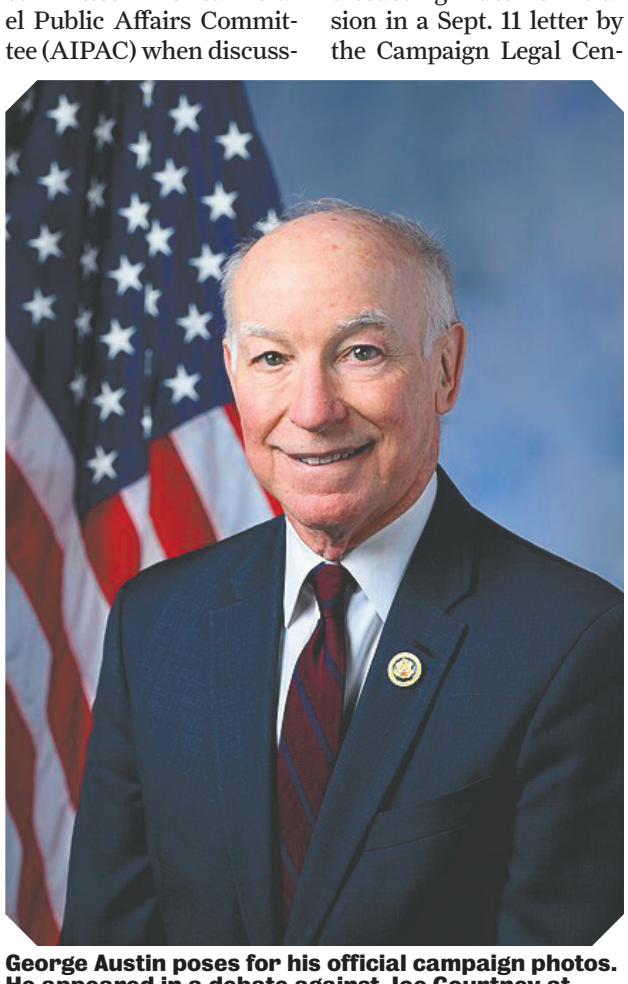
Courtney responded to this and said he supported multiple bills that regulated AI, which did not move forward because of Republican pushback. He gave Speaker Mike Johnson cancelling House session days as an example of the challenges AI legislation faces.

"Mike Johnson can't even bring up a bill that would protect kids in the terms of the AI threat that's out there," Courtney said.

Austin avoided supporting important parts of President Donald Trump's agenda in multiple ways during the debate. He said Trump's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) had not executed "the mission" very well and expressed dissatisfaction with war in Iran.

Austin said his goal was for an "America first" policy that prioritized domestic spending over international conflicts because of the rising cost of living domestically.

Courtney said his hope was for Democratic control of the House, which he would use to fight against policies of the Trump administration that he blamed for causing issues Connecticut is facing.



George Austin poses for his official campaign photos. He appeared in a debate against Joe Courtney at Connecticut College last Monday.
PHOTO COURTESY OF @GEORGEFORCT2 ON INSTAGRAM



Joe Courtney poses for his official campaign photos. He appeared in a debate against George Austin at Connecticut College last Monday.
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE JOE COURTNEY CAMPAIGN

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MEME OF THE DAY

