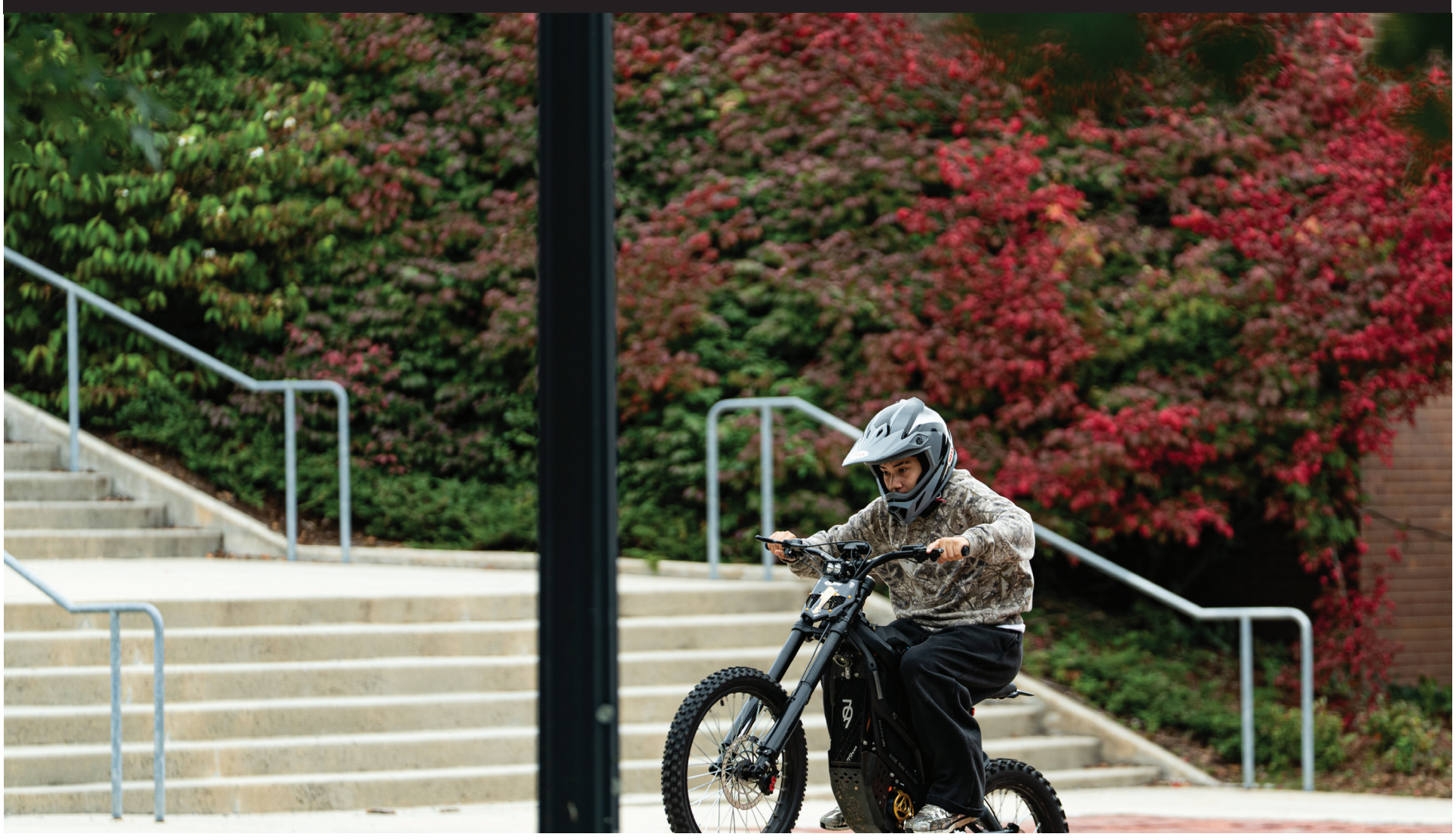
Opinion

Photo of the Day |



A person rides a bike on UConn's campus outside of Homer D. Babbage Library. The weather was nice and sunny for spending time outside. PHOTO BY JACOB BLACKWEL, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Op-Ed

OUR CLIMBING TEAM'S FUNDING:

What's the real story?



UConn climbing team participates in the Summer Send Series CRG Hadley Competition. Throughout the academic year, the climbing team has competed at events.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @UCONNCLIMBINGTEAM ON INSTAGRAM

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One of my earliest memories in the climbing center was falling. Shocking, right? Some of the University of Connecticut Climbing Team members happened to be there. Looking back on it, I find it hilarious that I got embarrassed, but I also can't blame myself. After all, seeing them climb felt like being slapped across the face with awesomeness. Of course, after watching their technique in real time, you already know I asked them for some tips! I felt one word: welcomed.

Before I knew it, I fell in love with the relentlessness of the sport and the warmth of the community. I remember being stuck on a move for a jillion attempts and losing. My. Mind. When I got it with the help of a team member! As my friend always says, falling and failing 95% of the time makes the five percent when you succeed feel incredible.

It is this positive impression on the community that helps define the UConn Climbing Team. They are also defined by their tenacious attitude towards competition. My friend who is a new member on the team tells me that the rock-climbing team is a powerhouse of camaraderie, never failing to cheer each other on.

The team sends its members to the very highest level of competition. In recent years, it has been sending 5-10 members to the USA Climbing Collegiate National Championships, which is a massive deal! Unlike track, where there are multiple levels for collegiate athletes to compete in, our climbers compete at the very highest collegiate level.

Our team is doing so much more with so much less; it is competing at elite levels with a fraction of the funds. This is because it is designated as a Tier II sport funded by USG. After many club sports were pushed down into the Tier II category, USG now has so many more slices to split one pie into. Last year, these clubs could request up each to $15k, and this year, only up to $10k. his meant the Team was cut 33% of its funding, as explained by the president.

If the team is going to stay competitive, it obviously needs the resources. For starters, each climber needs a membership to Central Rock Gym, since they aren't a club sport. If they were, they'd be able to use on-campus facilities. Next, each member needs registrations. One to compete in general, and another to compete nationally. Afterwards, when the climbing team makes it to nationals (because they're unstoppable), they have to get there!

Luckily , our rock climbing team excels at being between a rock and a hard place, and they find a way to make it work. They can't ask Undergraduate Student Government for help because Nationals is in May, when the academic year is over. Impressively, the team worked its tail off to fund their trip to nationals, and with the help of the community, they were able to fundraise $8,500 for their journey out west!

That is why fundraisers like Ignite have become heavyweight champions in securing resources for the team. This remains true for this season and those to come. The fundraising event runs from Oct. 2 to Oct. 23, and you can help! To start, you can become an Ignite Advocate, sharing your link with friends and family or you can show up on Wednesday, Oct. 14, where clubs will be tabling fun events.

While fundraising does help immensely to support the team, the university needs to step in too.It would do itself some good to recognize its immense advantage in infrastructure over other universities nationally. Our climbing wall is exceptionally rare, reaching 58 feet tall. Only about 4-5 other colleges with indoor climbing nationwide have facilities that clear this height. Even more, our bouldering section is complete with slab, overhang and cave, providing opportunities for budding athletes to develop well-rounded climbing skills right on campus. If UConn took all this time to be one of the top 10 schools for climbing, we should put our resources to good use and not just let it be a mere talking point for tours walking by.

Climbing at UConn is a very special thing. Its team makes a profound impact on the community while blowing us all away with their performances at nationals, even as they had funding challenges. UConn Climbing Team, we see you, we support you and you're crushing it!

Political lens of the 'December baby'

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Imagine, for a moment, that you are a high school senior during a national election year. You sit in the same classrooms as your peers. You study for the same exams. You learn from the same teachers and are set to walk across the stage together on graduation day.

Then Election Day arrives.

One of your classmates can vote. You cannot.

The difference? They were born in October. You were born in December.

You may only be a month younger, possibly even just a few days. You belong to the same community and received the same education, but when November arrives, your birthday determines whether you have a voice in the country's future.

Is that not arbitrary?

Birthdays are a traditional milestone. When you turn 13, you become a teenager. When you turn 16 you can get your driver's license. When you turn 18 you are granted adulthood — along with the right to vote. Age requirements establish necessary boundaries, and there are good reasons for having them. However, when applied strictly to civic life, they limit a young person from participating in the democratic process.

This issue is especially relevant ahead of the November elections, as voting rules have become a major legal subject across the country. Last month, the Supreme Court blocked federal restrictions on mail-in ballots from taking effect ahead of the midterm elections. Meanwhile, federal and state courts continue to bicker about what makes a state properly representative of the people — such as Louisiana v. Callais back in April and the Missouri cases in September. While these cases address differing legal questions, they highlight the reality of contemporary American politics: The rules surrounding elections heavily influence how people participate in democracy and how they are represented.

Under the 26th amendment, you must be 18 by Election Day to vote in a federal election. This creates an easily administered standard. Realistically speaking, the government cannot evaluate every young adult and determine their civic maturity. A clear age requirement is a practical solution, but it also creates unintended conflict.

Young Americans already participate in elections at lower rates than older age groups. According to a Pew Research Center analysis of the 2024 election, young adults represented a disproportionately large number of nonvoters: Citizens under 30 made up roughly 20% of the eligible voting population yet only accounted for 15% of voters. These figures are an eyesore. It screams about the disconnect between ideal and actual voter turnout in the American youth.

Now, place yourself back in that high school classroom.

You have spent years studying American history and government. Depending on your state, you may have been required to pass a civics course to graduate. You have either independently or in class formed opinions on modern issues. Yet you are forced to sit and watch your classmates who had the exact same preparation vote in the election.

This gap has lasting effects. By missing that first opportunity, you are forced to wait another two to four years, long after you moved away for college or work and leaving you physically and emotionally less connected to the community you were raised in. How can society make the transition from civic education to participation easy and motivating? How do we build early voting habits that last?

One possible reform is to extend the voting eligibility to any citizen who turns 18 during the calendar year of a national election. Under this system, someone born in December could vote in November, turning 18 just weeks later. The age requirement remains objective and easy to administer: if you turn 18 by Dec. 31 of the election year, you can vote.

There are counterarguments. Any cutoff line creates tension. Why should someone born in late December vote while someone born in early January cannot? Furthermore, critics might ask whether newly eligible high schoolers would actually show up at the polls.

Research shows that young people would vote more often if we made the process simpler. Studies from CIRCLE show that beginner-friendly policies — such as registering online, getting registered automatically at the DMV, or signing up before turning 18 — boost youth turnout. High schools can also better bridge the gap to the ballot box. Curricula should emphasize practical, nonpartisan instruction: registering to vote, evaluating the news and engaging in local politics.

While strict rules create obstacles that push young people away, adjusting the cutoff date opens the door to the remaining seniors blocked off by an arbitrary birthday. Pushing the cutoff date to Dec. 31 may only affect a specific age group, but it is a meaningful step towards a more participatory democracy that empowers young adults to hold institutions accountable.

A difference of a few weeks shouldn't dictate whether a young person has a voice. Closing that gap is a practical, powerful step forward.