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University Production

# THE RECORDER

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## Connecticut's 2026 Gubernatorial Race Is Gearing Up: Ned Lamont and Erin Stewart Give Insights to Their Campaign



Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont following his second inauguration, Liam Enea

### Ned Lamont, Democrat

people and some businesses leaving the state, and here we are seven years later. We've cut taxes, we have one of the fastest-growing economies, a lower unemployment rate and a really good university system, and I want to keep that momentum going."

When Lamont formally announced his campaign for a third term as governor, he referred to unfinished work in his administration. He said he is proud that he and his administration turned a budget deficit into a surplus, and he would like to find ways to make health care more affordable for residents.

"When we came in, our fiscal house was a mess, and we were lurching from deficit to deficit and raising taxes," Lamont said. "We've balanced the budget, our pensions are no longer eating us alive, but now it's health care costs."

Lamont is currently working with State Comptroller Sean Scanlon and Department of Social Services Commissioner Andrea Barton Reeves to see what can be done to bring down health care costs. He has also been in communication with Mehmet Oz

see *Ned* on page 2

Liam McCusker  
Staff Writer

Ned Lamont is deviating from the tradition set by his predecessors and is seeking a third term in the 2026 gubernatorial election.

Affordability, particularly health care, and lowering taxes for middle-class residents are major motivations for his decision, said Lamont.

"We're just getting started," Lamont said. "This was a state that was really falling back 10 to 15 years ago, with a lot of young

Former New Britain Mayor Erin Stewart is not just running for governor. She is envisioning eliminating the car tax, lowering energy costs and giving young people more opportunities in the state.

After leading New Britain for six terms, Stewart said she felt a calling to run for governor of Connecticut because of what she describes as a need for change in leadership due to an ineffective team that is not concerned with affordability.



After stepping down as New Britain Mayor, Erin Stewart set her sights on the gubernatorial election, erinforect.com

### Erin Stewart, Republican

"We have a governing class in Hartford who don't live in our world. They don't know what it's like to sweat over the balance in their bank account. They don't feel the awful dread of opening their utility bills each month and having to make sacrifices," Stewart said. "There is an undercurrent of dissatisfaction and apathy among our residents that this is just the way it is in blue Connecticut. But that's the lie."

"We don't have to settle for what is; we need a leader who can show us what could be, what is possible with balanced government, lower taxes, common-sense policy and engaged management that puts Connecticut residents' quality of life first. That's why I'm running."

The biggest change Stewart plans to tackle in her first term, if she were elected, would be getting rid of the property tax on vehicles, though she also said she would like to get the state back on track and unlock potential for everyone.

"In my first budget address as governor, I will tell the Legislature that any budget

see *Gubernatorial* on page 3

## A Black Box Theatre Production, "Webster's Bitch"

By Jayden Klaus  
Contributor

Webster's Bitch offers an amusing exploration of the various meanings that language can hold through a critical and feminist lens.

Performed in the Black Box Theatre at Maloney Hall at Central Connecticut State University from March 5-8, the play follows Gwen (Nicole Sweet) and Nick (Edward Antigua), two lexicographers for Webster's Dictionary who find themselves in a conundrum when Gwen's sister Ellie (Brooke Hendon) informs them of a viral Twitter video in which their supervisor Joyce (Mia Lozada) is being called a "bitch" by the dictionary's editor-in-chief, Frank (Derek Lopez), while at a conference.

What follows is a series of debates over how the word in question should really be defined and the workplace politics surrounding it. Each of the characters working at Webster's has a lot of personal stakes in their job, and this new controversy is the tipping point that causes many of them to boil over.

From Gwen wanting more appreciation and compensation for what she has done and continues to do, to Nick not wanting to be blamed unnecessarily for doing his job, to Joyce holding on to lingering resentments for the previous editor-in-chief while seeking

see *Bitch* on page 5



The set of Webster's Bitch was crafted and arranged by CCSU students, Jayden Klaus/The Recorder

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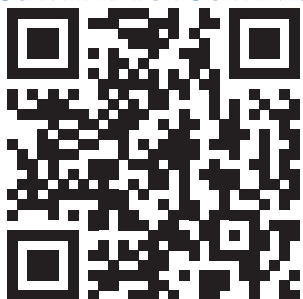
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SCAN HERE FOR OUR LINKS

*Ned continued from front*

to explore ways to work with the federal government on the issue. Lamont said he supports proposals that would require families to notify the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) when a child is being withdrawn from school to be homeschooled. He pointed to tragedies, including the death of 11-year-old Jaqueline Torres-Garcia and the Waterbury captivity case, in which a man told police he was held and abused for roughly 20 years after being withdrawn from school.

“We’ve had a few rare but scary disasters when it comes to kids who drop out of the public school system,” Lamont said. “And we want to do a better job of tracking them and making sure that we can keep them safe.”

Lamont said the tragedies should not be interpreted as a failure of homeschooling families, who he said care deeply about their children. Some homeschool advocates have instead placed the blame on the Department of Children and Families.

“What we’re trying to do is if you’re not going to school every day where we can keep an eye on what’s going on, at least let

us have some sort of a check-in to see how that kid is doing, and if they drop off the radar screen, there is the potential for something bad to happen,” Lamont said.

Lamont is aiming to regulate social media algorithms that target younger people and has been collaborating with Attorney General of Connecticut William Tong on House Bill 5037, which aims to protect minors from addictive features.

“We were one of the first states going back a few years to say, for starters, let’s get the smartphones out of the classroom,” Lamont said. “The teachers said it’s incredibly distracting, a lot of the students said ‘Hey, let me be,’ but after a week or two of getting the phones out of the classroom, even the students were pretty comfortable with it, and now we’re saying let’s get them out of the schools bell to bell — from the start of school until the end of the school day.”

Lamont said he has received good bipartisan feedback on the initiative, and he and his team want to do everything they can to allow kids to engage again. He also would like parents to have more control over the algorithms their children are viewing.

Benefits Lamont believes the policy has created include reduced anxiety among students and staff.

“I think there’s a lot of stress and we’re bringing clinics into our K-9 schools, and we’re bringing in counselors,” Lamont said. “And I thought it was all due to COVID-19, and that after a year or so with kids getting together and engaging, we could lower that stress level, but it’s still severe.”

Outside of distractions, Lamont said he wants kids to engage with each other in what he referred to as a personal and human way, which he hopes will be the outcome of the policy.

As it relates to Connecticut’s economy, one of the biggest factors Lamont believes is driving up the cost of living is housing.

“Our population is growing. I need young people here and they can’t afford to buy their first home, and rents are going through the roof,” Lamont said. “A lot of that is related to our housing bill. We’re going to give towns incentives to build more housing in their downtown areas.”

Lamont said that more broadly his administration has cut taxes for the middle class and is trying to increase wages to make life more affordable. Energy is also a major affordability issue because tariffs have driven up the prices of electricity and heating homes.

“We need to do a better job there as well,” Lamont said. “We’ve got nuclear power and wind power in place to try and lower the cost of electricity over time.”

In terms of income tax credits, Lamont said he is more focused on helping people start their own businesses, buy their first home and find ways to build wealth and have a stake in their communities.

“We’ve had more new business startups, often by people in downtown areas,” Lamont said. “Not big AI tech companies but small local businesses that are getting going. That’s something I want to build on and grow as best we can.”

Strategies Lamont has used to keep young people living in Connecticut include presenting the state as the most family-friendly in the country and reducing costs for child care.

## #KIZERSAYS

# IF YOU STAY READY, YOU DON'T HAVE TO GET READY!

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“When you want to have your first child, we have paid family and medical leave so that you can take a period of time off, allowing you to keep your job but also take time for that new child,” Lamont said. “We’re going to have one of the most robust early childhood education programs in the country. Universal early childhood education gives kids the best head start.”

Lamont said he believes these initiatives will motivate people to stay in Connecticut in the coming years.

Something Lamont said he has enjoyed most about leading Connecticut is hearing from people who say they feel better about the state, and he believes that positive reinforcement is good for Connecticut.

“That’s why I wake up every day really excited about what I do,” Lamont said. “I think we’re making progress.”

When asked if there was something about being governor that people might be surprised to learn, Lamont said he values the opportunity to connect with residents.

“Every day, I get to do a job that I love,” Lamont said. “I take a walk around Elizabeth Park, people come up and I get a chance to see what’s on their mind. I go down to the Capitol and when the Legislature’s in session it can get a little cranky as everyone gets their press releases going, but people are genuinely pretty positive.”

Lamont also encouraged people to consider public service at some point in their lives.

“I started out with a young family and did business. I needed to take care of my family and be at home,” Lamont said. “Then I got a little older and I’ve loved the opportunity to serve my state.”

Stewart said her experience as mayor of New Britain prepared her for the campaign because she has learned how to manage a government and lay out a clear plan for what she wants to achieve for the people she serves. She also criticized the administration of Ned Lamont, saying she believes it does not effectively manage crises.

“On the Republican side I’m the only candidate with the experience of having actually run a government and been accountable for it. The most important thing for any executive is to have a clear vision for where they are going, to clearly articulate that vision to their constituents, and to ensure that every decision they make is moving the state closer toward achieving that vision,” Stewart said.

“For the past eight years we’ve had a governor who’s a nice enough guy but he’s an absentee landlord. He’s content moving from crisis to crisis but doesn’t know where he’s taking us. We cannot afford four more years lost to indecision and apathy.”

Stewart said her experience managing the budget in New Britain prepared her to oversee the state’s finances, particularly because she believes it is important to hear from all parties when trying to solve problems.

Stewart said she is aware that many young people, particularly members of Generation Z, feel Connecticut is becoming too expensive to live in and start a family. In addition to eliminating the car tax, she said she intends to pursue alternative energy policies.

“Getting rid of the car tax would be a good start, but there’s so much low-hanging fruit out there. Instituting a common-sense energy policy that drives costs lower will pay huge dividends for everyone, especially young people.

Rooting out decades of waste, fraud and abuse is another,” Stewart said. “Creating the economic conditions necessary for businesses large and small to start, grow and thrive here will help fill the opportunity deficit that currently exists in our state and forces Gen Z to pursue their lives and careers elsewhere.”

Stewart said she plans to lower electric bills for residents by exploring alternative options for generating electricity.

“Increase supply by expanding generation options for nuclear and natural gas, keep more of the energy we currently generate here in CT instead of exporting it to our neighboring states, eliminate the public benefits charges from our utility bills, and hold the utilities’ feet to the fire to reduce the distribution charges that account for half of our bills,” Stewart said.

Stewart said she supports expanding renewable energy, specifically the New England Wind Project, but she believes it should not be the only solution and argues that it can harm waterways and farmland.

“It’s too expensive, too volatile and, ironically, too harmful to our environment,” Stewart said.

In terms of state cooperation with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Stewart said she believes it is best for the state to work with the federal government and not prevent federal authorities from doing their jobs. However, she acknowledged that there have been instances in which ICE agents have gone too far and said she believes operations should only be conducted in courthouses and other government buildings.

“I believe ICE made some critical and tragic mistakes in Minnesota and, as governor, I will do all I can to ensure that ICE confines their activities to detaining and removing criminals from Connecticut, not harassing or scaring law-abiding citizens simply because of their race, nationality or ethnicity,” Stewart said.

Stewart said she does not identify specifically as either a moderate or a conservative Republican. She said she sees value in both perspectives and believes that balance allows candidates to connect with voters.

“There are areas where I am personally quite conservative, and there are other areas where I have broken with my party in the past,” Stewart said. “I think that’s healthy. I don’t believe there are ideologically perfect candidates, but you can have a candidate that perfectly fits their state. And that’s where I fit in.”

Stewart said she supports a pro-choice policy on vaccinations and opposes Lamont’s initiative to mandate vaccinations and require coverage from insurance companies.

“I don’t support Lamont and his party’s aggressive move to mandate vaccines, restrict individual decision-making and remove the religious exemption,” Stewart said.

Connecticut has leaned Democratic in statewide elections for many years. Stewart said she plans to win the support of independent and Democratic voters by being open and genuine.

“I wasn’t able to win six terms as a Republican in a deep blue city because I pandered or changed who I was week to week or month to month,” Stewart said. “I won because I was clear about where I wanted to take New Britain, what our city could be if we all pulled together, and what I found was that success for New Britain didn’t come with an R or a D next to it, it came by getting people to work together toward a common objective.”

Stewart said she believes this is the true definition of leadership and that elections can be won by challenging the status quo and working to make life easier for residents.

“My party hasn’t fielded a candidate for governor since 2006 who inspired us to believe that we can have — and that we deserve — something better,” Stewart said. “We can close the education gap between our cities and the suburbs, we can have infrastructure that is ready to support growth in both residential and commercial sectors, we can be a leader in affordable and clean energy, and we can have a state that is an outlier from our neighbors in the Northeast for a lower-cost but much higher quality of life for all our people.”

### *Erin continued from front*

they send me will include the elimination of the property tax on automobiles or they won’t have a budget at all,” Stewart said. “But the biggest change I want to see from my first term would be restoring the pride people feel in being from Connecticut. We have so much untapped potential and we need a governor who has the vision and the courage to leverage that potential and turn it into reality.”

## THIS WEEK'S CAMPUS EVENTS

### **United Caribbean Club**

Pie or Lie

Thursday, March 26, at 6:30 PM EST

Africana Center – Marcus White

### **Fashion & Design Club + 107.7 WFCS The Edge**

Devils Den @ 10 PM: Artist Showcase

Thursday, March 26, at 9 PM EST

Alumni Hall, Student Center

### **DanCentral**

Auditions Spring 2026

Sunday, March 29, at 9 AM EST

Dance Education Center, Room 001

### **Central Activities Network [CAN]**

BINGO!

Tuesday, March 31, at 6 PM EST

CAN Room 203

## Sasquatch? Found at Last?

By Ron Marq  
Design and Layout Editor

On the cool evening of March 8th as the Sunday Scaries set in, I remembered that I bought a ticket the night before to see an elusive creature in the New Haven area. I've only seen bits and pieces of the famous beast online, but I finally found my chance to see it in real time! Bigfoot was afoot! The tall creature had come to the Space at The Ballroom wielding... an alto saxophone?

Apparently, I discovered Saxsquatch; a jazzy musician and producer known for his giant Bigfoot costume and electrifying live performances combining jazz, pop, and dubstep. Dean Mitchell adopted the moniker and blazed a trail of viral internet popularity, even scoring a spot on Jimmy Fallon's musical TV game show 'That's My Jam'. Hamden was a stop on his Party Animal tour.

Saxsquatch takes memorable songs with brass horn hooks like "Careless Whisper" and "September" alongside pop cultural phenomena like "Epic Sax Man" and the Cantina theme from the Star Wars franchise with his brand of grimy genre-bending original production, but has original tracks involving the saxophone.

His performance also involved a laser light show, crowd work, and audience participation. I highly recommend seeing him live for the full experience. It's so much more fun that it looks on your phone.

10/10!



*Saxsquatch plays during his live set and laser show in Hamden, Ron Marq/The Recorder*

## Scream 7 Slices Into Theaters

By Nicolina Coronis  
Assistant Lifestyle Editor

The popular movie franchise "Scream" released its seventh installment Feb. 27, earning a Rotten Tomatoes score of 31% and an IMDb rating of 5.7/10. In the world of "Scream," there's one rule that never changes: The killer always comes back. "Scream 7" sharpens the franchise's iconic knife once more, delivering suspense, humor and enough twists to keep audiences guessing until the final reveal. This review will include spoilers ... you have been warned.

The first — and most iconic — "Scream" movie was released in 1996, and here we are today still watching the cycle continue.

The 2026 version invites back some of the same actors who were in the 1996 version, such as Courteney Cox, who plays Gale Weathers (my personal favorite character), Neve Campbell as Sidney Prescott, Matthew Lillard as Stu Macher and David Arquette as Dewey Riley. It even includes members of the cast from the 2022 reboot, Jasmin Savoy Brown and Mason Gooding as the Meeks twins.

The ability to keep that much of the original 1996 cast is what made this movie particularly fun to watch, and it's not something you see in many movie franchises.

This time around, the killer is not after Sidney Prescott but instead her daughter, Tatum Prescott, who is the same age her mom was when this whole thing first started. I appreciate the tribute to Sidney's best friend, Tatum, who, as some of you may remember, died gruesomely trying to squeeze through a garage door in the 1996 version. "Scream 7" does a phenomenal job reminding the audience of the significance of past characters.

Though the plot is the same — to be expected — Sidney gets a phone call. She doesn't want to play a game. Two masked killers end up trying to kill her daughter and some other not-so-lucky characters along the way. The fun in the movie comes from guessing which two characters you think the killers will be based on what you've learned from the previous movies.



*With the seventh installation marking two decades of Scream movies, the mask is just as iconic, Paramount Pictures*

The movie ends with the reveal of the killers, which is a bit underwhelming: two characters who seem too irrelevant to earn the title of Ghostface killers. What makes the reveal exciting is the recreation of the very first scene in the original, in which Sidney's daughter is tied to a chair by the pool.

This movie is a true tribute to the franchise, reminding audiences why "Scream" has remained a defining force in the horror genre for nearly three decades. Even when the formula feels familiar, the series continues to play with audience expectations, blending nostalgia with new characters in a way that keeps fans invested.

While the reveal of the killers may not be the most shocking in the franchise's history, the callbacks to the original film highlight the series' commitment to honoring its roots while still moving the story forward.

If there is one thing the "Scream" franchise has proven, it is that Ghostface never stays silent for long.

Whether "Scream 7" marks the final chapter or simply another pause before the phone rings again, the film leaves audiences with the same lingering question that has echoed since 1996: When the call comes, will anyone ever truly be ready to answer?

Movie Rating: 7.5/10

# A Virus Reminiscent of COVID-19 Has Some Preparing for the Worst

By Liam McCusker  
Staff Writer

The recent Nipah virus outbreak in India has sparked fear across the world as many are voicing concerns similar to the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

After living through lockdowns and isolation, and hearing about new cases increasing every day, people are taking this news in with a level of fear that likely would not have been experienced before the pandemic, especially given that there is currently no vaccine for the Nipah virus, much like the situation when the COVID-19 virus originated in China, according to the CDC.

The Nipah virus is a zoonotic virus, which means that it mainly spreads from animals to humans, while the risk of human-to-human transmission is low but possible, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

It was first identified in 1998 during an outbreak among pig farmers in Malaysia. Researchers later discovered that the main transmitters of the virus are fruit bats.

Symptoms the virus can cause in humans include fever, headache, cough and trouble breathing. There have also been instances of severe cases that have led to inflammation of the brain.

Scientists, including those at the WHO, consider the Nipah virus to be a threat, especially because there is no widely available treatment or approved vaccine for the virus when this article is being written.

However, this does not mean that another pandemic is coming, but officials say the outbreak should be taken seriously.

In addition to India, the Nipah virus has also recently been detected in Bangladesh with two fatal cases, according to Samaan Lateef, an Indian-based journalist.

In Bangladesh, some of the infections were linked to contaminated palm sap. In India, small infections prompted

a quick response, with more than 100 people quarantined, along with testing and contact tracing. Health agencies are continuing to monitor the Nipah virus because of its severity and its potential to spread rapidly.

Although it is important to remember that the Nipah virus outbreak has been well contained, it is not spreading across the world like COVID-19.

However, even with this difference, there is still a large amount of apprehension among the public. This is likely due to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic proved that outbreaks in certain countries do not always remain contained, and that prompt responses can determine the outcome of an outbreak.

Social media has proven to make fear even worse. Posts put out on platforms like Instagram and X, formerly Twitter, without any context, can quickly spread across the app within minutes and terrify viewers.

I understand this reaction because I grew up living it.

I was only 14 years old when the COVID-19 pandemic began, and like many students, I was unable to see my friends in person out of fear for my health and the health of those around me.

News of a new virus brings back horrific memories of isolation, uncertainty and not being able to do anything.

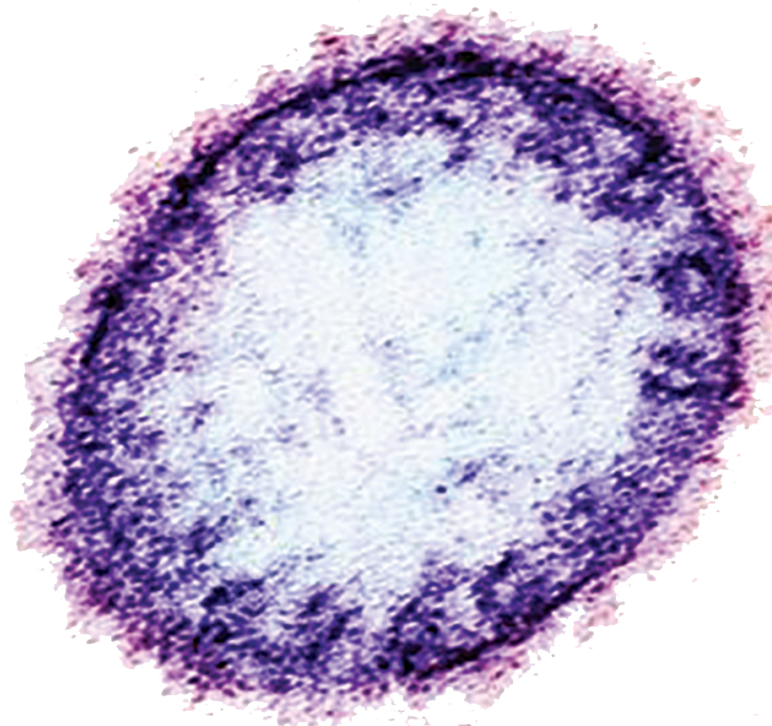
The Trump administration should take this situation seriously, especially since, during his first term in office, President Donald Trump downplayed the threat of the COVID-19 virus when it first began to spread in different countries.

By the time he declared it to be a national emergency, there were not enough tests, masks and personal protective equipment available.

His administration can atone for this by ensuring that the United States is as prepared as possible for another potential outbreak, although no cases have been detected in the country.

Ultimately, following the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has learned how quickly a virus can turn into a global health emergency. This explains why news about the Nipah virus has caused people to be concerned.

The Nipah virus outbreak is a reminder that diseases will never disappear, but if we remain vigilant, we can manage future outbreaks more effectively without repeating the mistakes of the early days of the last pandemic.



*Nipah Virus, Harvard Medical School; NIAID.*

*Bitch continued from front*

better career options, to Frank desperately wanting to keep his position in the aftermath of what he said, each of them has something to fight for. This causes them to butt heads with one another as the situation unfolds around them.

There is comedy in this play, as the situation is rather absurd, poking fun at how wildly fast things can spiral out of control on the internet. At the same time, it asks the audience to consider what that means. In a time when people's words and actions can be made publicly known almost immediately and responded to in turn, what should the reaction be and how big should it be?

Additionally, how long is it relevant? When the video initially surfaces, it draws massive criticism from certain feminist circles on Twitter. The situation online and in the Webster's Dictionary office changes slightly when a BuzzFeed article clarifies that Frank had not said "Joyce's a bitch" but "Joyce is my bitch." The internet's attention is then further diverted when J.K. Rowling tweets about there being a Hogwarts on the moon.

Internet trends and controversies can be fleeting as people jump to the next thing that catches their attention. We often do not think too much about the aftermath for those involved once it is deemed no longer relevant.

The play, in turn, shifts from the characters trying to deal with the massive backlash the dictionary is facing from people online to resolving the issue internally. Even with them out of the spotlight, they still feel they have a moral responsibility to update their definition of "bitch" to assuage any doubts about them as a language resource.

The ever-evolving meaning of language is another major element of the play. Several times, Gwen goes on a rant about how they have a duty as a dictionary to keep their definitions up to date because of the flexible nature of language. The initial definitions of "bitch" that the dictionary had on its website seemed sufficient at the time, but with people everywhere arguing about it, Joyce demands Gwen and Nick come up with more specific ones.

The way we view language, be it a playful, neutral tease in one context or a slur in another, is constantly in flux and important to be aware of. This is especially the case for an institution like Webster's Dictionary, but also for the average speaker of a language.

Another interesting aspect of the play is feminism in the workplace. Gwen is very frustrated with how reductive the initial definition of "bitch" is and how she feels she is not being compensated fairly for all her work. Joyce comes across as a very typical domineering and aggressive female boss to Gwen and Nick, though part of her behavior stems from the sexist environment she previously worked in at Webster's. Ellie is a vocal advocate for menstrual health and rights, who urges Gwen to leave her job due to the treatment she is receiving. This play gives audiences a lot to think about regarding how women are treated in the workplace, especially in white-collar jobs.

Each of the cast members gives performances that are fun and engaging. Every character has a great sense of pathos. You can sympathize with each person's viewpoint at times or disagree with them at others. They all feel like very real people stuck in a situation where there is no clear-cut, black-and-white answer.

Lozada, in particular, is as vivacious and fiery as Joyce. She commands attention in every scene she is in. Sweet gives Gwen a passionate performance with hard-hitting line deliveries that sell how stuck and frustrated Gwen feels in the situation. Lopez, as Frank, is interesting to watch in the limited time he is onstage, portraying a frantic, two-faced personality.

"Webster's Bitch" asks audiences to consider the power that language can have and how that power is affected by changing definitions. Sensibilities change as time passes, and we must keep up with them. The internet has certainly exacerbated things in recent years, but it is an issue we continue to face every time we speak.

Black Box Theatre's next performance will be "In Pieces" from April 30 to May 3.

## Tangled Roots: Echoes of Herstory in Environmental Justice: Bridging Social Justice Issues and Environmental Concerns Through Creative Expressions



*The 436 Project is an abstract representation of the slave auction,*  
Nicolina Coronis/The Recorder

**By Nicolina Coronis**  
*Assistant Lifestyle Editor*

Art, activism and environmental storytelling come together at CCSU this spring with “Tangled Roots: Echoes of Herstory in Environmental Justice,” a new exhibition at the Chen Art Gallery curated by assistant professor of art education Sonja Czekalski. The exhibit will be open through April 10.

The exhibit features the work of 16 interdisciplinary artists whose pieces explore personal narratives, environmental justice and the relationship between gender, nature and the climate crisis.

On Thursday, March 5, the gallery held a meet-and-greet with four of the artists, Connie Teed, Elvira Clayton, Annabel Manning and Sonja Czekalski, where they had the opportunity to share the meaning behind their art as well as their hopes for the exhibit.

“There are a couple of other themes in the show ... it was really important to me that this exhibition showed the duality between hope and grief, between the earth and the spirit,” said Czekalski.

Artist Manning discussed her new artworks, which explored the capabilities of digital art in the gallery. “They sort of developed out of COVID, spending a lot of time on the beach developing a relationship with the beach,” said Manning. “So, these are inspired by my walks on the beach with all of this happening.”

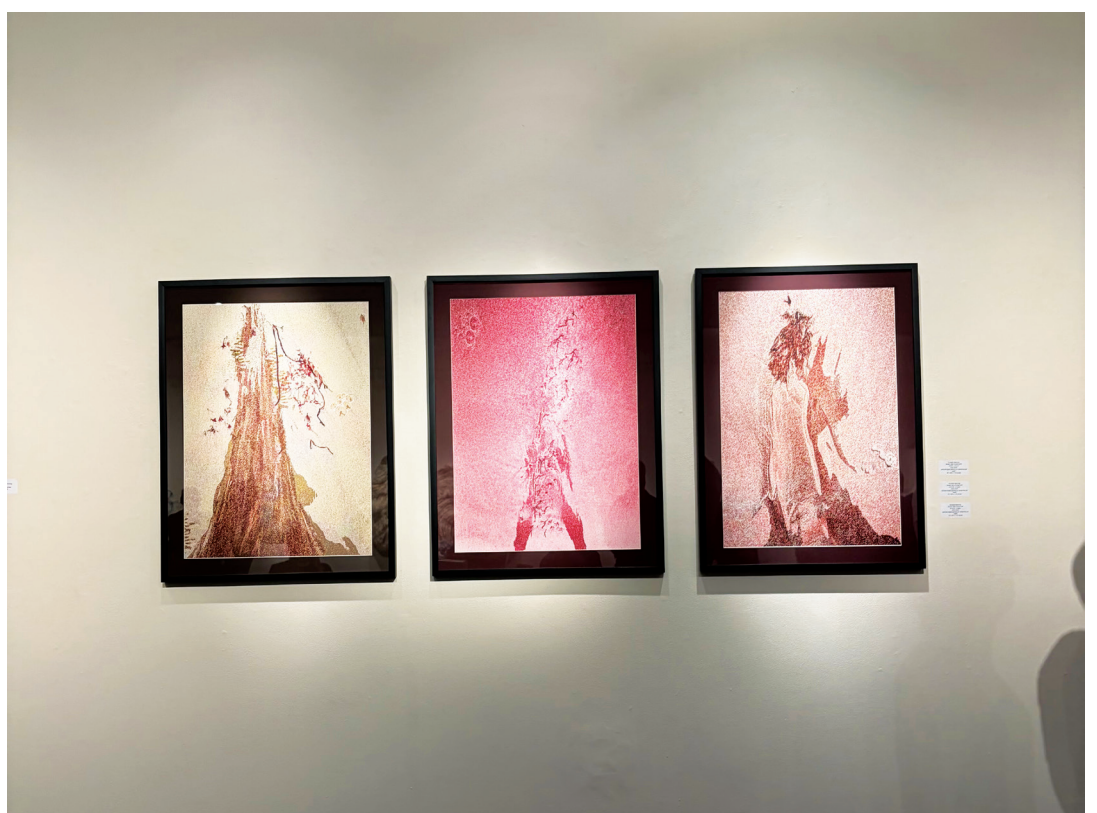
Artists were encouraged to explore different mediums of art in order to express themselves fully. Artist Teed took a new approach in the gallery by using video as a way to show art and express gender from a nuanced perspective.

“Thinking about ways that we relate to the natural world, but specifically through a lens of queer theory ... interrupting ideas of hierarchies and thinking about the way the pure body can be in the space of nature in new ways,” said Teed.

Artist Clayton used unique types of materials to capture a story that had been in the works for dozens of hours, utilizing numerous resources. This particular project not only had a deep meaning, but it also had a long history and was finally revealed at the gallery.

“Part of an ongoing project that I started in 2021, this work is called the 436 Project, and it is informed by an 1859 slave auction catalog,” said Clayton. “As I am creating this work, I am thinking about the relationship that these people had with the land and the natural world.”

The gallery also featured works addressing the health struggles women face today. “Tangled Roots: Echoes of Herstory in Environmental Justice” will remain on display in the Chen Art Gallery through April 10, inviting students and visitors to explore the intersection of art, nature and environmental justice.



*Manning's digital work was inspired by the beach,*  
Nicolina Coronis/The Recorder

# Way-Too-Early MLB Playoff Predictions

By Noah Gavin  
Staff Writer

With the conclusion of Opening Day of the 2026 Major League Baseball where the New York Yankees took on the San Francisco Giants on March 25, the other 28 teams will join the action in their own series over the next two days, on March 26 and 27.

This season starts following the Los Angeles Dodgers winning their second straight World Series in 2025 and a busy offseason that saw many teams have dramatic contract extension negotiations, making big trades, losing longtime players and making big spends to fill gaps that needed to be addressed. With a fresh season ahead, the slate is clean for all 30 teams, and all fans can look forward to their young players having breakout seasons and becoming the next superstar, their team emerging as this year's surprise underdog, or their team competing for a World Series win this October.

During the regular season, all 30 teams in the MLB fight for their division crown, and it seems like a good place to start. Here are my predictions for the division winners.

## NL West – Los Angeles Dodgers

It only makes sense to start with the reigning back-to-back champion Dodgers. They begin this season on top of both MLB and ESPN's preseason power rankings, and for good reason. What more needs to be said about them besides pitcher-hitter phenom and 2025 NL MVP winner Shohei Ohtani or former MVP winners Mookie Betts and Freddie Freeman? How about we talk about the fact that they added both the best position player, Kyle Tucker and the best reliever, Edwin Diaz, this past free agency had to offer? If the Dodgers' league-

leading payroll can stay healthy, they could easily win 100 games this year. Many players on their star-studded roster are getting older and need to stay on the field to lead L.A. to a third year of league domination.

## NL Central – Chicago Cubs

This Cubs team is poised to have a clear path to claim their first NL Central title since 2020. The Cubs were able to sign elite veteran hitter and defender Alex Bregman to a deal and have young players that can bud into superstars with time and consistency, like Pete Crow-Armstrong (who had a .634 OPS in the second half of last season). The Cubs are also led by veteran manager Craig Counsell, who has multiple fifth-place-or-higher finishes for NL Manager of the Year over his career. If Counsell can lean on his veterans in the right way and get his young talent developed, the ceiling could be higher for the Cubs than some think.

## NL East – Philadelphia Phillies

The Phillies roster looks just as good as ever. They secured a Kyle Schwarber return this past offseason, who belted an impressive 56 home runs for the Phillies last season and had the fifth-best OPS in baseball (.928). They still have the elite hitting of Bryce Harper, whose OPS ranked 22nd in 2025, and multi-time Gold Glove winners Trea Turner and J.T. Realmuto. The question for them remains what it has been for the past few seasons: Will Philly's offense be around in October? Over the last two postseasons their offense has hit just .199 and lost in the NLDS both years.

## AL West – Seattle Mariners

The Mariners have seriously turned things around in Seattle. They took the division crown from the dominant Houston Astros, who won the division four times in a row from 2021-24, and their roster can absolutely pull it off again.



Opening day takes place this week, MLB.com

While Cal Raleigh took the MLB home run crown last season and Julio Rodriguez continued to establish himself as a superstar, the Mariners' starting rotation can be the real storyline for them this season if the members can stay healthy. Logan Gilbert is young and has amazing command but missed significant time last season. Bryan Woo can go long distances in games, ranking 12th in innings pitched last season with 186.2, and has a low walk profile but also missed time last season. Bryce Miller, who had an outstanding 2024, will already be starting this season on the injured list. If this rotation can stay healthy and carve out more of those deep outings, they will be a serious threat in the American League.

## AL Central – Detroit Tigers

As 2025 Cy Young winner Tarik Skubal's free agency looms on the horizon, the Tigers look to build on their 87-win season from last year. As long as they still have Skubal, as well as former first-round pick Casey Mize, along with veteran arms Justin Verlander and Jack Flaherty, the Tigers' pitching staff looks like they'll have a great year. The need for them comes in their hitting. Kerry Carpenter and Spencer Torkelson need to find their

consistency at the plate. Veterans Javier Báez and the re-signed Gleyber Torres must produce. The Tigers are adding shortstop and No. 2-ranked overall MLB prospect Kevin McGonigle, who they hope will hit the ground running for the club.

## AL East – New York Yankees

With a lot of eyes on 2023 Cy Young Award winner Gerrit Cole's return this season, the Yankees look to be the best of some elite talent in the AL East this upcoming season. This roster is almost identical to the club that just won 94 games last season, and there is not much doubt that they can do it again, especially with the anticipated June return of Cole. If Cole quickly finds his stride back, and 2025 AL MVP Aaron Judge, who could reach 400 career home runs this year, hits like the beast he was the last two seasons, they will be able to reclaim the AL East crown from the Blue Jays.

Baseball is known for its exciting Wild Card series in the playoffs, and that means needing some exciting Wild Card teams. Here are four candidates who can make some noise this season and be a threat for the division winners.

## NL Wild Card #1 – New York

## Mets

It's not a far stretch to say that the Mets overhauled their roster this offseason. They added strong newcomers in Bo Bichette and Jorge Polanco to hit behind the elite Francisco Lindor and Juan Soto and bolstered their pitching staff with a trade for the talent of Freddy Peralta, who ranked seventh in ERA in all of baseball last season (2.86). These additions have cleared the road for another playoff berth in September.

## NL Wild Card #2 – Milwaukee Brewers

The Brewers could make a run at the Cubs for the division but have the strength to make the playoffs regardless. Their rotation has the talents of Jacob Misiorowski, who is now going into his sophomore season. Misiorowski captivated baseball fans last season with a fastball that averaged over 99 mph. The Brewers also have great young defensive players in Sal Frelick, who reads plays in the outfield with excellent precision, and Jackson Chourio, who has incredible athleticism and can also produce at the plate at the right times. With Christian Yelich taking an encouraging step forward last year, finishing



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with a .795 OPS that ranked 20th in the National League, the Brewers' offense needs to find their stride and hit more home runs in crucial moments to compete in October.

AL Wild Card #1 – Boston Red Sox

Boston clinched its first playoff appearance since 2021 last September, and the demanding fanbase is eager for more October baseball at Fenway Park. With the loss of multiple-time World Series champion and veteran third baseman Alex Bregman, the Red Sox allotted the money round out their rotation with the signing of Ranger Suarez, and he joins Garrett Crochet, who went on an AL Cy Young push last year, and veteran Sonny Gray, who was acquired in a trade. Closing the gaps in rotation was very much needed for the Red Sox, but they still have a lineup full of young players that they hope will break out, including a highly anticipated return from injury for former fourth overall draft pick Marcelo Mayer and up-and-coming star Roman Anthony.

AL Wild Card #2 – Toronto Blue Jays

The AL East will be a tough fight full of both young stars and veteran players across the board, and as such, it is not far-fetched to believe that we could see two of the three American League wild cards come from the East. The Blue Jays, of course, are coming off their franchise's first World Series appearance since 1993, a series that they came within one game of winning over the juggernaut Dodgers. Toronto will be missing a few pieces, with Bo Bichette leaving in free agency and Shane Bieber, who had an excellent regular and postseason performance for the Blue Jays last year, not expected to be ready for opening day with an uncertain timeline for return. However, after grabbing a few headlines from dramatic negotiations, the Jays were able to retain elite talent Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and can still brag about a strong rotation with Kevin Gausman, the young Trey Yesavage and newly signed Dylan Cease. This is still a team that took the Dodgers to seven games in last year's World Series; do not count them out.

Thirty teams will face each other over the course of the next three days, MLB.com

**Men's & Women's Track**

MARCH 26-28 @ NC State Raleigh Relays  
MARCH 27 @ Jaylin Rainford Invitational

**Softball**

MARCH 28 vs. Mercyhurst at 1 PM  
MARCH 28 vs. Mercyhurst at 3 PM  
MARCH 29 vs. Mercyhurst at 12 PM  
APRIL 1 @ UAlbany at 2 PM  
APRIL 1 @ UAlbany at 4 PM

**Baseball**

MARCH 27 @ Stonehill at 3 PM  
MARCH 28 @ Stonehill at 1 PM  
MARCH 29 @ Stonehill at 12 PM  
MARCH 31 vs. Sacred Heart at 3 PM

**Women's Lacrosse**

MARCH 28 @ Delaware State at 5 PM

CCSU's ATHLETIC SCHEDULE

