NEWS

"I'm gonna make him an offer he can't refuse."
DON CORLEONE, **THE GODFATHER**

Hundreds protest against ICE after Minneapolis shooting

BY ADELE HAEG
STAFF REPORTER

When asked why they came to the New Haven Green on Sunday afternoon, many protesters did not know where to start.

"There are so many things that bring me here today," protester Tisa Wenger said, including "the killing of Renee Nicole Good in Minneapolis, but overall, the climate of terror that ICE is perpetrating in cities across the country." She held a sign that read, "Trump is a criminal."

Wenger was one of roughly 500 protesters who rallied on the Green to protest the Trump administration's deportation campaign and demand that Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers leave New Haven.

The event was organized by members of the Connecticut chapter of the national 50501 protest movement and local Latino advocacy group Unidad Latina en Acción, as part of a nationwide "ICE Out for Good Weekend of Action."

The groups mobilized in response to an ICE agent's fatal shooting of Renee Good, a 37-year-old legal observer, in Minneapolis last Wednesday. Kristi Noem, the secretary of homeland security, defended the shooting as an act of self defense, claiming that Good committed "an act of domestic terrorism," which Minnesota officials disputed.

"All of a sudden, people are really, really mad," said Alison Greenlaw, the Hartford County 50501 organizer. "People need to use that energy to get involved," she added.

Another 50501 representative, Gabriel Gonatice, said that the group usually requires a month to prepare for large-scale events, but organizers planned Sunday's protest within a week.

"This was a project, took some organizing, but it was made easier by the fact that so many people were inspired," he said.

Speakers led chants, including "not one more," and "Impeach, convict, remove." One read the names of every person killed by an ICE agent since the start of 2025. The last name he read was Renee Nicole Good's.

Sunday's protest was preceded by a smaller rally outside of the New Haven courthouse on Thursday in reaction to three ICE arrests that occurred downtown that same day, according to the Connecticut Mirror.

New Haven Police Department officers were informed of the arrests by ICE but were not involved in them, according to NHPD spokesperson Christian Bruckhart. ICE did not immediately respond to the News' request for comment.

Local activists have also protested at Tweed New Haven Airport since Avelo Airlines began operating deportation flights last April, in part due to poor performance at Tweed. On Wednesday, however, Avelo announced that it would end its deportation flights.

Compared to past months of anti-Trump advocacy, engagement with this week's protests has been very high, according to Katherine Hinds, the leader of the Connecticut Visibility Brigade. Hinds said that Avelo's decision to halt deportation flights has shown people that protesting is effective.

During protests on highway overpasses, the group uses a clicker to tally how many honks, waves or other signs of acknowledgement they receive from passersby. Typically, the group gets about 500 "signs of engagement" per protest, Hinds estimated.

Yesterday, Hinds said, about 2,500 people honked, waved or responded in other ways to their sign reading "ICE murders woman in MN." Hinds believes that increased mobilization against ICE on the local level shows that "people are realizing that nobody is safe."

The protests in Connecticut have been peaceful, several organizers said.

"You get the minor MAGA agitators who show up and swear at you," Greenlaw said, but "nothing threatening."

Eli Sabin '22 LAW '26, who recently stepped down from his post as downtown's Ward 7 alder, urged New Haven officials to ensure immigrants' safety as ICE remains in the city. Many protesters said they had previously heard reports of ICE agents in the area, but none interviewed by the News said they had seen an ICE agent.

More than 2,000 ICE agents were present in the Twin Cities when Good was killed, as part of the Department of Homeland Security's "Operation Metro Surge" in Minnesota.

Bruckhart wrote in a text to the News that he did not know how many ICE agents were in the city, but that "they've been here for years."

So far this year, three people have been shot observing immigration raids, including Good and two people in Portland on Jan. 8.

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WILLIAM QIAN / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
In response to a federal agent's killing of Renee Good in Minneapolis, local activist groups organized a rally calling for ICE officers to leave New Haven.

Avelo stops ICE deportation flights after months of controversy

BY ERIC SONG
STAFF REPORTER

After months of protests, Avelo Airlines will end its deportation flights for the Department of Homeland Security.

Avelo CEO Andrew Levy announced the end of Avelo's work with the department in an email sent to employees last Tuesday and obtained by the News. The announcement coincided with the planned closure of three bases, including Avelo's hub for deportation charter flights at the Mesa Gateway Airport in Phoenix, Arizona. These changes will come into effect after Jan. 26.

"The program provided short-term benefits but ultimately did not deliver enough consistent and predictable revenue to overcome its operational complexity and costs," Levy wrote.

The company's decision to end its collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security comes nine months after its original decision to begin deportation operations, announced in an internal email last April. Avelo began operations for Immigration and Customs Enforcement the following month and has run hundreds of flights for ICE amid President Donald Trump's crackdown on undocumented immigrants, leading to public backlash and calls for a boycott.

In his email last Tuesday, Levy characterized the decision to begin deportation operations as a result of a "tough competitive environment in HVN," referring to Avelo's operations from Tweed New Haven Airport. According to Levy, the program "promised more financial stability but placed us in the center of a political controversy."

An Avelo spokesperson did not respond to the News' request for comment.

Many organizations working in New Haven, including the New Haven Immigrants Coalition, Unidad Latina en Acción, Connecticut Students for a Dream and the Coalition to Stop Avelo formed last spring, organized frequent protests outside of Tweed to protest the contract.

"Doing ICE's dirty work doesn't pay," Anne Watkins, an organizer for the New Haven Immigrants Coalition, wrote in a statement to the News. "Avelo Airlines has finally caved and canceled its contract with ICE after months of pressure from New Haven Immigrants Coalition and allies around the country."

On Thursday, immigration advocacy organizations held a press conference at the New Haven County Courthouse, taking credit for the airline's decision.

"We organized, we protested, we boycotted, and we said we would not stop until Avelo stopped being complicit in human suffering," Kica Matos, the president of the National Immigration Law Center, said. The group also objected to the fatal shooting of Renee Good on Wednesday morning by an ICE officer in Minneapolis.

Avelo plans to refocus its passenger operations around four airports: Tweed New Haven Airport, Wilmington Airport in Delaware, Concord-Padgett Regional Airport in North Carolina, and Lakeland Linder International Airport in Florida.

Levy also announced a round of layoffs due to the changes, resulting in a "smaller fleet and network."

CSI Aviation, the corporation contracting Avelo for ICE removal operations, made $660.6 million from federal contracts in fiscal year 2025.

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ZOE BERG
The decision was announced in an email sent Tuesday to Avelo crewmembers. Avelo plans to lay off employees in the wake of further reductions in operations.

Union leaders, city officials tout public school teacher contract

BY SABRINA THALER AND LEO NYBERG
STAFF REPORTERS

City officials and leaders of the New Haven teachers' union announced a new contract at a Monday press conference, and the Board of Education voted unanimously to approve the contract on Monday night.

The contract, which includes a 13.53 percent pay increase for teachers over three years and increased healthcare benefits, will cost the city around $20 million over the full three years, New Haven Public Schools superintendent Madeline Negrón said at the press conference. The teachers' union held rallies during the negotiations calling for higher pay, better health coverage and a provision that would formally bar Immigration and Customs Enforcement from entering schools.

"Everyone here wants to pay our teachers even more and wants to provide even better benefits to our teachers," Mayor Jusin Elicker said. "However, we're in the condition of real financial constraints."

As district leaders craft their projected budget for the 2026-27 school year, they will factor in the necessary costs to fund the salary increase, New Haven Public Schools spokesperson Justin Harmon said in an interview.

Whether NHPS can support the salary increase, Harmon explained, depends on support from beyond the school district. The city's Board of Education and the Board of Alders are responsible for approving the district's budget, and the Board of Alders can set aside funding in its own annual budget to support NHPS.

"We don't have those dollars yet," Harmon said. "That's going to come through the process of presenting to the city and presenting to the state and trying to get other people to back us."

At the press conference, Elicker said the state government has not done its part to fund teachers. He said the foundation amount — the state's contribution for each student's education through its Education Cost Sharing, or ECS, formula — has remained stagnant since 2013. He called on the state to raise the foundation amount and index it to inflation.

"We are doing our part. We are making the hard decisions," Elicker said. "We need the state to do more so that we can provide our teachers with even better benefits and better salaries."

Negrón doubled down on the call to action. At Monday evening's board meeting, she committed to "advocating aggressively" for increased funding at the state level, and said district leaders would collaborate with New Haven's delegation in the state legislature.

Connecticut's biennial budget for 2026 and 2027 included boosts in funding to early childhood and special education across the state, while continuing $11,525-per-student payments for K-12 schools through the ECS formula.

Leslie Blatteau '97 GRD '07, the president of the New Haven Federation of Teachers, said the union has worked to ensure that "respect isn't just a slogan or a talking point, but something tangible that our members will actually see in their take home pay in the next three years."

Blatteau said this year's bargaining team was the largest the teacher's union had assembled for negotiations. She said the team distributed updates about negotiations to every member of the union.

"This is a fair contract that will benefit all 1,175 members in the years that come," Jenny Graves, the vice president of the New Haven Federation Teachers, said at the press conference. "We also know there is a lot of work to be done. Our students shouldn't have to learn in buildings with no heat and leaky ceilings. Our educators shouldn't have to dig into their own pockets to fund their classrooms."

Graves said the union and city agreed to table a review of student enrollment and class sizes until March 2028.

While Blatteau said the teachers did not get the entire healthcare package they wanted, and Elicker said the teachers union "drove a hard bargain," both sides celebrated the deal.

Alder Sal Punzo, a longtime teacher and administrator in New Haven, said the deal was a success for both sides.

"The one thing you try not to do is to go to arbitration," Punzo said.

Graves highlighted the wealth gap between Yale and New Haven as she laid out potential goals for future negotiations. She suggested that the University's increased support could help improve working conditions for teachers.

"We know there is a $45 billion endowment that sits in the heart of the city, owned by an institution that continues to take over more and more property in our city, and the time is now for them to pay what they owe so that everyone in our city can thrive," Graves said.

Through a six-year plan announced in 2021, Yale increased its annual voluntary contribution to New Haven's budget in lieu of property taxes, amounting to over $135 million for the city. The University also sponsors a number of programs with local public schools, including the new Yale Teaching Fellowship and its Yale Pathways programs for local middle and high school students.

The contract will go to the New Haven Board of Alders for final approval and is set to take effect July 1.

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The new contract for the city's public school teachers gives teachers a raise and better healthcare coverage. Mayor Elicker said the teachers' union "drove a hard bargain."