NEWS

"Cause once upon a time you were my everything, it's clear to see that time hasn't changed a thing" **NEVER FORGET YOU** ZARA LARSON

In New Haven and Hartford, old politicians face young challengers

BY ELIJAH HUREWITZ-RAVITCH
STAFF REPORTER

Gov. Ned Lamont SOM '80 said he gets an email in his inbox "every day" that reads something like this: "Dear Ned, aren't you sick of Ned Lamont? Give money so I can get this guy out of office."

As he makes his pitch for a third term, Lamont, 72, is facing federal headwinds—and a dark horse Democratic challenger in state Rep. Josh Elliott, 42, of Hamden, who is responsible for the emails. Elliott, who was first elected to the state House in 2016, launched his campaign for governor over the summer. Across Connecticut, as Democratic incumbents face upstart challengers born decades before them, "generational change" is the phrase on the street.

Rep. John Larson, who is 77 and has represented Connecticut's first congressional district since 1999, is fielding challenges from Luke Bronin '01 LAW '06, the 46-year-old former mayor of Hartford; Jillian Gilchrest, a 44-year-old state representative; and Ruth Fortune, a member of the Hartford school board in her late 30s. In the first quarter of 2026, Bronin outraised Larson, with $2.2 million to the incumbent's $1.9 million.

Meanwhile, Rep. Rosa DeLauro, who is 83 and has represented New Haven and its suburbs in Congress since 1991, has a challenger of her own: Andrew Rice, 38. Another challenger, Damjan DeNoble, ran with an explicit pitch for generational change but suspended his campaign in February.

And in western New Haven, 26-year-old Eli Sabin '22 LAW '26 and 31-year-old Justin Farmer are each hoping to replace 77-year-old-state Rep. Patricia Dillon SPH '98, who was first elected to her position in 1984.

But few of the younger Democratic candidates are embracing the generational change narrative.

"Certainly the idea of generational change can be part of the overall matrix of somebody making a decision about who they want to be in office," Elliott said in a February phone interview, "but for it to be the end-all be-all? Definitely not."

The state lawmaker said he does not dwell on age, though he occasionally discusses it "for people that care."

Farmer, for his part, does see "generational change" underway—"not so much in terms of age, but in terms of ideology and thinking."

A member of the Democratic Socialists of America and former member of the Hamden Legislative Council, Farmer is running on a progressive agenda centered on increasing state funding for public schools and a reimagined approach to public safety.

Facing both a baby boomer and a Generation Z politician, Farmer said in a January phone interview that he doesn't think much about age.

Of course, youth may not be a compelling campaign message.

"'Vote against him because he's older' is not a great argument," Lamont said.

Rice, a former Democratic Socialists of America member, is also reluctant to lean into age-related messaging.

"With age comes experience and wisdom and knowledge," he said in a phone interview on Monday. "As far as it being centered on just a generational change, I worry that that would also make people feel left behind, because you can be a Boomer, an X-er, a millennial or a Z-er and still be struggling."

But Rice is eager to see the "people who will be inheriting the future" have greater say in how that future is determined.

"It's unfair for people who statistically will not live to see the repercussions of their decisions be the ones making those decisions," he said, but added that he is "not the type of person that's going to go around and be like, 'Okay, boomer.'"

In the governor's race, meanwhile, Elliott's campaign messaging is focused on economic populism. He said that the generation before his "has really done incredibly damaging things to our economy." As he tells it, a gutting of the middle class has led to a "de facto monarchical structure where people are hiding their money in trusts from generation to generation."

The most recent poll showed Elliott with 13 percent of the primary vote to Lamont's 57 percent.

Meanwhile in New Haven, Sabin notched a small victory earlier this week, scoring the endorsement of a Westville Democratic ward committee. That group's vote is nonbinding and largely a formality, but the result seemed to come as a surprise to local Democratic leaders.

"Most of the support that we're earning is about people feeling like the challenges that we are dealing with in the city and as a state and as a country right now require new, bold leadership that can get out in our neighborhoods, bring people together and is focused on the issues that matter most to our residents," Sabin said in a phone interview on Monday. "It's about the issues."

The ward committee's endorsement went against the wishes of its cochair, who will help decide whom New Haven's Democratic committee will officially endorse, and Vincent Mauro, Jr., that group's chair. Both are supporting Dillon. Mauro wrote in a text message Monday that he has "never not endorsed an incumbent."

Dillon, who last faced a primary challenger in 2010, noted earlier this year that local news media coverage has focused on the question of age in her three-way race.

For the veteran state legislator, "experience matters."

"You have to know what you're doing," she said in a phone interview in January. "And when you look at a problem, it doesn't always have a little label on it that tells you who is going to be affected by it. Sometimes it does, but generally speaking, you have to be able to know what you're looking at, how it affects your district, who to go to to work together to fix it, and experience brings you that."



ELIJAH HUREWITZ-RAVITCH / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
A wave of young challengers is taking on some of the state's oldest incumbents, including Gov. Ned Lamont, Rep. Rosa DeLauro and state Rep. Patricia Dillon.

Some are making a similar argument for DeLauro, the longest-serving member of Connecticut's congressional delegation and a prominent voice in the Democratic caucus.

Leaving a Young Democrats of Connecticut event in January, 77-year-old Senate President Pro Tempore Martin Looney, who represents part of New Haven in the state senate, made the case for his longtime political ally.

"Rosa is still very vigorous, still very active," Looney said.

Given Congress' seniority-based structure, a freshman replacement for DeLauro will struggle to get much done, Looney added, "no matter how talented that person may be individually."

If Democrats take back the House of Representatives in this fall's midterm elections, DeLauro, the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, will become one of the most powerful people in Washington.

Lamont—who himself took on an incumbent several years his senior when he challenged Sen. Joe Lieberman '64 LAW '67 in 2006 — agreed that policy matters far more than age.

"I think it's time for new ideas," he said in a February phone interview. "I see a lot of old ideas coming from young people, and I see a lot of bold ideas from a guy named Bernie Sanders, who's older than dirt."

In Connecticut, with its lineup of older politicians, generational change may simply be inevitable, whether in 2026 or 2028.

"Anybody who challenges them is going to be younger," Elliott said. "So I don't know how much of a story there is. I just know there's an incredible amount of frustration."

That is just the feeling Lamont and his fellow incumbents are trying to address as they develop the latest of many election pitches.

"I want to be a state that allows young people to have the resources and the backing to start their own business and grow some opportunity and wealth in their own communities," he said. "I want a state that thinks young, and maybe it's ironic that a 72-year-old is the guy running on that."

The Connecticut Democratic primary will be held on Aug. 11.

Contact
ELIJAH HUREWITZ-RAVITCH *at*
elijah.hurewitz-ravitch@yale.edu

Effort to dedicate corner to Local 34 founding member moves forward

BY BRETT PENK
STAFF REPORTER

New Haveners and Yale student leaders have collected about 320 signatures on a petition to name the corner of College and Elm streets in honor of a man who helped establish Yale's first employee union.

The petition required 250 signatures to qualify for review by the president of the Board of Alders, Tyisha Walker-Myers, who may assign it to one of the board's committees, according to Ward 1 Alder Elias Theodore '27. Theodore said he recently submitted the petition to City Hall for review.

Under the proposal, the corner would be dedicated to John Wilhelm '67, who helped found Local 34, which represents the University's clerical and technical workers. Last year, the union celebrated the 40-year anniversary of its first contract with Yale—a milestone that motivated locals Aldo Cupo and Cheryl Bergman to spearhead the renaming efforts, they said.

Cupo and Bergman were also founding members of Local 34 and are now members of the Yale Unions Retirees Association. The pair said in a phone interview that they wanted to honor Wilhelm's contributions to the union.

According to Cupo and Bergman, Wilhelm led Local 34's first contract negotiation processes and pushed for pay equity for male and female workers.

Later in his career, Wilhelm was elected president of UNITE HERE, a national labor union that encompasses Yale's Locals 33, 34 and 35. He retired in 2012.

Cupo and Bergman started the renaming process by reaching out to Theodore, whose district includes the corner where College Street meets Elm Street.

"I was really excited when Aldo and Cheryl reached out," Theodore said. "We all recognize this as an opportunity to help educate on this history."

In order to gain city approval to rename the street corner, Cupo and Bergman had to collect 250 signatures, at least 166 of which were mandated to come from downtown residents. Theodore assisted them by partnering with the undergraduate organizations Students Unite Now and the Yale College Democrats to collect signatures from Yalies, many of whom live in the downtown area.

Audrey Landeros '27, a community engagement fellow for the Yale College Democrats, described Yale students as being "incredibly positive, super enthusiastic to sign and give someone that honor" of having a street corner named for them.

Cupo and Bergman said that the corner of College and Elm is symbolic for the union. For the past four decades, they said, Local 34 members have met at First and Summerfield United Methodist Church, which is nested in the northeast corner of the intersection. The pair described the street corner as the dividing line between New Haven and Yale's campus.

Wilhelm said in a phone interview that he was humbled to learn of the renaming effort.

"If you had asked me if that was okay, I would have said no because I don't like glorifying myself," he said of the renaming effort.

If approved, the sign would also commemorate the work of all Yale union members in the past 40 years, Wilhelm said.

"I'm humbled and I'm proud of the work that I and others did when I was there," he said. "I am also really proud of the amazing progress that the people who have led the union of Yale have made since I left."

Now that the petition has surpassed the 250-signature threshold, Theodore said, several steps are in order.

If Walker-Myers assigns the renaming effort to a committee, it would then hold a public hearing in which locals can weigh in on the petition, he said.

"Hopefully, we can get this done in the next four to six months, so we're hoping for a ceremony at the corner of College and Elm Street in the fall, and we would love to have many people there," Theodore said.

Wilhelm said he would attend the ceremony.

Local 34 signed its first contract with Yale in 1985.

Contact
BRETT PENK *at*
brett.penk@yale.edu.

Neighborhood's Democrats back Sabin's bid to replace state legislator


LILY BELLE POLING / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
The Ward 26 Democratic committee's members voted to support former Alder Eli Sabin '22 LAW '26 in his campaign to replace Rep. Patricia Dillon SPH '98.

BY ELIJAH HUREWITZ-RAVITCH
STAFF REPORTER

In a surprising shake up, the Ward 26 Democratic committee voted to back Eli Sabin '22 LAW '26 in his primary challenge to a 21-term incumbent state representative.

Sabin, who is set to graduate Yale Law School this spring, launched his campaign to unseat state Rep. Patricia Dillon SPH '98 in January. Dillon's district covers much of western New Haven and includes all of Westville's Ward 26.

Sabin served on the Board of Alders for six years and announced his resignation just minutes before he was set to be sworn in to a third term as Ward 7 alder. Now, along with Justin Farmer, a progressive organizer and former Hamden town legislator, he is taking on an influential legislator who was first elected to the body in 1984.

Twenty-one members of the ward committee voted to endorse Sabin, nine Dillon, and one Farmer, according to the New Haven Independent. The vote is nonbinding and serves as a recommendation to the ward's Democratic Town Committee co-chairs. They will decide whom to endorse at a larger New Haven Democratic Town Committee meeting next month.

Laura Cahn, one of the Ward 26 co-chairs, told the News she is backing Dillon — as is Vincent Mauro, Jr., the chair of the Democratic Town Committee, who added in a text message that he has "never not endorsed an incumbent." In a brief phone interview Monday, Cahn said she "had no idea" the Ward 26 committee would support Sabin.

Dillon called the vote a "straw poll" in a phone interview Monday. "I didn't understand it to be an endorsement."

"Is it dispositive? No. But of course I respect that people came out. I'm sorry that some of the people who didn't come were not aware that so much emphasis would be placed on it," Dillon added.

Sabin, for his part, said he was "honored" to have the support of the committee's majority.

"It just reflects what I've been hearing from the hundreds of people I've talked to while knocking doors so far during the campaign and at the many meet and greets that we've had so far," he said in a phone interview Monday. "There's just a lot of energy and excitement in the district about new leadership and new fight."

In the first quarter of 2026, Dillon raised around $9,585, Sabin $8,585 and Farmer $7,595, according to campaign finance disclosures.

Contact
ELIJAH HUREWITZ-RAVITCH *at*
elijah.hurewitz-ravitch@yale.edu.