FROM THE FRONT

"The newspaper is a greater treasure to the people than uncounted millions of gold."
HENRY WARD BEECHER AMERICAN CLERGYMAN

First midterm with early voting

EARLY FROM PAGE 1

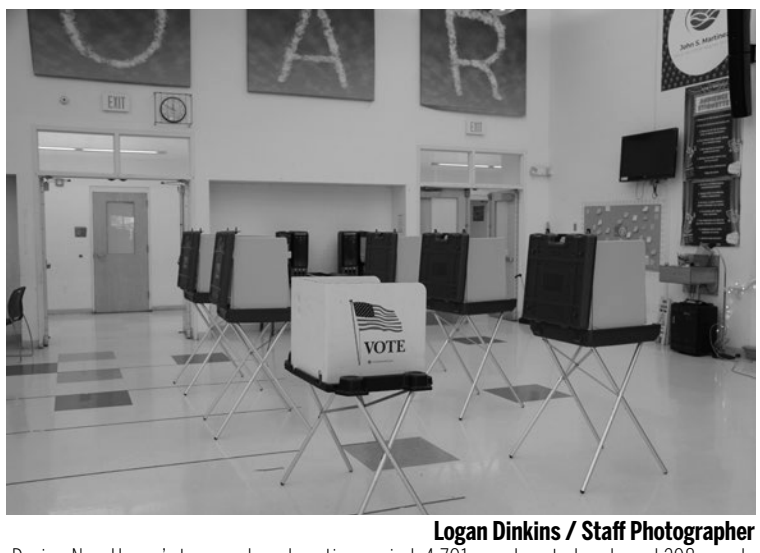
This year's election marks the third election and first midterm race since the state adopted early voting in 2023. Last year, when the mayor and alders were on the ballot, 1,560 New Haveners voted early and 77 voted through same-day registration. During the 2024 presidential election, 8,024 people voted early and 1,012 voted through same-day registration.

While regular early voting is for registered voters, the same-day registration figure denotes voters who had not registered to vote or who switched their registration to New Haven.

This year, Democratic Gov. Ned Lamont SOM '80 is seeking a third term against Republican state senator Ryan Fazio. A University of New Hampshire poll conducted between Oct. 27 and 31 showed Lamont leading by 13 points. Also on the ballot, Democratic Rep. Rosa DeLauro is seeking her 19th term to represent Connecticut's third district, which includes New Haven, and other candidates are vying for spots in seats in the state legislature and state-level positions.

The wards nearest to City Hall, which include Ward 7 and Ward 2, saw "by far" the most turnout so far, Arnold said, adding that residents of every one of New Haven's 30 wards have cast early ballots. There was not a "big turnout" from Ward 1, which includes Yale's Old Campus and eight of its 14 residential colleges, Arnold said, although he noted that Ward 7, which contains parts of downtown and East Rock and has a large graduate student population, still saw high turnout.

Poll worker Maria Gant said the city saw a "good flow" of voters which included "a lot of first-time voters" this year. The poll workers often burst into applause when someone said it was their first time voting, she said.



Logan Dinkins / Staff Photographer
During New Haven's two-week early voting period, 4,701 people voted early and 298 people voted through same-day registration, turnout that the city's top election moderator said was "tremendous" and could ease congestion on Tuesday..

Gant, who voted early herself, said it was an easier option for her because it didn't require her to take time off of work. Some residents who voted early in City Hall on Sunday also cited work commitments and Election Day conflicts, as well as shorter lines at the polls.

Fair Haven resident Joe Rini said he voted early because of a medical appointment on election day. He called early voting a "great idea" and said that "everybody" he knows has already voted.

Isabella Valentin, who said she participated in same-day registration on Sunday, said she had voted early in order to avoid a crowd at the polls on election day.

Jacqueline Roberts, who also voted on Sunday, said it was her first time voting early. Roberts "wanted to avoid crowds," she said. Most of the people she knows plan to vote on Election Day, she said.

Arnold said the high early voting numbers may mean that there will be fewer people — and thus less congestion — at the polls on Tuesday. Same-day registration is particularly time consuming, so the fact that 298 people have already voted through same-day registration is a "tremendous help," he said.

On Tuesday, voters will be able to cast ballots at locations across the city. A list compiled by the registrar of voters' office lists the voting location for each of Yale's dorms.

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Move could deter voters, officials say

MONITORS FROM PAGE 1

where rhetoric and federal actions appear to be intended to cast doubt on election integrity and to intimidate voters." In light of that climate, the presence of election monitors at the polls might make elections feel "less accessible to all," they wrote.

Since the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, election monitors have been sent to certain polling places to watch for voting rights violations and document observations at the polls. The federal government this year has announced plans to send over 1,000 election monitors to locations across all 50 states — the highest number of monitors ever. Officials in several other states have also prohibited the monitors from entering polling places.

In a Friday press release, Connecticut Secretary of State Stephanie Thomas said that representatives from the Secretary of State's Office, Connecticut Attorney General's Office and the City of New Haven had met with Justice Department officials, who agreed that monitors would remain outside of a restricted area around the polls and observe "without interfering with the voting process." The monitors will have "no powers of arrest, detention, search, or seizure," Thomas said.

New Haven appears to be the only Connecticut city to which the Justice Department plans to send monitors.

Thomas also pointed to Connecticut statutes that she said "clearly" outline who is permitted in polling places — a category that does not include Justice Department election monitors.

"Like other members of the public, DOJ monitors may observe from outside the 75-foot restricted area," Thomas said, describing the radius inside of which the state prohibits nonvoters from loitering.

In a Friday email to the News, a Justice Department spokesperson, Kiersten Pels, described election monitoring as "routine." The monitors will "merely observe and report any potential violations of federal law to the Department, which will be reviewed after Election Day," Pels wrote.

Local and national leaders have echoed the registrars' concerns that election monitors may discourage some voters.

In a Friday press release, Mayor Justin Elicker said that given Trump's "repeated attempts to undermine and cast doubt on" elections and the "politicization" of the Justice Department under the Trump administration, the presence of election monitors would be "counterproductive."

Also in a Friday statement, Rep. Rosa DeLauro said the move to send monitors to New Haven is "meant to make voters feel watched and unwelcome."

"To the people of New Haven: do not let anyone scare you away from the polls," DeLauro said in that statement. "Your vote is your voice. No one can take it from you."

During the 2022 midterm cycle, the Justice Department sent election monitors to 24 states, which did not include Connecticut, according to a press release from the time. Connecticut saw federal election monitors during the 2016 presidential election for the first time since 2002.

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Employees allege fatal electrocution was preventable

GOLF COURSE FROM PAGE 1

appropriate channels," Posterli wrote in a Wednesday email to the News. "The university offers its sympathy to the family of the contractor who was involved in a fatal incident last year. The university does not comment on pending litigation."

Carmen Nicolaou, an attorney representing ELM, wrote in an October email to the News that "ELM takes the safety and well-being of its employees seriously" but declined to comment further, citing pending litigation.

For this story, the News interviewed two current golf course employees and one former employee. All three worked at the golf course during the restoration project and subsequent year-long grass-growing period. The golf course reopened in April, but conditions soon deteriorated, according to a September article in The Athletic.

'It's just an unsafe situation'

In Yale's cross-complaint against ELM in the wrongful death lawsuit, the University wrote that ELM "failed to provide adequate training and education to its employees" about electrical hazards and "failed to adequately supervise its employees" at the golf course.

Employees said that Peter Palacios, who was the general manager of Yale Golf Course before leaving in April, directly supervised the ELM subcontractors. Malonis said that because ELM did not sufficiently train its workers, Palacios provided impromptu "seminars" for subcontractors in the parking lot on how to use equipment.

Even though the subcontractors did not come in trained on how to properly operate basic equipment like backpack leaf blowers, golf course management assigned them to use potentially hazardous machinery, according to the employees. Malonis said that subcontractors once put an improper mixture of oil and gas into backpack leaf blowers, damaging the engines.

"They just put them on the machine and let them go," a current employee said in a phone interview. "It's just an unsafe situation."

In an October email to the News, Palacios said that when he served as the golf course's general manager, "my responsibility was to foster an inclusive, team-oriented, and effective work environment. I believe communication, mutual respect, and clear accountability are essential to any successful operation."

He added that he worked with the golf course superintendent "to ensure that both the Yale grounds crew and ELM contractors performed their assigned responsibilities to a high standard." Palacios did not directly respond to a question about whether he was aware that subcontractors lacked training.

When reached by email, Yale Golf Course Superintendent Alex Ranvik said he had been "looped in internally" by Yale spokespeople and provided no further comment.

It is unusual for subcontractors to use Yale equipment instead of their own, Malonis and a golf course employee said. But two employees recalled ELM subcontractors using — and frequently breaking — Yale machinery, including a mower worth about $80,000.

Subcontractors could have been injured, according to Malonis and a current employee.

"When you look at that and then you look at a person who had a fatality, you add it up, and you say, 'We're lucky we didn't have more issues,'" Malonis said, referring to the leaf blower engine damage.

A current employee said working at the golf course can be unsafe, especially for those who lack training.

Due to the language barrier, subcontractors could not adequately communicate what was wrong with broken machinery, Malonis said.

The two current employees said that ELM subcontractors are still using Yale equipment.

Last September, weeks after Marcatoma's death, Malonis wrote in an email to Yale Senior Labor Relations Representative Cory Garfman that "it appears the contracted workers are inexperienced and a lack of safety training and equipment is apparent," according to an email that he shared with the News. In the email, Malonis called for a "broad look at how the golf course is holding its commitment to safety standards, for all workers working."

One employee said that a lack of training "absolutely" contributed to Marcatoma's death. But since the fatal electrocution, subcontractors still have not been given adequate safety training, according to another current employee.

Strange hours, staggered departures

Marcatoma was leaving work at 5 p.m. on Aug. 21, 2025, when he and other workers encountered a tree that had fallen across the golf course's exit road, according to a Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority investigation into the incident. Marcatoma attempted to move the tree and touched a power line that it had pulled down, the investigation states.

Employees said they are typically slated to leave work at the golf course hours before the subcontractors are.

Subcontractors and union employees at other worksites normally leave work at the same time, according to Malonis and two current employees who have worked elsewhere at Yale. But at the golf course, subcontractors often left at around 5:30 p.m., while the union workers were scheduled to leave at around 2:30 p.m., Malonis said. The employees described this schedule as strange.

The employees interviewed by the News said that if Yale workers and subcontractors had left work at the same time, Marcatoma may not have died. Union workers are given health and safety training, which equips them to handle hazardous situations, according to a current employee.

"If I had been there, there would be absolutely no way anybody was touching that tree when it was holding wires to the ground like that," the retired employee said.

Local 35 has sought answers about workplace practices at the golf course since September 2025, according to emails and a written grievance shared by Malonis. He said that the union has received little clarity from the University.

In the grievance, Malonis asked how many other contractors besides ELM placed bids for the golf course work. It is standard practice for at least three contractors to place bids, Malonis said. He said he wanted to know how ELM got the job if it did not bring its own equipment.

Posterli wrote that the University did not seek bids other than ELM's for the golf course maintenance work.

"ELM was hired for golf course maintenance as a sole source vendor because of its experience working on the course restoration," Posterli wrote.

In response to questions regarding issues brought up by employees, Posterli wrote that "many of your questions, including those about manual labor, relate to the period of the golf course restoration, rather than current operations, and to the course's management by an employee who is no longer with Yale."

'They made them work like dogs'

ELM subcontractors were not given basic protective equipment like gloves, hearing protection and eye protection, according to Malonis and workers at the golf course.

"They weren't offered all of the safety equipment that was necessary or that should have been an option for them to use," a current employee said in a phone interview.

Another current employee recalled giving subcontractors gloves from his former personal business because "they're walking around here with no gloves." The retired employee corroborated his account.

The employee who provided gloves also recalled giving subcontractors eye protection. "They had none," he said.

"ELM's agreement requires it to provide personal protective equipment that meets Yale Environmental Health and Safety standards, including eye, foot, and hearing protection and work gloves," Posterli wrote.

All three of the employees interviewed by the News said they witnessed instances where subcontractors were made to perform manual labor that a machine at the golf course could have completed.

A current employee said subcontractors carried five-gallon buckets of crushed stone up 10 to 15 steps last fall when Yale employees could have used a machine to do it. Earlier this year, he said he saw ELM subcontractors spreading a dump truck load of rocks with shovels at the front gate. The employee said he raised his concerns with Palacios.

"I said, 'Peter, let me just get the tractor and I'll spread this for them. They're gonna kill themselves with this,'" the employee recalled.

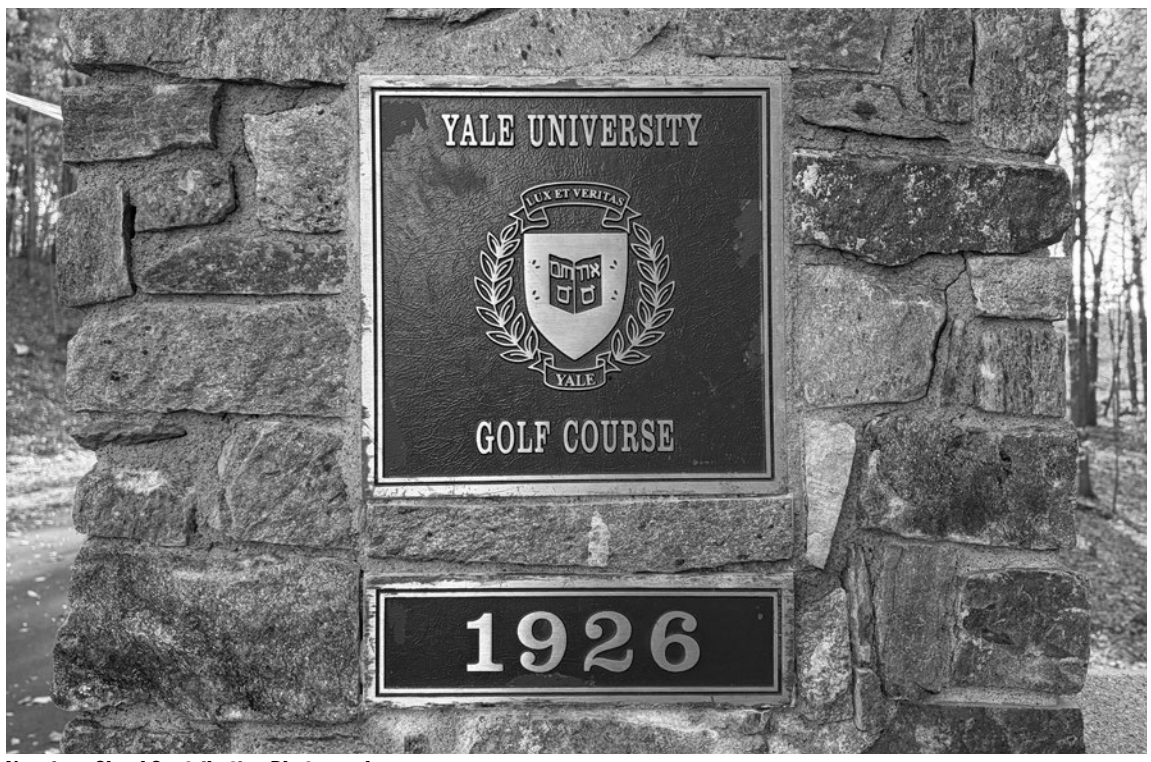
Palacios did not take up his offer, he said. The employee recalled coming to work one day and seeing that the rocks had been spread.

The retired employee described subcontractors' work shoveling stone from the backs of golf carts and spreading it out as "backbreaking" and "one of the hardest jobs you can do by hand."

The employee said he told Palacios that he could assist the subcontractors with a machine, but Palacios responded that the workers "need something to do."

"I'm not saying they abused those people, but they made them work like dogs," he said, referring to Palacios. "We had equipment there. And it was just unnecessary."

The Yale Golf Course is located at 200 Conrad Dr.



Nausicaa Chu / Contributing Photographer
Current and former Yale Golf Course employees said that the fatal electrocution of a subcontractor last August could have been prevented. They said unusual workplace practices and a dearth of safety measures still endanger subcontractors and employees.

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