

9-1-2023

Connecticut Politics in 2023: The Rise of Blue Suburbia

Scott L. McLean
Quinnipiac University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/nejps>

Recommended Citation

McLean, Scott L. (2023) "Connecticut Politics in 2023: The Rise of Blue Suburbia," *New England Journal of Political Science*: Vol. 14: No. 1, Article 5.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/nejps/vol14/iss1/5>

This State Report is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in New England Journal of Political Science by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

CONNECTICUT POLITICS IN 2023: THE RISE OF BLUE SUBURBIA

Scott L. McLean

Quinnipiac University

In this article, I argue that in 2023 the traditional urban-suburban political divide in Connecticut politics has abated due to the growing electoral appeal of Democratic candidates in state government, and the growing Democratic margins in the General Assembly. Democrats and Republicans now represent suburbs. Yet suburbs continue to be an electoral battleground in the state. In 2023, Governor Ned Lamont cemented a new political center in the state in the form of a bipartisan alliance of suburban Democrats and Republicans focused on fiscal discipline and restrained social program spending.

2023 promised to be a year of Democratic dominance in Connecticut. Governor Ned Lamont was narrowly elected in 2018 but cruised to a second term in 2022 with a 13-point win over two-time losing Republican challenger Bob Stefanowski. Democrats in the 2022 election gained an additional House seat to attain a 98-53 majority and pick up another seat in the Senate to achieve a 24-12 majority. The GOP is worried about even greater losses in 2024: Four of the 12 remaining Republican senators were elected in 2022 with less than 51 percent of the vote.

It might appear at first glance that governing the state would be easy for Democrats. Republicans have not controlled the Connecticut House since 1985 (Ballotpedia 2024). No Republican has served in the state's U.S. congressional delegation since 2009. Connecticut's state government has been controlled by a Democratic trifecta since 2011. That is the second-longest run of blue trifectas, surpassed only by Delaware (Connecticut is tied with California and Hawaii). In 2018 the Democrats broke their tie with Republicans in the Senate, to win five seats and gain a 23-13 advantage. Since the 1970's, Democrats most of the time controlled the General Assembly House and Senate. Meanwhile, Republicans were competitive in Governor's races and controlled the Governorship from 1995 to 2010.

Nevertheless, growing Democratic majorities has meant more senators and representatives from suburban areas, and Republican worries about greater losses in 2024 has made it possible for Governor Lamont to forge a bipartisan suburban coalition willing to support his policy priorities, reduce income taxes and limit state spending. In the following discussion, I will highlight how the urban-suburban divide played a role in the state's 2023 approach to the affordable housing crisis, higher education, social programs and electoral reforms.

The Urban-Suburban Divide in Connecticut

An old saying among pols in Connecticut is that the key political divide in the state is not Republican versus Democrat, but cities versus suburbs. Federal interstate construction in the 1950s, and massive federal urban redevelopment projects in Hartford and New Haven in the 1960s, enabled an exodus to the suburbs (mostly by the descendants of Italian and Irish immigrants). Most General Assembly seats from rural and suburban areas were held by Republicans, while Democrats held most seats in urbanizing areas.

As a comparison to other New England states, Connecticut with its 88 percent urban population rate (4th highest in the U.S.) looks more like Massachusetts (92% urban) and Rhode Island (90% urban), than it does New Hampshire (60% urban), Vermont (38.9 % urban) or Maine (38.7% urban). What sets Connecticut apart from other New England states is its rising rate of racial and economic segregation. White flight to the suburbs in the 1970s made Connecticut one of the most segregated states, and the way its political system empowered suburban leaders tends to exacerbate the problem. Only 15.5 percent of the state's population lives in the densely urbanized cities, while 72.5 percent live in suburban areas (Iowa State University). Cities, particularly Hartford and Bridgeport, have among the most racially and economically segregated places in America, according to a 2024 state-funded study (Ragland, 2024; Urbanomics, 2024). Suburbanization also has fueled economic disparities. Although Connecticut is the wealthiest state in the U.S. per capita, its poorest residents live in the most densely populated cities (*World Population Review*). The 10 percent of the state's population living below the poverty line are concentrated in high-poverty cities: Bridgeport (23% poverty rate), Hartford (28.4% poverty rate), New Haven (24.6 % poverty rate), New Britain (19.7% poverty rate), West Haven (11.3% poverty rate) and New London (21.5% poverty rate) (*World Population Review*).

Understanding the Suburban Shift to Blue

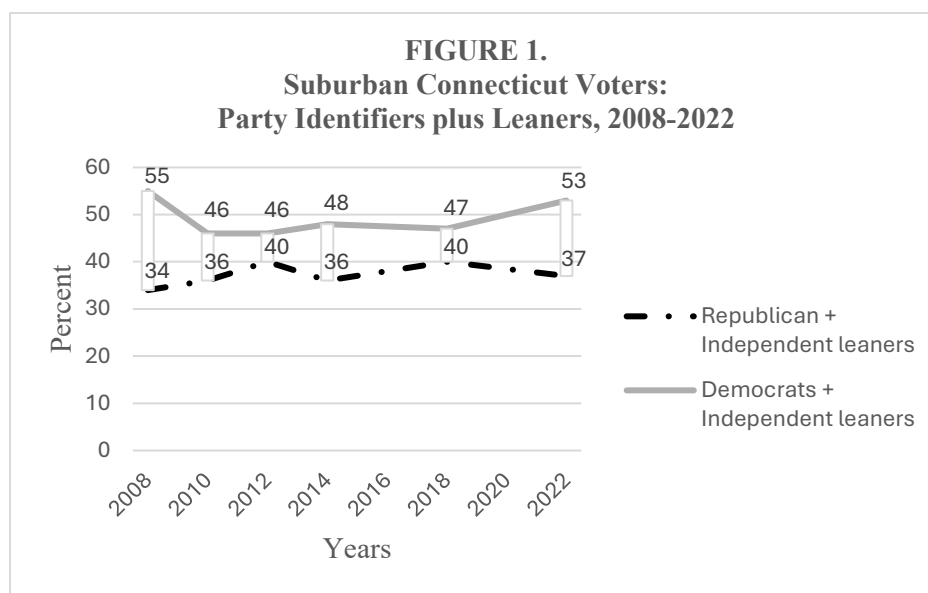
To understand how the towns-state and urban-suburban divide affected politics in 2023, we need to briefly look at the battle for the suburbs in the 2022 Governor's race between two millionaires: The Democratic incumbent Ned Lamont, and the two-time Republican nominee Bob Stefanowski. Lamont won the Governor's chair in 2018 by 3 points over Stefanowski and, Lamont would not have succeeded without urban party leaders who engineered a massive Democratic turnout in the major cities of New Haven, Hartford and Bridgeport. Urban turnout neutralized Stefanowski's margins in the suburbs.

Democrats were gaining an edge in the suburbs at least since 2010a. By 2022, the suburban shift favoring Democrats were becoming manifest in growing Democratic margins of control in the General Assembly. Sociologist Karyn Lacy (2022) identified three recent national trends that contribute to the competitiveness of suburbs: people with below-median income, immigrants and educated non-white middle-class workers (Lacy, 2022). Some suburban areas in Connecticut are changing faster than suburbs in other states. The towns surrounding metropolitan Hartford, for example, now have a higher proportion of non-whites than towns surrounding Boston or Providence (Frey 2022). Between 2010 and 2020, less-densely populated towns just outside urban centers (such as Hamden, West Hartford and Stamford) saw a 19 percent increase of African Americans, and a 58 percent increase in Hispanics (CT Data Collaborative 2021). The political effect is that over the last ten years, more suburban Republican strongholds have become competitive or Democrat-leaning.

Lamont won his rematch with Stefanowski by a comfortable margin, demonstrating the potential of a coalition less dependent on urban voters and less beholden to urban Democrats in the General Assembly. Politics in 2023 demonstrated that Lamont was able to exercise his independence from the progressive agenda and use his new support in the suburbs to pursue his progressive instincts in a fiscally conservative way.

Lamont's fiscal approach emerged from the early months of his first term, when the state faced both a fiscal crisis and a pandemic. Lamont in 2019 took over a state government struggling with public pension debt and growing Medicaid costs. Connecticut's economy seemed trapped in sluggish growth (1.6% GDP increase) that lagged behind every New England state, and was in the U.S. bottom half (CBIA, 2020). He held one of the lowest job approval ratings among governors in the U.S., according to [a Morning Consult poll](#) (Morning Consult, 2019). However, things turned around for Lamont at the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The General Assembly granted Lamont executive power to handle the crisis, which he used to impose one of the nation's earliest and strictest lockdowns. Connecticut's economy grew during the crisis, and in 2022 he proposed a tax cut package aimed at local property tax relief (Haigh 2022). By July 2022, *Morning Consult* now found Lamont had catapulted to the highest job approval of any Democratic governor, behind 9 other Republican governors (Putterman, 2022).

The Democrats came to power in the 2000s because of party realignment in the suburbs, but the urban versus suburban divide is a persistent source of discontent within the Democrats' coalition. Shifting suburban voter preferences are reflected in gradual shifts in voter registration patterns. The percentage of "unaffiliated" voters in suburban areas increased from 38% to 42% between 2000 and 2022. As Figure 1 illustrates, the gap between suburban Democratic and Republican identifiers and independent leaners expanded from 46%-40% in 2012, to at 53%-37% (Quinnipiac University Poll 2012 2022b).



Source: Quinnipiac University Poll, *Connecticut Polls*. (Quinnipiac University Poll 2008b; 2010; 2012; 2014; 2018; 2022a)

Although Democrats control state government, party unity is not the norm in Connecticut. The state's lack of county government (abolished in 1959) and its 17th century system of 169 independent towns and cities, reinforces inequitable tax burdens, gaps in resources and economic

opportunities between urban and suburban areas. Regional governance, when it occurs, comes from negotiation between towns on in limited cooperation on policing, emergency services, education, affordable housing, trash pickup and even water pollution control. The state government has the authority to address urban-suburban gaps in education, affordable housing, elections management and environmental protection, but legislators in the General Assembly either resist, or at least limit state actions that would impose restrictions or mandates on local government. Connecticut's politics almost always revolves around whether the state will respond to urban-suburban tensions, and even if the state does respond, will it budget enough to get the job done? In 2023, we could see these tensions in affordable housing, education policy and electoral reform.

Lamont's Fiscal Centrism

All of these shifts meant that by 2023, Lamont in his second term was less dependent on cities to get elected or to govern. His strategy was to persuade suburban Democrats and Republicans in the General Assembly to support his plans for modest increases in spending and limited tax cuts. This became a source of intra-party tensions among Democrats about the growing "rainy day fund" that the Governor resisted using for spending on a variety of programs.

In the early 2000s, the legislature raised taxes mainly to keep the pension funds afloat and to maintain the current levels of state services. The rainy day fund was the result of a 2017 bipartisan "fiscal guardrails" law that established a "rainy day" Budget Reserve fund. The law required that nearly all revenue surpluses should be devoted to paying the state's underfunded teacher and employee pensions and Medicaid payments (Lamont 2023). In his inauguration speech, Lamont proclaimed the "end of the state's permanent fiscal crisis," and the dawn of wiser investment in education and infrastructure, along with middle class tax cuts. State Comptroller Sean Scanlon predicted that the rainy-day fund was expected to yield a record high \$4 billion (Scanlon, 2024). Unlike other states, Connecticut is not cutting spending, and not raising taxes. But on the other hand, it is not using its vast annual surplus (projected at nearly \$167 million in 2024) to pay for larger tax cuts, or affordable housing, or education all of which are preferred by Democratic leaders in the General Assembly.

Conflicting Democratic demands on the surplus led to small cracks in the dominant Democratic coalition in the General Assembly. The loudest critics of Lamont's strict adherence to the fiscal guardrails are urban Democratic representatives and senators. With the fiscal guardrails in place, Lamont developed a new centrist coalition of Republicans and suburban Democrats. Only 12 of 53 House Republicans and 1 of the 12 Republican senators voted against Lamont's budget (Haar, 2024) Urban Democratic senators and representatives have supported the Lamont programs, while complaining that they are not targeting the systemic obstacles to relieving poverty and expanding the middle class (Pazniokas, 2023). Progressives argue that the fiscal guardrails are kept too strict in a time of rising surpluses, and broad-based tax cuts leave insufficient funding for urgent needs of urban centers, such as programs to address the state's housing shortage, poverty and education.

In 2023, Lamont proposed the largest tax cuts in the state's history, which will take effect in 2024. It was the first reduction in income tax rates since the 1990's. The cuts are targeted at

the 1 million individual taxpayers earning less than \$150,000, or for households making under \$300,000. Overall tax rates will drop from 5% and 3% for those respective groups, to 4.5% and 2%. Increases in the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) will lead to taxes reduced even more for low-income working families. The innovative “baby bonds” proposal, initially opposed by Lamont, was passed when Treasurer Erick Russell freed up \$381 million, enough to fund the program for 12 years. In the baby bonds program, the state will set aside \$3200 for each new baby covered by Medicaid. Between ages 8 and 30, the child can use the money for defined expenses like college, starting a business or buying a home. In the first six months of the program, nearly 8,000 babies were born eligible for the program (Lamont, 2024).

Affordable Housing

One area where tensions between cities and suburbs become most immediately manifest in politics is in affordable housing policy. Connecticut is one of the most economically and racially segregated states in the U.S., and the most urgent remedy is to expand the state’s stock of affordable housing, especially in the suburbs (Urbanomics, 2024). Yet the state faces a crisis in affordable housing stock. The pandemic and lack of strict enforcement of the state’s requirement of 10 percent affordable housing stock in every town has led to low supply of single-family affordable homes, skyrocketing rents and a homelessness crisis in cities. Historically, the state has done very little to enforce the affordable housing mandates on resistant suburban town governments. The state grants towns permission to fall short of the 10 percent affordable housing standard if they show progress and allows local zoning boards to have restrictive ordinances that prevent affordable housing that impacts the “historical character” of a neighborhood.

The General Assembly spent time in 2023 trying to pass widespread zoning reforms that would allow greater residential density near public transit, along with tougher penalties on towns that fail to meet the affordable housing requirements. The bills were not passed in the 2023 session, in part because suburban Republicans and some Democrats, particularly from suburban Fairfield County, resisted what they called “one-size fits all” solutions on towns with different needs (Monk, 2024). Lamont said he preferred measures to allow developers to sue municipalities for exclusionary zoning rules (McQuaid, 2023). In the end, the General Assembly acted to provide \$600 million in bonding authority for affordable housing, and \$150 million for Lamont’s “Time To Own” downpayment assistance program. The upcoming 2024 legislative session will again highlight the clash of urban versus suburban Democratic lawmakers looking to solve the affordable housing problem. One possible compromise that puts more teeth into state affordable housing standards is to direct more funding to towns and cities that are building more affordable housing. Another is to direct more money to nonprofit agencies in cities that carry out state anti-poverty programs. However, these approaches will be unsatisfactory for progressive activists and officials who are increasingly vocal about addressing the segregation issue head on (Monk, 2024)

Education and Social Services Funding

Urban progressives in 2023 argued that there are enough surplus tax revenues on income taxes and capital gains taxes to fully provide services for the poor and to fully fund higher education in the state. Yet in his 2024 plan, Lamont has only proposed a 4% increase in kindergarten extension to 5-year-olds, affordable housing and the state university system

(Phaneuf, *et. al.*, 2024). As long as the strict fiscal guardrails are supported by the Governor and his suburban allies, the funding to address the housing issue will be limited. In a similar way, urban representatives face suburban support for fiscal restraint and tax cuts before dealing with the state's underfunded education and social services systems. The problem, again, is the 2017 fiscal guardrail rules puts limits on what the surplus can be spent for, and suburban Democrats and Republicans were able to outvote the progressives in 2023. An example of this was the return of a plan by Senate President Pro Tempore Martin Looney to incentivize public school districts to adopt regional districts was killed in the 2023 session. Suburban municipal leaders and senators attacked the plan as “state takeover of local schools” that would never get sufficient votes to go forward, and Governor Lamont did not express support. Eventually, the proposal was pulled from the General Assembly agenda.

Likewise, Lamont cut back higher education funding in his 2024 plan. Since 2020, the General Assembly has only propped up higher education using variable surplus proceeds left over after funding the rainy day fund as required by the fiscal guardrails law and from federal pandemic relief (Phaneuf, *et. al.* 2024). As a result, community colleges will be increasing their tuition by over 10% in 2024, and the University of Connecticut and regional state universities are considering similar hikes, depending on what the General Assembly eventually decides to do.

Electoral and Public Campaign Finance Reforms

In this concluding section, I discuss how the COVID-19 pandemic and the election of 2020 launched a wave of voting reforms and changes in the state's public campaign finance system. Even before the pandemic, Connecticut had recently instituted a successful online voter registration system. Connecticut maintained one of the most restrictive Absentee Ballot systems in the U.S. Voters can only obtain an Absentee Ballot if they affirm they will be out of town on election day, military or religious obligations, “because of sickness or physical disability.” In July 2020, the General Assembly approved for the 2020 election, an broader interpretation of the sickness/disability, so that fear of becoming sick due to exposure at the polls, and caring for a sick or disabled person were valid excuses for not appearing at the polling place. A handful of Republican legislators criticized the move as a Democratic get-out-the-vote ploy, to no avail. The practical effect was that the state created a mail-in ballot system for all registered voters, but only for 2020 and 2021 elections. In addition, the Secretary of State established Absentee Ballot drop-off boxes outside every Town Hall. Republicans in suburban and rural areas did not make much use of the absentee ballot rules. Meanwhile, Democrats used local party canvassing efforts to encourage voters in suburban and more urbanized towns to apply for absentee ballots. The strategy led to higher-than-expected Democratic voter turnout in 2020 which helped suburban Democrats running for General Assembly.

The pandemic opened a window for voting reforms, something that progressives had long advocated. Since 2013, Connecticut has used an online voter registration option. Yet the state by 2020 retained one of the most restrictive Absentee Ballot systems, requiring applicants to affirm they would be sick, absent, or in military service on election day. At the behest of Governor Lamont, the Secretary of State broadened the “sickness” excuse to include caring for a sick person, or concern about exposure to COVID-19 at the polls as a valid excuse and then sent every registered voter in the state an Absentee Ballot application. The move temporarily created a *de*

facto mail-in ballot system (Dixon 2022). Republicans cried foul, echoing President Trump’s rhetoric claiming the Democrats were trying to rig the 2020 election with Absentee Ballots. In the election, Republicans in suburban and rural areas resisted using the Absentee Ballot rules, while the Democratic party organization in urban areas and suburbanizing towns used grassroots canvassers to urge their supporters to vote Absentee by mail in order to avoid any need to contend with any unexpected COVID-19 outbreak on election day. The strategy led to higher-than-expected Democratic voter turnout in 2020 which gave an edge to suburban Democrats running for General Assembly. It was a result that the state GOP could hardly avoid, given the pressure from the Trump campaign to question absentee balloting as “fixing” the election in the Democrats’ favor. And it is unsurprising that urban Democrats voted heavily using Absentee Ballots, while suburban and rural Republicans voted at the polling places. Democrats in 2020 gained five seats in the House, and 2 seats in the Senate to extend their supermajorities.

Absentee Balloting requirements are established in the state constitution, so in 2023 the General Assembly voted to create a ballot measure for 2024 asking voters if they authorize a constitutional amendment for no-excuse absentee balloting. It would allow Connecticut to become the 28th state to allow any registered voter to request an absentee ballot without providing a reason why they could not appear at the polls (Ballotpedia 2024). Democrats in the legislature proposed no-excuse absentee ballots, which passed in May 2023 at the end of the session with strong bipartisan support.

By late 2023, the Republicans saw a new opportunity to oppose Absentee Ballots, by focusing on accusations of corruption in the September 12 Democratic Mayoral primary between incumbent (and former federal racketeering inmate) Joe Ganim and challenger John Gomes. Gomes lost narrowly after the counting of hundreds of Absentee Ballots favoring Ganim. Gomes then challenged the result in court, alleging Absentee Ballot stuffing and showing security video footage of a Ganim campaign worker repeatedly dropping off large bags of ballots at the Bridgeport drop box (Haig, 2023). A judge called for a new primary, which Ganim won as he cruised to re-election in February 2024 (Lockhart, 2023).

The Bridgeport mess led Republicans to finesse their position on Absentee Ballots. They demanded that the drop boxes placed outside every Town municipal government building should be eliminated because it invited corrupt ballot box stuffing. They called for a mandatory one-year jail penalty for “ballot harvesting” of the kind alleged in the Bridgeport primary (Lockhart, 2023, Nov. 24). Currently it is legal in Connecticut to obtain hundreds of blank absentee ballot applications to distribute to others – indeed this was what the Secretary of State did in 2020 in mailing an absentee ballot to every registered voter. However, under the law, people using a collection box to vote by absentee ballot must drop off their completed ballots themselves, or designate certain family members, police, local election officials or a caregiver to do it for them (Haig, 2023). What Republicans want to do is to criminalize violations of Absentee Ballot handling rules.

The next Democratic-led change was for early voting. In 2022, voters approved by 61 percent a ballot measure requiring the General Assembly to institute early voting in the state. Connecticut will be the 46th state with early voting, starting with the 2024 presidential primaries. voters will have 14 days prior to the general election to cast a vote (or 4 days prior to a special

election or presidential primary). The problem is that the General Assembly only appropriated \$3 million dollars for towns to implement early voting, which is only half of the amount required.

Perhaps the most intense debate on electoral reform was on how to update the state's public campaign finance system, the Citizens' Election Program (CEP). CEP was adopted in 2005 in the wake of a campaign corruption scandal involving Gov. John Roland, who eventually was sent to federal prison. Since then, CEP has become widely used by candidates for the General Assembly and other state offices. Yet CEP is rarely used by candidates for Governor. One reason is the rise of superPACs following the U.S. Supreme Court decision in 2010 in *Citizens United v. F.E.C.* Gubernatorial candidates had less need for public money when SuperPACs could purchase advertising. But the main reason was the rise of millionaire candidates who were willing to finance their own campaign and bypass the voluntary spending limits required for public grants. In 2010, for instance, Republican Tom Foley spent \$10 million of his own cash on his way to the 2010 Republican nomination for Governor, though in a losing cause against Democrat Dannel Malloy (Associated Press 2014). Then in his 2014 rematch against Governor Malloy, Foley opted for public financing which only resulted in his being outspent by Malloy. Back then, the current maximum CEP grant was \$1.6 million for a primary, and \$7.7 million for the general election, and to qualify for the grant, the candidate agrees to not accept individual donations in excess of \$290.

The public grant system was absolutely irrelevant once multi-millionaire Ned Lamont began running for governor. For example, Lamont spent \$15.9 million in his 2018 run, and a whopping \$25.7 million 2022, burying in a blizzard of TV and web ads his fellow millionaire, Republican Bob Stefanowski, who spent \$6.6 million of his own cash in 2018 and \$14.5 million in 2022 (Pazniokas 2023). Had they opted for public financing, they would have been limited to about \$8 million — roughly the amount Lamont spent on television advertising in the last five weeks of the campaign (Pazniokas, 2023).

In 2023, the General Assembly began bipartisan discussions on raising the limit on individual donations to gubernatorial candidates from \$290 to \$1000. Ultimately, in March 2023, the General Assembly passed a bipartisan bill to double the public grant for Governor candidates from \$7.7 million to \$12 million, and to reduce the time it takes for a candidate to receive the grant, citing how a self-financing millionaire can spend millions by the time the opponent receives the public grant.

Conclusion

In the space of a year, Connecticut Democrats pushed Connecticut from being one of the most legally restrictive electoral systems, to a 2024 system with an expanded public campaign financing system, fully online registration, no excuse mail-in Absentee Ballots and early voting. At the same time, Governor Lamont built a coalition of fiscal discipline, based on suburban Democrats and Republicans who favored tax cuts over expanded social spending in the cities. Progressive Democrats demanded social spending increases that would benefit residents of urbanized areas, but Lamont's coalition can outvote them. Despite Lamont's rhetoric favoring higher education, early childhood education and affordable housing, he proposed only a 4% increase and a tax cut, while billions accumulated in the rainy-day fund. In 2023, only 12 of 53 House Republicans and 1 of 12 Republican senators voted against Lamont's final budget. Lamont

and the Democratic expansion into suburbs represent a political shift toward conservative fiscal responsibility, even when it angers progressives in the House and Senate.

An unexpected feature of Connecticut General Assembly is that Senate Democrats are more progressive than House Democrats. Conventional thinking might lead one to expect larger Senatorial districts to encourage ideological moderation. But urban Democratic Senators have held seniority over their suburban Democratic colleagues. For instance, Senate President Pro Tempore Martin Looney of New Haven has held his Senate seat since 1993 (Looney 2024). As Democrats have expanded their margins in the Senate, it has emboldened Senators from urban districts to demand more progressive policies and budget priorities from the Governor. This only encouraged Gov. Lamont to seek the fiscal center among the suburban representatives and senators. In 2024, expect to see internal tensions between urban progressive legislators and Gov. Lamont's suburban alliance on spending for increases in affordable housing, higher education funding, urban poverty and calls for fully financing the local costs of implementing electoral reforms like early voting and increased numbers of absentee ballots.

References

- Ballotpedia (2023). *State Government Trifectas*. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from https://ballotpedia.org/State_government_trifectas
- Ballotpedia (2024). *Connecticut State Senate*. Retrieved Feb. 24, 2024, from https://ballotpedia.org/Connecticut_State_Senate
- Ballotpedia (2024). *Connecticut No-Excuse Absentee Voting Amendment (2024)*. Retrieved March 8, 2024, from [https://ballotpedia.org/Connecticut_No-Excuse_Absentee_Voting_Amendment_\(2024\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Connecticut_No-Excuse_Absentee_Voting_Amendment_(2024))
- CBIA. (2020, April 7.). *State's 2019 Growth Ranks 33rd in U.S.* www.cbiam.com. Retrieved Feb. 18, 2024, from <https://www.cbiam.com/news/economy/ct-2019-gdp-growth/>
- Urbanomics (2024, January). Connecticut Housing and Segregation Study. <https://portal.ct.gov/datapolicy/-/media/DataPolicy/General/FINAL-CT-Housing-and-Segregation-Study-2024.pdf>
- CT Data Collaborative. (2021). *Population Changes in Connecticut, 2010 to 2020*. (). <https://www.ctdata.org/blog/population-changes-in-connecticut-2010-to-2020>
- Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection. (2023). *Crime in Connecticut, 2022*. (). <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DESPP/CSP/Crimes-Analysis/2022/Crime-In-Connecticut-Annual-Report-2022.pdf>
- Frey, W. (2022). *Today's Suburbs Are Symbolic of America's Rising Diversity: A 2020 Census Portrait*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/todays-suburbs-are-symbolic-of-americas-rising-diversity-a-2020-census-portrait/>
- Haar, D. (2024, Feb. 7.). A Political Shift in CT? We Might Be Watching It Unfold. *CT Insider* <https://www.ctinsider.com/columnist/article/ct-spending-taxes-political-shift-18654514.php>
- Haigh, S. (2022, Feb. 2.). Connecticut Governor Proposes Cutting Taxes by \$336 Million. *Associated Press* <https://apnews.com/article/business-connecticut-ned-lamont-personal-taxes-property-taxes-d6c41e8a82083dca225a358360ad2de7>
- Haigh, S. (2023, Sept. 20). Connecticut Election Officials to Investigate Bridgeport Primary. *Associated Press*. <https://apnews.com/article/bridgeport-absentee-ballot-investigation-ganin-c69023a813ab10ab08dd9231e3299ad4>
- Lacy, K. (2022, November 4). How Democrats and Republicans Could Be Getting the Suburbs Wrong. *NBC News THINK* <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/election-2022-democrats-republicans-suburban-voters-wrong-rcna55669>

- Lamont, N. (2023, January 3,). *Governor Lamont's 2023 State of the State Address*. Retrieved Feb. 24, 2024, from <https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Speeches/Governor-Lamont-2023-State-of-the-State-Address>
- Lamont, N. (2024, January 17,). *Governor Lamont and Treasurer Russell Announce 7,810 Babies Have Been Born Eligible For Connecticut Baby Bonds*. Retrieved Feb. 24, 2024, from <https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Press-Releases/2024/01-2024/Governor-Lamont-and-Treasurer-Russell-Announce-7810-Babies-Have-Been-Born-Eligible-for-Baby-Bonds>
- Lockhart, Brian. (2023, November 1). Bridgeport Mayor: Get Rid of Absentee Ballot Drop-off Boxes. *Connecticut Post* <https://www.ctpost.com/news/article/ganim-absentee-ballot-box-eliminate-18462170.php>
- Lockhart, Brian. (2023, November 24). Court-ordered Bridgeport Absentee Ballot Rules Could Be Blueprint for Future State Reform. *Connecticut Post* <https://www.ctpost.com/news/article/bridgeport-may-be-test-site-for-voting-reforms-18509007.php>
- Looney, Martin (2024). “State Senate President Pro Tempore Martin Looney.” Official website. <https://www.senatedems.ct.gov/senator/martin-m-looney> Retrieved March 20, 2024.
- McQuaid, H. (2023, June 9). Winners and Losers of the 2023 Legislative Session. *CT News Junkie* <https://ctnewsjunkie.com/2023/06/09/winners-and-losers-of-the-2023-legislative-session/>
- Monk, G. (2024, Jan. 30). CT Lawmakers Preview Housing Issues for Legislative Session. *CT Mirror* <https://ctmirror.org/2024/01/30/ct-housing-2024-legislative-session-fairfield-county/>
- Morning Consult. (2019), *The 10 Most Popular and Unpopular Governors*. Retrieved Feb. 18, 2024, from <https://morningconsult.com/governor-rankings/>
- Pazniokas, M. (2022, Sept. 30). Stefanowski Takes Aim at CT Police Accountability Law. *CT Mirror* <https://www.ctpublic.org/news/2022-09-30/stefanowski-takes-aim-at-ct-police-accountability-law>
- Pazniokas, M. (2023, June 8). CT 2023 Legislative Session Ends With Passage of Wide-Ranging Bill. *Connecticut Mirror* <https://ctmirror.org/2023/06/08/ct-general-assembly-legislative-session-campaign-finance-municipal-pension/>
- Phaneuf, K., Harkay, J., & Pazniokas, M. (2024, Feb. 7). Lamont, CT Legislature Appear Headed for a Showdown over Education. <https://ctmirror.org/2024/02/07/ct-ned-lamong-education-funding-uconn/>

- Putterman, A. (2022, July 21). Gov. Ned Lamont Has Highest Approval Rating of Any Democratic Governor. *CT Insider* <https://www.ctinsider.com/news/article/Gov-Ned-Lamont-has-highest-approval-rating-of-17318268.php>
- Quinnipiac University Poll (2008). “Connecticut Voters Are Down, But Still Like Gov. Rell, Quinnipiac University Poll Finds; Mortgage Scandal Takes Small Toll On Sen. Dodd.” July 1, 2008. <https://poll.qu.edu/Poll-Release-Legacy?releaseid=1189>
- Quinnipiac University Poll (2008b). “Connecticut Voters Back Same-Sex Marriage, Quinnipiac University Poll Finds; Rell Approval Holds As Dodd, Lieberman Scores Drop.” December 17, 2008. <https://poll.qu.edu/Poll-Release-Legacy?releaseid=1243>
- Quinnipiac University Poll (2010) “Lamont Has Early Name Edge In Connecticut Gov Race, Quinnipiac University Poll Finds; Bysiewicz Tops Dems In Attorney General Race.” January 2, 2010. <https://poll.qu.edu/Poll-Release-Legacy?releaseid=1416>
- Quinnipiac University Poll (2012). “Connecticut Voters Split On Death Or Life Without Parole, Quinnipiac University Poll Finds; But Voters Say Abolishing Death Penalty Is Bad Idea.” April 25, 2012. <https://poll.qu.edu/Poll-Release-Legacy?releaseid=1739>
- Quinnipiac University Poll (2014). “Malloy 47%, Foley 44% In 2-Way Connecticut Gov Race, Quinnipiac University Poll Finds.” November 3, 2014. <https://poll.qu.edu/Poll-Release-Legacy?releaseid=2108>
- Quinnipiac University Poll (2018). “Connecticut Gov Race Too Close To Call, Quinnipiac University Poll Finds; Murphy Holds 15-Point Lead In U.S. Senate Race.” October 30, 2018. <https://poll.qu.edu/Poll-Release-Legacy?releaseid=2584>
- Quinnipiac University Poll (2022). “Lamont Has 8-Point Lead In Connecticut Governor Race, Quinnipiac University Poll Finds; 58% Say They Are Worse Off Financially Than A Year Quinnipiac Ago.” May 26, 2022. <https://poll.qu.edu/poll-release?releaseid=3847>
- Quinnipiac University Poll (2022a). “Lamont Up By 15 Points in Connecticut Governor's Race, Quinnipiac University Connecticut Poll Finds; Blumenthal Up By 15 Points In Senate Race.” October 24, 2022. <https://poll.qu.edu/poll-release?releaseid=3860>
- Ragland, Jamil (2024, February 28). Connecticut Is Racially Segregated: Now What? <https://ctnewsjunkie.com/2024/02/28/connecticut-is-racially-segregated-now-what/>
- Scanlon, S. (2024, January 4,). *Comptroller Sean Scanlon Projects \$178 million Surplus*. Office of the State Comptroller. Retrieved Feb. 24, 2024, from <https://osc.ct.gov/articles/comptroller-sean-scanlon-projects-178-million-surplus/>
- World Population Review* (2024) World Population Review. Retrieved Feb. 17, 2024, from <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/>