

the VOICE



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Legislative Affairs Council Actively Tracking Bills During Session

The mission of the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut is to create and maintain a positive business climate that meets the needs of our members by supporting economic development and growth in the region. This may mean advocating for legislation that enhances workforce development and education opportunities, streamlines government operations, and promotes tourism, or opposing legislation that would increase the cost of doing business or create systemic inefficiencies.

We envision a vibrant region with a strong identity, and the Chamber acts as an inclusive “voice of business” in

Hartford and Washington alike.

Our legislative tracking software allows us to monitor bills proposed at the state and federal levels that may impact our region’s businesses, nonprofits, and/or residents, providing a summary of the bill, its sponsors and committees, and progress such as committee recommendations or upcoming public hearings. At any time, our tracked bills can be viewed on

ChamberECT.com, and conveniently sorted by Bill Topic, i.e. Workforce Development, Budget, Tourism & Gaming, Transportation, and more (using the drop-down menu).



4 Ways Get Engaged:

Review our tracked bills online at ChamberECT.com/government-affairs or **Request a weekly bill report** by emailing info@chamberect.com.

Share your concerns with us!. We often write letters of support, submit testimony, or meet with legislators to educate them on our region’s needs.

Join our Legislative Affairs Council, which offers periodic forums with fellow members, advocates, and legislators.

Attend events with your elected officials, including our “State of” and “Business Luncheon” events, featuring guest speakers from local state government.

A Special Thank You | Through their commitment to the Chamber, these companies have demonstrated support for the many smaller businesses we serve.





The Southeast Connecticut World Affairs Council (SECWAC)

Bringing the World to Southeast Connecticut, and bringing Southeast Connecticut to the World

The Southeast Connecticut World Affairs Council (SECWAC) engages leading global voices to foster a deeper understanding of issues that bear directly on America's vital global interests. Between September and June, SECWAC arranges 10-15 meetings and events along the CT- I-95 corridor, inviting experts from academia, think tanks, and government. We meet at various locations in the region, eg Connecticut College, the Old Lyme First Congregational Church, Essex Library, and Wesleyan University.

SECWAC is a membership organization committed to civil discourse on a wide range of topics with a focus on international affairs. Our mission is to provide opportunities for community members to engage with world class speakers and with other members of their community. Recent meetings have covered the crisis in Gaza, historical and political developments in Turkey and Peru, and a retrospective panel discussion on the invasion of Iraq. The next meeting will be on May 1 at Wesleyan University, when Frank Costigliola, Professor of History at

University of Connecticut, will speak on his book "George Kennan: A Life Between Worlds".

You can learn more about SECWAC, including how to become a member, at secwac.org.

SECWAC is embarking on a new collaboration with the Philadelphia World Affairs Council to bring opportunities for international travel to our members. We will kick-off this initiative with a trip to Ireland in September 2024 to explore the political and social history of Ireland over the past 100+ years. Paul Nugent, Executive Director of SECWAC and a native of Ireland, will lead the trip: it will involve 2 days in Belfast visiting the Titanic Museum and various sites associated with the Troubles, and then 3 days in Dublin visiting Trinity College Dublin, the Irish Parliament, and sites associated with the 1916 Easter Rebellion, amongst other activities. He has also organized presentations by experts on Irish history, Brexit, and the Irish Constitution. You can learn more by e-mailing Paul directly at exhibernia@gmail.com.



The check distribution ceremony and photo opportunity took place at 10 a.m. April 16 at the Chamber's Regional Innovation Center in New London.

Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT Foundation Awards \$109,072 to 51 Local Organizations

The Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT Foundation has awarded 51 grants to enhance education, economic development, and meet essential needs in New London and Windham counties.

This initiative is part of the Foundation's ongoing efforts to improve local quality of life, especially for children and families, supported by funds raised at their annual Holiday Gala. Since 2002, the Foundation has contributed over \$2 million to area nonprofits. Louis Ziegler, Chair of the Foundation's Board of Directors, emphasized the community's role in these efforts: "I'd like to extend a thank you to all our sponsors, donors, and volunteers who helped to make the Holiday Gala the success that it is. This is our largest year yet for submitted applications and a record number of awarded grants."

For a complete list of grant awardees visit ChamberECT.com/blog. The Foundation's next event will be its 11th Annual Bowl-a-thon on July 16.

Welcome!

NEW MEMBERS!

Artphoto By Pietro LLC

Professional photography studio offering services for portraits, weddings, commercial, events, editorial, aerial, and schools.

Norwich | artphotobypietro.com
(860) 514-8939

Borough of Stonington

The oldest Borough in Connecticut, chartered in 1801, with a structure governed by the Board of Warden & Burgesses.

Stonington | stoningtonboroughct.gov
(860) 535-1298

Brookside Farm Museum

Dedicated to preserving land and property at 33 Society Road, serving as a vibrant community resource.

Niantic | brooksidefarmmuseum.com
(860) 373-0397

Bubblehead Vacations LLC

Travel planning services led by Dave Bryant, specializing in bespoke itineraries and expert advice.

Groton | bubbleheadvacations.com
(843) 948-6154

Cal's Appliance

Appliance repair service covering New London, Windham, Middlesex, and Tolland counties with expert, one-stop solutions.

Jewett City | calsapplianceservice.com
(860) 884-4548

Connecticut Lyric Opera, Inc.

State's most-performing opera company offering fully-staged performances across Connecticut.

New London | ctlyricopera.org
(860) 861-0283

Decker

Full-service agency providing strategic consultancy, marketing, branding, design, advertising, and more.

Rocky Hill | deckerct.com | (860) 659-1311

ECHO Cancer Foundation, Inc.

Non-profit offering support services, guidance, and education to cancer patients and caregivers.

Norwich | echoassociates.org/cancer-foundation/foundation-services
(860) 420-9722

Geo SubSea, LLC

Provides marine scientific expertise to the offshore industry, facilitating collaboration between developers, engineers, and government agencies.

Middletown | geosubseaconsulting.com
(860) 682-7093

Harris Business Advisors LLC

Offers payroll, bookkeeping, accounting, and business consulting services.

Norwich | harrisbusinessadv.com
(959) 837-0422

Holiday Inn

Full-service hotel offering 120 well-appointed guestrooms, including deluxe suites, with amenities such as complimentary high-speed wireless Internet and an indoor heated pool.

New London | ihg.com/holidayinn
(860) 949-6020

Kin D Thai & Sushi

Restaurant offering top-quality Thai cuisine and sushi in a cozy atmosphere, catering to vegetarians, vegans, and those with dietary restrictions.

New London | kin-dthaiandsushi.com
(860) 574-9097

Lemoine Distributors LLC

First choice for Healthy Snack and Beverage Vending Machines with a motto of "Vending Made Easy."

Ledyard | (860) 514-8377

Niantic Bay Playhouse

Home of East Lyme Regional Theater, offering theatrical performances in a picturesque setting.

Niantic | nianticbayplayhouse.org
(860) 850-5072

Petra Star

Unique collection of Sustainable Artisan and Vintage Jewelry, including the Linked by Love Permanent Jewelry.

Mystic | petrastar.com | (860) 775-7377

Samantha Storey, Realtor RE/MAX Coast and Country

Passionate real estate expert offering friendly guidance in New London & Windham Counties for over 20 years.

Mystic | samanthastorey.remax.com
(860) 961-9795

Temple Emanu-El

Reform Jewish community supporting diversity and inclusivity in the Greater New London area.

Waterford | tewaterford.org | (860) 443-3005

The Diamond

Sourdough pizza with shuffleboard & timeless games, unique craft beer, cocktails, and a curated wine list.

New London | instagram.com/diamondnlc
(959) 716-4009

The Harvest Corner

Adult use cannabis store in Colchester offering premium products and exceptional customer service.

Colchester | theharvestcornerct.com
(860) 420-3292

The Ledges Apartments

Vibrant community offering 1 and 2 bedroom apartments and 3 bedroom townhomes in Groton CT.

Groton | theledgesapartments.com
(860) 448-6444

Tina Luft, Kazantzis Real Estate

Passionate realtor with 30+ years of experience offering friendly guidance in New London & Windham Counties.

Brooklyn | TinaLuftRealtor.com
(860) 917-1073

Triton Square

Remarkable new apartment development in Groton. Seamlessly blending modern design with comfort and convenience.

Groton | tritonsquare.com | (860) 570-2000

Turner Environmental, LLC

Environmental consultancy firm with over 1,000 investigations and expertise in permitting, reporting, and compliance.

East Lyme | turnerenviro.com
(860) 705-8704

\$PENT LOCAL \$TAYS LOCAL | SUPPORT THE LOCAL BUSINESSES THAT SUPPORT YOU

For a list of more local Chamber businesses, visit ChamberECT.com.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM Q1 AT CHAMBERECT



Member News Releases Shared



+

2 **SOLD OUT**
Business
After Hours

11 Awards Presented



**increase in
social interactions**

127,000+

Facebook impressions

\$109,072 awarded to 51 Organizations

2 NEW STAFF MEMBERS

Andrea Manning
Administrative Partnerships Manager

Kevin Zhang
Community Manager, Regional Innovation Center

**Be part of the momentum: join and get engaged today at
ChamberECT.com or (860) 701-9113!**



Photo courtesy of Mystic Aquarium



Mystic Aquarium Expands Renewable Ocean Energy Exhibit with Research Partners, and Ørsted, Eversource

Mystic Aquarium, in partnership with leading research agencies, Ørsted, and Eversource, announces the expansion of its Renewable Ocean Energy exhibit, enriching the experiences of over 800,000 visitors annually with insights into offshore wind energy and the Aquarium's pioneering research.

Katie Cubina, Senior Vice President for Mission Programs, emphasizes the urgency of transitioning to renewable sources like wind, solar, and geothermal power. Mystic Aquarium actively investigates the potential impacts of offshore wind on marine ecosystems and wildlife to inform responsible development in our region.

Nicole Verdi, Ørsted's Senior Manager of Government Affairs & Policy, underscores offshore wind as a vital solution in combating climate change. Ørsted prioritizes coexistence with marine wildlife, ensuring responsible construction of clean energy infrastructure.

Ray Collins, Government Affairs & Community Relations, Offshore Wind at Eversource Energy, stresses the importance of transitioning to clean, sustainable energy sources. Eversource is proud to support Mystic Aquarium's

research efforts, contributing to marine conservation.

Mystic Aquarium's research initiatives encompass monitoring marine mammals and sea turtle strandings, developing health assessment techniques, tracking rehabilitated animals, and analyzing environmental DNA near wind farms. This data-driven approach informs responsible development to meet climate targets while safeguarding marine ecosystems and wildlife.

The exhibit, funded by grants, features video interviews with key Aquarium leaders, showcasing research and conservation efforts. Interactive experiences engage visitors of all ages, inspiring environmental stewardship.

Connecticut's leadership in offshore wind development is evident, with State Pier in New London serving as a hub for wind turbine assembly. Revolution Wind will deliver renewable energy to Connecticut and Rhode Island, powering homes across both states. This milestone underscores the region's commitment to a sustainable future powered by clean, renewable energy.



Photo courtesy of Foxwoods Resort Casino

Zac Young's Sprinkletown Donuts & Ice Cream Now Open at Foxwoods

From the sprinkled mind of celebrity Pastry Chef Zac Young comes his newest concept: Zac Young's Sprinkletown Donuts & Ice Cream. With customizable donuts and signature ice cream sundaes with a "choose your own adventure" menu, it's a sweet playground for both kids and adults alike.

With fresh, hot, mini donuts rolling out of the donut robot, guests can choose their unique glazes and toppings or flavored sugars to build their own sweet creation. The soft serve menu is equally as playful with guests choosing from a festive variety of magic shells, sauces, toppings, and of course, sprinkles!

Recognized as one of the country's top pastry chefs, Chef Zac Young is known for his playful takes on American desserts, including the all-in-one sensation, The PieCaken!

Zac is best known for Final Four finish on the inaugural season of Bravo's "Top Chef: Just Desserts," The Cooking Channel's long-running show, "Unique Sweets" and his costumes and commentary on Food Network's "Halloween Baking Championship". He frequently appears on "Chopped," "Beat Bobby Flay," "Worst Cooks in America," "Bakers Vs Fakers" and "Best Bakers in America".



Unlocking Marketing Mastery: Step-by-Step Workshops with Miranda Creative

Introducing Step by Step with Miranda Creative at The Regional Innovation Center 92 Eugene O'Neill Dr, in downtown New London. During your midday break, join the award-winning team of Miranda Creative for unique, hands-on, in-person workshops where you will learn – step by step – how to master simple marketing tasks that can be complex to understand.

These fast-paced work sessions will have attendees addressing these tasks in real time. Natural educators, and part of a well-known culture of community involvement, Miranda Creative's digital marketers, social media mavens, and brand specialists will make learning fun.

Each class is only \$5 for Chamber Members and \$20 for Non-Chamber Members and is limited to 25 attendees. Reservations open two weeks before each workshop. Topics are subject to change based on market conditions or trending technologies.

Have a suggestion for a Step by Step? Feel free to email rtaskoski@mirandacreative.com and we will be happy to consider adding it to the roster.



New Tourism Campaign Aligning With Connecticut's Brand Theme, 'Make It Here'

Governor Ned Lamont today announced the launch of Connecticut's latest tourism campaign for the spring and summer 2024 travel season. The campaign leans into the state's new brand theme "Make It Here," aligning the branding and tourism campaigns with this singular tagline and bringing synergy to efforts encouraging consumers to live, work, and play in Connecticut.

Replacing the "Find Your Vibe" tourism campaign that launched in 2022, the "Make It Here" tourism campaign builds upon the prior campaign's success by infusing energy, vibrancy, and an abundance of activities that showcase Connecticut's diverse landscape – from a rich arts scene to exhilarating outdoor adventures, world-class dining, family entertainment, and deep-rooted history.

"As we continue on this exciting journey with the 'Make It Here' campaign, we're not just promoting tourism, we're celebrating the essence of Connecticut – the spirit of innovation, creativity, and community that defines us," Governor Lamont said. "From bustling cityscapes to serene landscapes, Connecticut offers an unparalleled experience for visitors and residents alike. Together, let's showcase why Connecticut is not just a destination but a way of life."

With a budget of \$1.86 million, the campaign will span from April 1, 2024, through Labor Day 2024, employing an integrated mix of marketing tactics including:

- Inflight seatbacks on targeted JetBlue flights
- Connected TV/digital video
- Prominent out-of-home placements in New York City,

Boston, and along highways in Connecticut

- Robust social media engagement
- Content marketing
- Paid search marketing

"Tourism is a cornerstone industry in our state, supporting more than 150,000 jobs," Dan O'Keefe, commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, said. "Aligning our latest tourism campaign with 'Make It Here' reinforces our commitment to reshaping perceptions about Connecticut to attract more businesses and residents, while also bolstering this vital sector."

The campaign will spotlight hundreds of businesses statewide, ranging from hotels and restaurants to cultural attractions, theaters, wineries, breweries, and state parks, showcasing the breadth and depth of Connecticut's tourism offerings. In addition to attracting visitors, the campaign also aims to foster local pride by encouraging residents to explore Connecticut's diverse attractions and experiences in their own communities.

"The 'Make It Here' platform celebrates a fundamental truth about Connecticut – that we are a state of innovation and action," Anthony Anthony, Connecticut's chief marketing officer, said. "When people visit to play, they feel that spirit and may consider making a life here. That's why it's so important to unify our messaging marketing strategies around that singular live, work, play idea and 'Make It Here' message."

For travel inspiration and upcoming summer events, visit Connecticut's official tourism website at ctvisit.com.

Chamber to Celebrate Mike Buscetto as the 73rd Annual Citizen of the Year on May 23

Michael “Mike” Buscetto, III of Waterford, has been named the 2024 Citizen of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut. Known for his transformative endeavors and philanthropic initiatives, Buscetto will be honored at a testimonial dinner on Thursday, May 23, at Mohegan Sun, beginning at 6 p.m.

Buscetto’s impact on Southeastern Connecticut is profound and multifaceted. Throughout the pandemic, while many businesses struggled, he doubled down on his commitment to the community. His restaurant, Filomena’s in Waterford, remained open with innovative safety measures, providing not only quality food and drink but also a much-needed source of respite and entertainment.

In addition to his entrepreneurial ventures, Buscetto has spearheaded inclusive urban development projects, such as New London’s Easy Street, the city’s first 55+ active adult community. His contributions extend to Waterford, where he developed the Utopia Centre on Route 1, home to Filomena’s and a testament to his commitment to economic development and community building.

Beyond business, Buscetto is deeply invested in supporting the region’s

youth. He founded the “Bash at the Beach” fundraiser at New London’s Ocean Beach Park, which has raised over \$550,000 for youth programs. His involvement with local foundations and service bureaus, including the Cactus Jack Foundation and Safe Futures, reflects his dedication to fostering a nurturing environment for families.

Buscetto’s contributions have garnered him numerous awards and recognitions, including the Safe Futures Power of Purple Award and the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International Paul Harris Fellow Award. His impact has been felt across various sectors, earning him the title of “Revitalization Leader of the Year” by the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut in 2009.

Mike Buscetto’s dedication to Southeastern Connecticut extends beyond his professional achievements. He is a devoted husband, father, and grandfather, and an active member of the community. His unwavering commitment to improving the lives of those around him makes him a deserving recipient of the Citizen of the Year award.

Purchase tickets and sponsorships and
ChamberECT.com/coy.



EVENTS SCHEDULE

**THURSDAY
MAY 2
12-1 PM**

WORKSHOP WITH MIRANDA CREATIVE
Mine! Mine! Mine! – Claim your
Google Business Listing
Chamber Regional Innovation Center

**WEDNESDAY
MAY 8
5-7 PM**

BUSINESS AFTER HOURS
Charter Oak Federal Credit Union
& Pasta Fresca
1055 Hartford Turnpike, Waterford, CT

**FRIDAY
MAY 10
11:30 - 1:30 PM**

MID DAY CONNECTIONS
Marvel Home Decorating
283 Boston Post Road, East Lyme, CT

**WEDNESDAY
MAY 15
7:30 - 8:30 AM**

BUSINESS BEFORE HOURS
Chelsea Groton Bank
904 Poquonnock Rd, Groton CT

**THURSDAY
MAY 16
5-7 PM**

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS SOCIAL
Topgolf Swing Suite Foxwoods
350 Trolley Line Blvd, Ledyard, CT

Register at ChamberECT.com



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