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Bill tackles student gambling harm

Proposed legislation would require colleges provide on-campus help programs

By Livi Stanford
HARTFORD COURANT STAFF

More than 70% of Connecticut's undergraduate students have gambled, with 17% reporting it at a moderate level, according to a survey of 1,300 students at 30 higher education institutions across the state conducted by two UConn researchers.

Lawmakers are now considering legisla-

tion that would require public higher education institutions to provide "an on-campus problem gambling program at least once each academic year," according to an analysis of SB 381.

"This bill is a good first step to addressing the issue and getting students the help they need," said Sen. Derek Slap, co-chair of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee and a West Hartford Democrat in an email. "The massive expansion of sports betting is creating real problems — not just on college campuses, but especially on college campuses. I fully expect we will need to do more than this bill to adequately combat it."

The Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee passed SB 381 in a 17 to 1 vote.

Diana Goode, executive director of the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling, said in her testimony that the bill is a "practical, prevention-focused policy that strengthens student support systems without imposing unnecessary administrative burdens."

"It ensures that gambling-related harm is addressed proactively, just as campuses already address substance use, mental health, and suicide prevention," she said. "The need for this legislation is clear and data driven."

Goode wrote in her testimony that "sports

betting has rapidly become one of the most significant gambling-related risks facing college campuses.

"National research from the National Collegiate Athletic Association indicates that sports wagering is widespread among college-age populations, with surveys finding that 67% of students living on campus report placing sports bets, and many do so at higher frequency than their non-student peers," Goode said.

Goode said that "public health researchers warn that this normalization of sports betting can contribute to financial stress, academic

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AARON FLAUM/HARTFORD COURANT

The finishing touch



Micaela Levesque, a local muralist, puts the finishing touches on one panel of a five-part mural for the Women's League Child Development Center in Hartford on Thursday. The mural will be part of the center's new STEAM Explorers Park, scheduled to open in late spring.

Vernon prepares to renovate textile mills

214 apartments proposed for 19th-century complex

By Don Stacom
HARTFORD COURANT

With a new \$2.5 million state grant, a Connecticut town is on track to complete an extensive environmental cleanup of the complex of 19th century textile mills where a developer wants to build 214 apartments.

The Vernon mills that have been out of service for decades loom over East Main Street just blocks from the village center, and local officials have been working since 2015 to turn them from urban blight into productive housing.

It's likely to take another five years before tenants are moving into the roughly 130,000-square-foot complex, but that day will mark much more than the salvaging of a prominent part of Vernon's industrial past, officials contend.

"We get the property cleaned up, but we also get this project that will really anchor our downtown," Mayor Dan Champagne said Wednesday. "This is going to make the entrance to downtown much better."

In all, lining up the funding to thoroughly remove asbestos, PCBs and other contaminants from the three primary mills — Daniel's, Amerbelle and Anocoil — and two smaller connected buildings has taken a decade. That's far longer than Camden Management Partners' schedule for renovating them into a mix of predominantly apartments with some first-floor commercial space.

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UConn women, Final Four go hand in hand

Huskies making an unprecedented 25th appearance

By Lori Riley
HARTFORD COURANT

PHOENIX — Thirty-five years ago, on Geno Auriemma's 37th birthday, his UConn women's basketball team beat Clemson in Philadelphia to advance to its first Final Four.

On Friday, the Huskies will compete in their 25th Final Four and hope to compete Sunday for their 13th national title. The undefeated defending national champions will face South Carolina in a rematch of last year's NCAA championship game on Friday at 7 p.m. in an NCAA Tournament semifinal at the Mortgage Matchup Center in Phoenix. UCLA and Michigan play in the second game with the winners advancing to Sunday's final.

"I think (Louisville coach) Jeff Walz said earlier in the tournament, UConn's in the Final Four every year and the rest of



UConn head coach Geno Auriemma watches players warm up during practice prior to the national semifinals at the Women's Final Four of the NCAA college basketball tournament Thursday in Phoenix. **ROSS D. FRANKLIN/AP**

COMING UP

Women's Final Four

UConn faces rival South Carolina on Friday at 7 p.m. on ESPN

Men's Final Four

Huskies meet high-powered Illinois on Saturday at 6:09 p.m. on CBS

See **WOMEN** on Page A2

More tournament coverage in **Sports**

Fierce Trump defender Bondi fired

AG didn't quell Epstein furor or bring trial against foes

By Alanna Durkin Richer, Eric Tucker, Michael Balsamo and Michelle L. Price
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Thursday that Pam Bondi is out as his attorney general, ending the contentious tenure of a loyalist who upended the Justice Department's culture of independence from the White House, oversaw large-scale firings of career employees and moved aggressively to investigate the Republican president's perceived enemies.

The departure followed months of scrutiny over the Justice Department's handling of files related to the Jeffrey Epstein sex trafficking investigation and failed efforts to meet Trump's unwavering demands for criminal cases against his adversaries. As Trump's own frustrations mounted, he began privately discussing firing Bondi, people familiar with the matter say.

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WEATHER FORECAST

Morning mist. High of 64. **PAGE B12**

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