

Impact + Connection

 **mirror**
15 YEARS of *trusted journalism*



15 Years of Stories That *Moved* Connecticut

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From Investigation to Reform: How Connecticut's Towing Laws Changed

Two years of reporting uncovered a dysfunctional system that went overlooked for decades.

Melissa Anderson's car was towed while she was helping her 2-year-old daughter into a winter coat. Fifteen days later, the towing company sold it under a 100-year-old law that gave her no realistic way to get it back. Her husband lost his job when he could no longer reliably get to work. The car was gone, and so was their family's stability.

This wasn't an isolated incident. It was the result of a system that allowed towing companies to sell cars quickly and with little oversight. Over two years, CT Mirror and ProPublica investigated that system, and uncovered overlooked laws that enabled some of the most predatory towing practices in the nation. Outdated statutes allowed towing companies to sell vehicles after just 15 days— often for minor infractions like parking the wrong way or failing to display a permit. Low-income residents were hit hardest, losing not only cars but also their belongings and livelihoods.

Within days of our publishing the first story in the five-part series two

• bills were introduced in the state legislature to address some of the issues raised in our reporting. The Department of Motor Vehicles said it would undertake a "comprehensive review" of towing practices, and the speaker of the House promised that fixing the towing laws will be a "priority" this legislative session. The legislature passed and on June 12, 2025 Governor Lamont signed a major towing reform package to end unsavory towing practices in Connecticut.

• The package makes it easier for people to get their towed vehicles back, requires towing companies to take more time before selling a towed car, requires tow companies to accept credit cards, and allows car owners to retrieve their belongings from the vehicle, even if they don't pay the towing fees.

• Melissa Anderson later told CT Mirror what a relief it was that something had changed.

“
I'm glad we made a difference, This is going to help a lot of people.
”
— Melissa Anderson

THE IMPACT

- Reduced towing fees for low-income
- Clearer notice before vehicles are removed
- Stronger accountability for towing companies



“Independent news reporting is essential to good government.”

- Michael Roy
Supporter

John Mortiz, Energy and Environment Reporter



“Accurate and balanced reporting is essential for the success of our community and democracy.”

- Jeannette Picard
Supporter

Marianna Navarrete Villegas,
Community Engagement Reporter

15 Years Of Holding Government Accountable + Moving Connecticut Forward

■ ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Non-profit news start-up
Connecticut Mirror aims to
inform and empower
Connecticut residents**

2010

2011



During the first term of Gov. Dannel Malloy, Connecticut is facing down a budget crisis and CT Mirror's in-depth coverage helped surface the magnitude of the fiscal challenge facing the state and established CT Mirror as essential source for understanding the state's complex fiscal matters.

 **SMALL STATE | BIG DEBATE RACE**

2015

CT Mirror hosts "Small State, Big Debate: Race" with keynote speaker New York Times columnist Charles Blow. The event asked questions "How will public policy impact diverse populations in Connecticut in the immediate and distant future?" in five critical areas: criminal justice, education, data, health care, and housing.

2017

Current **Publisher & CEO Bruce Putterman** joins CT Mirror alongside Executive Editor **Elizabeth Hamilton**, a veteran investigative reporter from the Hartford Courant the next year.

**American
Journalism
Project**

2019

The American Journalism Project makes a \$830,000 grant to CT Mirror as one of their first grantees nationally. With it **CT Mirror creates an investigative reporting team** and made the organization's first business hire, igniting growth for years to come.

2020



A global pandemic hits in March and people turn back to news media to make sense of a new world. Readership and subscriptions accelerate rapidly and users on CT Mirror's website surpass 1 million.

Accountable
and

CT Mirror publishes an investigation exposing Connecticut's dysfunctional unclaimed property system, prompting the state to roll out sweeping changes that returned over \$40 million back to CT residents.



2021



CT Mirror enters a collaboration with Connecticut Public to jointly hire the state's only reporter dedicated to covering the impact of federal policy on in Connecticut

2022



CT Mirror revealed the governor's office had for two years stalled Connecticut's "Baby Bonds" program, which invests state funds for children born into low-income families to use at age 18. Within weeks, the incoming state treasurer made it his top priority, and eventually state leaders reached a compromise to fund the initiative.

2023

CT Mirror launches an in-person event series with the state's top elected officials, including Senators Chris Murphy and Richard Blumenthal. CT Mirror publishes a deep-dive into the state's "fiscal guardrails," shaping the budget conversations of the entire legislative session is year and next.

2024



2025 and beyond

Reaching on average 330,000 people per month, with 2,500 individual supporters, CT Mirror is the statewide source for trusted nonprofit journalism. This year CT Mirror launched a new event series about Connecticut entrepreneurs titled "This Could Work," and won the National Press Foundation's AARP Award for Excellence in Journalism on Aging for an investigative series on long-term care insurance. With impactful investigative collaborations and new community engagement initiatives, the strength of our supporters is moving CT Mirror to being THE statewide accountability newsroom and toward the next 15 years of impact.

15 Years Of Trusted Journalism



Raising Voices Lab: Listening First, Reporting Together

Enterprise Editor Kelia Torres Ocasio and Community Engagement Reporter Reginald David at a CT Mirror event in Bridgeport.

The Raising Voices Lab is a new desk at CT Mirror that takes a different approach to meeting information needs and distributing reporting to readers. It is spearheaded by two community engagement reporters — one based in Bridgeport and one in Hartford — who form relationships in their cities and crowdsource questions on anything from home ownership to Medicaid to city happenings.

“I want people to see me as a neighbor, not just a reporter.”
— Reginald David

The reporters research the answers to those questions, then push that information out via text, social media, and events. The goal of

A new desk at CT Mirror is connecting with communities in Bridgeport and Hartford, crowdsourcing questions, sharing answers and meeting people where they are.

the Raising Voices Lab has been to understand and meet the information needs of communities of color and to shine a light on stories that have historically been absent from dominant narratives about underrepresented communities — stories covering a Black equestrian museum opening in Hartford, and scholarship opportunities for students in Bridgeport.

“Making the connection between public policy and its impact on underserved communities, particularly communities of color, has long been a priority for The Connecticut Mirror, but this initiative gives us an opportunity to take that work a step further,” said CT Mirror Executive Editor Elizabeth Hamilton.

New Reporters



Marianna Navarrete Villegas
Hartford

Arianna, a Mexico native, is bridging the gap for residents between local issues and state policy issues through community listening and information sharing.



Reginald David
Bridgeport

Reginald, originally from Bridgeport, builds relationships throughout Bridgeport to elevate community voices and increase public dialogue around local issues.



Insight From CT Mirror analysis unlocked \$600 Million Annual Impact

In 2017, Connecticut lawmakers adopted a bipartisan budget compromise four months into the fiscal year — the last state in the nation to do so. The plan created a key “fiscal guardrail” called the volatility cap, requiring any tax revenue above a fixed threshold to be treated as “volatile” and set aside for reserves or pension debt instead of the main state budget.

Over the next six years, the rule diverted an average of \$1.4 billion annually — never less than \$530 million — even as programs struggled for funding. CT Mirror State Budget Reporter Keith Phaneuf analyzed long-term revenue data and found that the 2017 volatility threshold reflected one of the lowest revenue periods in recent history. His reporting showed that much of what was labeled “volatile” was actually stable, recurring income that could safely support education, health care, and social services.

Phaneuf detailed this in his 2024 series, “Fiscal Guardrails or a Straitjacket?” sparking a year-long debate between the legislature, which sought to loosen the cap, and Governor Ned Lamont, who resisted at first. Lawmakers cited Phaneuf’s work to argue that revising the rule wouldn’t risk a return to deficits.

In 2025, Lamont ultimately agreed to redirect \$300 million per year starting in 2026; **lawmakers doubled it to \$600 million.**

By exposing how the volatility cap sequestered stable revenue, **CT Mirror’s reporting was central to the legislative decisions that ultimately shifted hundreds of millions of dollars back into Connecticut’s budget** — making more resources available for public priorities statewide.

CT Mirror’s reporting in “Fiscal Guardrails or Straitjacket?” revealed the “volatility adjustment” redirected an average of \$1.4 billion each year, never less than \$530 million, from the state budget. While the guardrail strengthened the state’s savings, many lawmakers argued that essential programs were being shortchanged even as Connecticut posted record surpluses.