

yale dems



# SEMESTER IN REVIEW

AUGUST 2023

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# A WORD FROM THE BOARD

Dear Extended Dems Community,

What a successful semester to kick off 2023! After restarting some in-person activities in 2022, we were determined to continue this momentum and cement our status as the center of political action on campus.

Last semester, we split our Voter Engagement branch into two parts: a nonpartisan spinoff called Yale Votes, separate from Yale Dems, and a Voter Advocacy branch, which takes an explicitly partisan angle to promoting voter engagement on campus. Our revamped Voter Advocacy branch reached out to every Yale from Wisconsin, helping to elect Janet Protasiewicz to the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, our Legislative Advocacy branch passed a whopping 12 bills through the Connecticut General Assembly, securing wins for education policy, healthcare affordability, and more. Our City Engagement branch grew to record size, working on issues like climate justice, housing affordability, and immigration rights, and our Elections branch volunteered on state legislative campaigns in Virginia and Wisconsin ahead of important elections.

We also revived and improved the traditions that make our Dems community so special. We raised over \$1,200 for the Integrated Immigrant and Refugee Services (IRIS) through the Benefit. We resumed in-person speaker events for the first time in three years, hosting Neera Tanden, former Gov. Gary Locke, Jay Carney, New Haven Mayor Justin Elicker, and grassroots climate justice and gun violence organizers. And we organized an in-person trip to the Hartford State Capitol, created the Dems Alumni Mentorship Program, and hosted an LSAT informational workshop.

None of this would've been possible without your support—thank you for all that you do! In the face of continued oppressive Supreme Court decisions and electoral uncertainty in 2024, we look forward to continuing our fight for justice, equity, and the progressive values that we all hold dear.

## YALE DEMS BOARD 2023

*JOSH GUO '24, RYAN SMITH '24, JANALIE COBB '25, JEREMY WILLIAMS '25, EMMA POLINSKY '25, ISABELLA MORALES '24, EVELYN LETONA ROBLES '25, ISABELLA WALTHER MEADE '25, KATE REYNOLDS '25, DAVID ACQUAAH-MENSAH '25, GUSTAVO TOLEDO '25*



# LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

ADVOCATING FOR PROGRESSIVE LEGISLATION IN DIRECT COLLABORATION WITH STATE LEGISLATORS IN HARTFORD!

The Connecticut General Assembly began its session on January 4 and adjourned on June 7. Each of the **45 Legislative Fellows** worked on a bill about which they were passionate, with the range of topics including **education reform, environmental protection, and criminal justice equity**. Through partnerships with our state legislator partners, and the hard work of fellows and general members alike, we were able to achieve huge wins in education policy, gun reform, criminal justice, healthcare affordability, and other important areas.

This year, we also had a fellow testify against a piece of Conservative gun legislation, which we successfully prevented from passing. At our weekly Tuesday meetings, fellows presented their bills to their peers, generating dozens of public testimony submissions for each bill as a result. Legislative Fellows also had the opportunity to take a **trip to the Hartford Capitol building** in Hartford, Connecticut this semester (pictured below) to culminate a semester of hard work.





# 11

Fellows testified at public hearings in front of state legislators

# 18

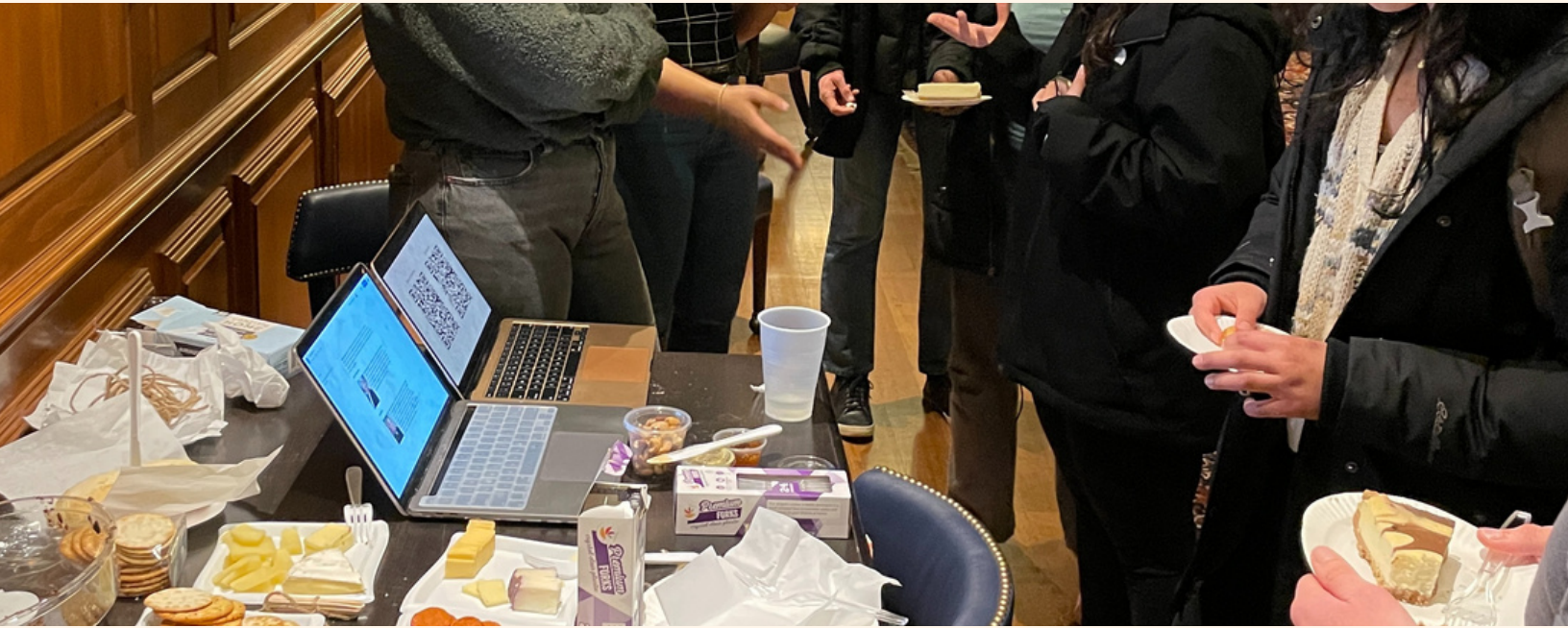
Bills reported out of Committee

# 9

Op-eds written by fellows published in Connecticut statewide publications

# 12

Dems-supported bills passed by the Connecticut General Assembly



## VOTER ADVOCACY

SUPPORTING WISCONSIN VOTERS  
AT YALE FOR SPECIAL ELECTIONS,  
AND LOBBYING FOR  
EARLY/ABSENTEE VOTING IN CT!

This semester the branch of Dems formerly known as **Voter Engagement** became **Voter Advocacy**! After the successful launch of Yale Votes as its own student organization dedicated to advocating on behalf of students to administrators on all issues pertaining to student voting rights, we took the opportunity to expand our own voter advocacy work outside of Yale. Through the work of this branch, we now hope to **advocate for voting rights** on behalf of all people, but especially vulnerable populations, **at the local, statewide, and national levels.**

That said, our work on Yale's campus did not disappear entirely. To support democratic efforts to win the **Wisconsin State Supreme Court**, our VA fellows emailed **68** Yalies from Wisconsin throughout the month of March with resources and information to help them vote. We also hosted a **Wisconsin Cheese Night** information session for those students.

This spring, we also began a new partnership with **Common Cause Connecticut** to support their efforts to advance voting rights in the CGA. **4** fellows worked this semester on bills pertaining to the implementation of **early voting**, improvements to **no excuse absentee voting**, and a **Voting Rights Act (VRA)** in CT. Both early voting and the VRA **passed** and no-excuse absentee voting will go to a referendum in November 2024. Fellows gave **testimony** to the CGA **5** times for these bills, sent in written testimony, and collectively made **hundreds of calls** to CT residents to garner support.

# CITY ENGAGEMENT

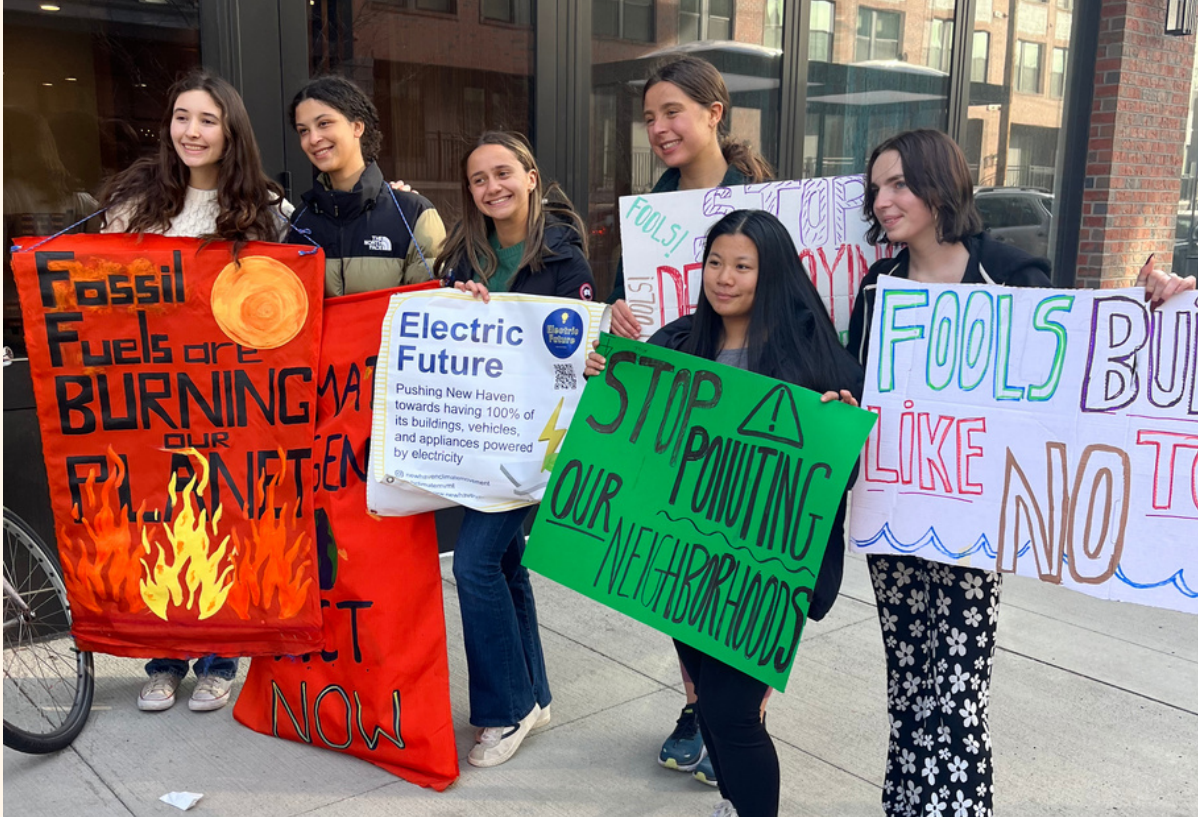
SUPPORTING GRASSROOTS ORGS AND NON-PROFITS IN NEW HAVEN!

City Engagement partners with **New Haven officials, non-profit organizations, and community organizers** to support pre-existing advocacy efforts and promote progressive change in New Haven.

Through this work, Dems is able to foster relationships with amazing community leaders and learn through city education programs. Some of the issue areas we have focused on in the past and present include **housing and affordability, climate policy, education, immigration rights, and mayoral policy work.**

This past spring, we had a record-breaking **22 City Engagement fellows**, our largest cohort yet! This meant that we were able to partner with more New Haven organizations than we ever have before.

Our fellows partnered with the **New Haven Climate Department, New Haven Reads, New Haven Climate Movement, Urban Resources Initiative, and Source Development Hub.** We also began to set up a future project with the **Coordinated Access Network of New Haven.**





## **SOURCE DEVELOPMENT HUB**

Source Development Hub aims to provide an affordable housing platform for those in New Haven and CT broadly. Fellows met once a week with the project head, Billy Huang, to come up with ideas and reach out to organizations for their input. This project culminated in a 15 page report, which can be found here [LINK].

## **NEW HAVEN CLIMATE DEPARTMENT**

Fellows partnered with this new city department in the mayor's office, led by former alder Steve Winter, to conduct research on composting and electric vehicle policy. They wrote two detailed policy memos, which can be read here [LINK].

## **NEW HAVEN CLIMATE MOVEMENT**

NHCM is a youth-led grassroots organization that leads campaigns for climate action in New Haven. Fellows attended one to two meetings each week, and helped organize internal and external outreach, as well as plan and attend monthly public actions alongside NHPS students!

## **URBAN RESOURCES INITIATIVE**

Fellows working with URI helped to canvas in areas of New Haven with particular needs for increased tree planting. Canvassing took place on multiple weekends for several hours at a time!

## **NEW HAVEN READS**

Fellows volunteered with New Haven Reads and tutored young kids from New Haven Public Schools. Specifically, Fellows took turns reading and playing educational games with New Haven youth for at least one hour per week.





# ELECTIONS

2023 IS STILL AN ELECTION YEAR - SUPPORTING BATTLEGROUNDS CAMPAIGNS AND ORGS IN WI, VA, FL & GA!

This semester, Elections fellows worked as **remote interns in competitive races** in multiple states. For example, fellows worked on state legislative races in the newly redistricted **battleground state of Virginia**, interned for a competitive state senate **special election campaign in Wisconsin**, and continued working with **grassroots voting organizations**. Fellows work in Virginia will help set up Democrats for success later this year. And although the Democratic candidate lost in the Wisconsin special election, she came **within 2 percentage points**, an impressive result in a historically red district. Throughout the semester, fellows conducted **donor and policy research**, connected with voters, and assisted with **data analytics**. Fellows met weekly with senior campaign staff and often met the candidates themselves. Additionally, fellows attended **nine weekly Elections Meetings** to learn campaigning skills that may prove useful later in their careers.

**6** Campaigns and Grassroots Organizations

**20** Fellows from around the Country

**11** Weeks working as Campaign Interns

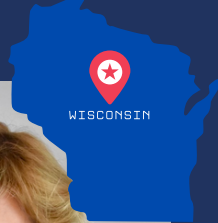
**300+** Hours Worked During the Semester



Michael Feggans for VA-House of Delegates District 97



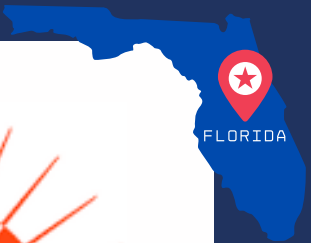
Joshua Cole for VA-House of Delegates District 65



Schuyler VanValkenburg for VA-State Senate District 16



Jodi Habush Sinykin for WI-State Senate District 8



# SPEAKERS

HIGHLIGHTING KEY VOICES IN POLITICS, POLICY, AND ORGANIZING!

Dems held a variety of speaker events this past semester—and for the first time since 2019, many were in person! From presidential advisors to elected officials to grassroots activists, we exposed Yalies to pioneering voices in politics, journalism, and organizing through extended Q&As and intimate small-group dinners, making Dems speakers can't-miss events for any members of the extended Yale community. See below for details on our speaker lineup.



## NEERA TANDEN

Ms. Tanden currently serves as Director of the Domestic Policy Council and Senior Advisor to President Biden, and has previous experience as a policy advisor for the Clinton and Obama presidential campaigns, and as President of the Center for American Progress.



## JAY CARNEY

Mr. Carney has served as White House Press Secretary under President Obama (the longest-serving one of the 21st century), and a TIME Magazine journalist for 20 years, covering topics such as the fall of the Soviet Union and the Clinton/Bush presidencies.



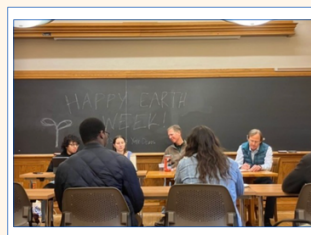
## JUSTIN ELICKER

Mr. Elicker has served as New Haven's mayor since 2020. Prior to serving as mayor, he worked as a New Haven alder and as the Executive Director of the New Haven Land Trust.



## GARY LOCKE

Mr. Locke has served as Governor of Washington (the first Chinese-American governor in history), Secretary of Commerce, and U.S. Ambassador to China.



## CLIMATE ORGANIZING PANEL

This panel included young Yalie activists from the New Haven Climate Movement, as well as Professor John Wargo, a Yale EVST professor who teaches environmental law and has advised organizations such as the World Health Organization, EPA, and CDC.



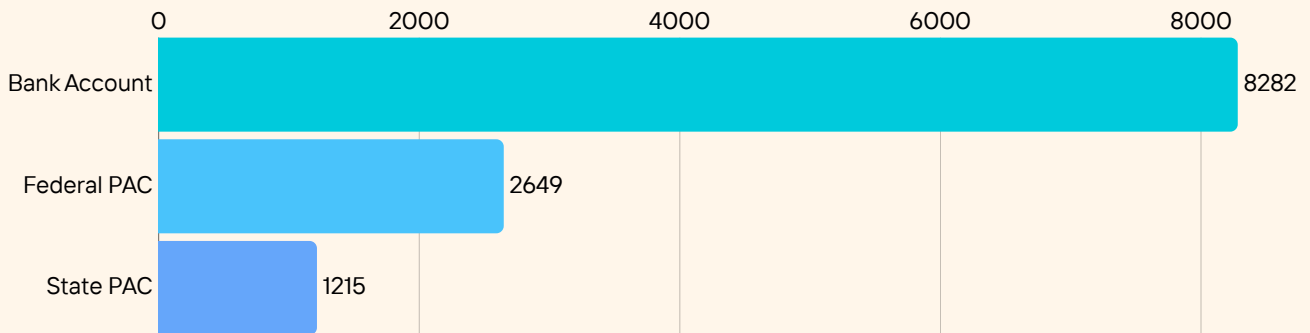
## GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

This panel included experts on gun violence prevention such as Rob Wilcox, from Everytown for Gun Safety and an architect of last year's Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, as well as grassroots activists with experience creating meaningful gun reform.

# FINANCES

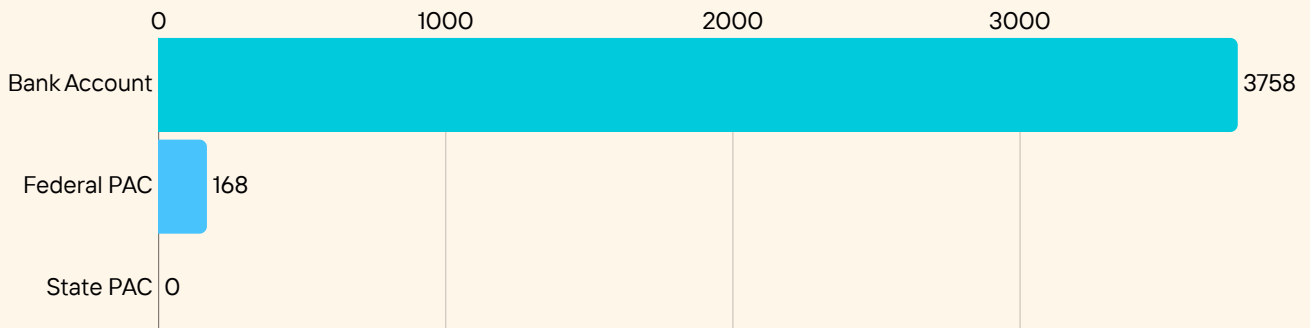
ENSURING THAT DEMS CAN REMAIN ACCESSIBLE IN THE LONG RUN

## OUR ACCOUNTS



We ended this semester in a healthy financial position, with over **\$8,000** in our bank account, over **\$2,500** in our federal PAC, and over **\$1,000** in our state PAC.

## NET GAIN



Our fundraising efforts this semester paid off: we gained over **\$3,700** for our bank account and over **\$150** for our federal PAC.

## SEMESTER HIGHLIGHTS

In addition to our normal fundraising efforts, we were proud to have raised **over \$1,200** for IRIS, a local immigrant services center in New Haven.



## OUR COMMUNITY!

MAKING DEMS FUN AND ENGAGING FOR OUR MEMBERS!

Possibly the best part of being in Yale Dems is participating in the Dems community. Since the return of in-person activities last year, we continued to bring back our favorite Dems traditions to stay true to the work hard, play hard spirit that has defined our organization. Whether it was fun ways for our members to get to know each other and make friends, or opportunities to have fun while raising money for good causes, we made sure that Dems events were ones to remember for Yalies across campus!



### FAM REVEAL!

We had a blast revealing our Dems Families, where we grouped "Little Sibs" under a "Big Sib" mentor, as a group for hanging out, meals, and advice!



### DEMS WOADS!

DWoods returned bigger and better than ever, and we raised over **\$250**, while dancing the night away at Toad's Place.



### THE BENEFIT!

The Benefit returned, in support of IRIS for a second year, hosted in collaboration with 10+ cultural and arts groups on campus. We were proud to raise over **\$1,200** by the time the night was over.

# STAY CONNECTED!



## **MENTOR A DEM!**

This semester, we launched a brand-new **Alumni Mentorship Program** to connect Yale Dems students with alumni who share their career interests and goals. With 10 participating alumni and 13 students, this program was a big success. If you're interested in becoming a mentor in the fall, please fill out [this form](#). Thanks so much for your engagement and participation!

## **SUPPORT A DEM!**

Dems is unable to remain cost-free to members without the support of alumni! We accept donations via **GoFundMe** and our **federal PAC**. Feel free to also reference [our giving guide](#) when considering a donation.

## **YALE DEMS BOARD 2023**

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