

civic leadership within Lions Clubs International, where he later served as District Governor of District 51-E. The values that guided his life—discipline, sensitivity to the needs of others, and a deep respect for education and service—remain reflected in the mission of the organization.

For more than four decades, the Fondo de Ayuda Social del Leonismo has served children, youth, and families throughout Puerto Rico, responding to needs related to disaster relief, rehabilitation services, and housing assistance. To date, the organization has disbursed more than \$500,000 indirect aid throughout the island.

Beyond immediate assistance, the organization is distinguished by its commitment to sustained, long-term support. It has accompanied students from their early school years through the completion of their university studies, helping remove barriers and expand opportunities for those most in need.

The Fondo de Ayuda Social del Leonismo is recognized by Lions District 51-E and by Lions Clubs International as a permanent service initiative of Lionism, while maintaining its distinct identity as an independent nonprofit organization.

Mr. Speaker, the Fondo de Ayuda Social del Leonismo represents the very best of community-based service: sustained commitment, responsible stewardship, and an unwavering dedication to improving the lives of others.

I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the Fondo de Ayuda Social del Leonismo for its 46 years of exemplary service and to commend its continued work on behalf of the people of Puerto Rico.

RECOGNIZING HARTFORD HOSPITAL'S NEW FACILITY

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 30, 2026

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, during this weeks Ways and Means Committee hearing, I had the opportunity to speak about Jeff Flaks, President and Chief Executive officer of Hartford HealthCare. During this hearing, I said:

"I want to note the CEO of Hartford Hospital, in my home state, Jeff Flaks. This is a CEO who goes out in the winter and finds people that are homeless, sleeping under bridges, etc., and brings them back to the only place that they will have refuge and care."

Jeff is an extraordinarily leader in the healthcare industry and I am proud to have him working in my district. I include in the RECORD an article from the Hartford Courant about Hartford Hospital's new facility. This tower will be on the cutting edge of medicine and will ensure that residents of Central Connecticut continue to get first rate care. I thank the team at Hartford Healthcare for their work to make this plan a reality.

CT HOSPITAL'S \$950M TOWER IS A WHOPPER, 'MOST ADVANCED' IN NATION. WHAT IT WILL LOOK LIKE AND WHEN.

(By Kenneth R. Gosselin)

A \$1 billion-plus investment in Hartford Hospital over the next decade is spurring an unprecedented building boom not seen in the hospital's 172-year history—with its center-

piece now coming squarely into focus: a \$950 million in-patient and surgical tower that will not only give the hospital a more prominent place in the city's skyline but, hospital leaders say, among hospitals across the country.

The tower, expected to open in 2031, will rise 14 stories, double the height of the next tallest building on the 70-acre campus.

The tower will be built on a one-acre patch now used for valet parking near the corner of Seymour and Jefferson streets, its half a million square feet of space so massive that the upper floors will need to be built out over the top of the neighboring Jefferson Building.

Construction on the tower is expected to begin next year and will include 216 private-room patient beds—increasingly sought for hospital stays—20 surgical areas organized around recovery rooms and specialties by floor, all outfitted with cutting-edge technology.

"So this is a massive investment in the future of Hartford Hospital," said Jeffrey A. Flaks, president and chief executive of Hartford HealthCare, the parent of Hartford Hospital and seven others in Connecticut. "And this building will be the most advanced, most sophisticated hospital building anywhere in the country."

Hartford HealthCare's plans to spend more than \$1 billion over a decade at Hartford Hospital have been well-known since at least the end of 2024, with a new, in-patient tower considered a significant part of those plans. But the specifics weren't disclosed until now, as financing is falling into place.

The reshaping of the hospital's campus seeks to strike a balance among lifting the hospital's national profile, providing more efficiently for the health care needs of the local community and recognizing the reality of an aging population that needs increasingly sophisticated care.

The hospital's \$1 billion-plus plan also includes other major projects, some already in construction.

The projects include a much-needed expansion of the hospital's emergency department; a Hartford HealthCare-Go Health urgent care center with more services than is typical; and a 1,600-space parking garage that is part of a larger "arrival center" with a restaurant and conference space for up to 500.

The hospital also intends to launch the redevelopment of three historic structures at the northeast corner of Washington and Jefferson streets later this year. The project will anchor a growing presence of community clinic space in historic structures along the north side of Jefferson Street.

"This is a generational moment for us," Flaks said. "This will position us for decades to come."

Flaks comments on the details of the new tower came in an interview with The Courant prior to a public announcement Saturday at Hartford HealthCare's annual Black & Red Gala fundraiser, the hospital's largest of the year.

The in-patient tower has been part of the hospital planning since at least 2021 when an \$80 million addition to the Bliss Building was completed, adding critical care space.

The addition came on the heels of the 2016 opening of the \$150 million Bone & Joint Institute orthopedic center. Both projects helped reshape not only the hospital's expanding capabilities but were intended to project a modern image of a destination for increasingly sophisticated health care.

In addition to new technology, the planned tower will increase the percentage of overall private rooms from the hospital's current 60% to about 80%, hospital officials said. The hospital now has 867 patient beds.

Flaks said the projects will be financed primarily through bond funding supported by

the corporation's endowment and other philanthropic gifts.

'A VARIETY OF OPTIONS'

The expansion and reorganization of the hospital's emergency department comes as it annually treats about 110,000 patients, a number that is forecast to grow in the coming years, hospital officials said.

The department already is seeing a severe space crunch, with some patients routinely seen in hallways. According to hospital officials, the emergency department has 108 rooms and averages 305 patients a day.

Cheryl Ficara, the president of Hartford Hospital, said plans call for an expansion into the adjacent Conklin Building into space where as many as 30 beds will be set aside for patients who are "under observation."

"And why that's so important is because many of the people that come into the emergency department, probably, I would say only 25 to 28% are admitted," Ficara said. "The rest are on observation and will be transitioning back out." The exact number of beds that will be added has yet to be determined.

The entrance to the emergency department also is getting a makeover, with separate entrances being created for walk-in patients and those transported by ambulance, Ficara said.

In addition, the hospital expects to open in June a Hartford HealthCare-Go Health urgent-care clinic in the recently-acquired former Girl Scouts of Connecticut headquarters at the corner of Washington Street and Retreat Avenue.

The urgent care center is seen as relieving some of the pressure on the emergency department, giving patients another option when they don't necessarily need emergency department care.

The clinic, expected to open in June, will offer expanded services such as the opportunity for blood work and more sophisticated imaging not typically available at the hospital's other urgent care locations. "We're working with the community very closely to be able to educate them on the variety of options," Ficara said.

ARRIVAL CENTER

The new parking garage—running the length of the south side of Jefferson Street between Washington and Seymour streets—will add about 1,000 new spaces to help ease a longstanding parking crunch at the hospital.

Built in two phases on the site of a now-demolished garage and a former gas station, it is expected to gradually open beginning in 2027. The valet service also will be based in the garage.

The garage also will anchor what the hospital describes as an arrival center.

The venue also will include a restaurant on Seymour Street and a conference center located near the corner Washington and Jefferson streets.

The conference center is expected to accommodate up to 500 people—a size that has the potential to attract national meetings and bring more visitors to the city of Hartford, Flaks said.

"So this is all part of that broader strategy to really have Hartford Hospital be magnetic, to be a destination for research, teaching, innovation, clinical discovery," Flaks said. "And it just adds another piece of the puzzle that we need to be able to elevate and be competitive with anyone across the country to host meetings of this scale. So we're very excited about that."

The parking garage will be connected to the new tower via a skywalk that will lead to the tower's two-story lobby, the new main entrance to the hospital.

And as construction of the new tower starts to take shape, two concourses—one interior, one exterior—will be built to connect all the structures at the heart of the campus: the new tower, the Jefferson Building, the emergency department, the Conklin Building and the High Building—now the main entrance.

“The internal concourse allows patients, families, colleagues to move patients, products—everything—throughout the buildings without the need to access any other pathway,” Keith Grant, vice president of operations for the Hartford region of Hartford HealthCare, said. “It becomes the outer spine of the building.”

An exterior concourse will overlook redesigned landscaping, with a new “healing garden” the focal point. Honoring historic properties.

Up until a few years ago, Hartford Hospital came under intense criticism for its poor stewardship of historic structures on its campus and allowing them to become blighted.

The hospital met with strong opposition in 2023 from neighborhood leaders and preservationists when it moved to demolish a historic, yet decaying, 1920s apartment building at the corner of Washington and Jefferson streets.

Today, plans call for the building and two neighboring ones—primarily their facades—to be incorporated into a new community-based clinical space. Those plans are evidence that the hospital says respect the past while also looking to the future.

The hospital also points to the \$2 million-plus renovation 1879 Queen Anne-style house on Jefferson Street. The house, which had fallen into disrepair, was singled out as one of the most notable properties when the Jefferson-Seymour National Historic District was formed in 1979.

The hospital’s evolving perspective on historic structures also was evident in reversing a plan to demolish the historic, 1920s Hall-Wilson Laboratory in 2021. Instead, the hospital took the unusual step of converting the interior of the brownstone structure into an electrical substation plant, in a \$23 million project.

While most efforts at incorporating historic structures into a modern hospital campus have been focused along Jefferson, Ficara, Hartford Hospital’s president, said the hospital also is now looking along Retreat Avenue.

“All the buildings that we own that are historic and need work, if you will, it’s a partnership of making sure from a historic perspective, that we honor them,” Ficara said. “But, at the same time, renovate them and then use them for today’s day and age, and I think that is very possible.”

HONORING ANDY MARSH

HON. PAUL TONKO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 30, 2026

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker. I rise today to honor the tremendous contributions of Andy Marsh as former CEO, and now Chairman of the Board of Plug Power. I have had the pleasure of working closely with Andy for many years, and I have had a front row seat watching Plug Power grow in Latham, New York and beyond under his leadership.

For decades, Andy’s leadership has shaped the hydrogen industry, helping to usher in America’s embrace of a clean hydrogen econ-

omy. I have long admired his deep appreciation for public policy and his recognition of the power of government to create economic opportunities and drive innovation. Andy understood early that building a hydrogen economy would need more than breakthrough technology—it would require advocacy, partnership, and a willingness to engage in the difficult work of shaping policy.

Andy championed the importance of hydrogen as a tool for decarbonization, energy security, domestic manufacturing, and job creation. His leadership was instrumental in some of the most significant policy achievements for clean hydrogen in our Nation’s history, including the development of the Section 45V Clean Hydrogen Production Tax Credit.

Thanks in large part to Andy’s leadership, the United States has become a global leader in clean hydrogen development. Through strategic partnerships, expanded domestic manufacturing, and a steadfast commitment to American energy leadership, what was once seen as an emerging technology has become another tool to secure our Nation’s clean energy future.

Andy has inspired colleagues, industry leaders, labor partners, and public servants alike with his belief that innovation and economic growth can—and must—go hand in hand. I congratulate Andy for his decades of contributions to our Nation’s energy future and the lasting legacy he will continue to build as Chairman of the Board of Plug Power. I am confident that because of his leadership, clean hydrogen will play an important role in moving our Nation closer to a cleaner, more prosperous future.

RECOGNIZING HANCOCK MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS’ HEROIC EFFORTS

HON. MIKE EZELL

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 30, 2026

Mr. EZELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary bravery of a group of middle school students from Hancock County, Mississippi, who stepped up in a moment of crisis and prevented what could have been a tragic accident.

When their school bus driver suffered a medical emergency and lost consciousness, these young students did not panic—they acted. Sixth graders Jackson Casnave and Darrius Clark helped take control of the school bus, easing the bus to a safe stop, while eighth graders Kayleigh Clark and Destiny Cornelius, and sixth grader McKenzy Finch, worked together to call for help and administer lifesaving medicine to their bus driver.

Because of their quick thinking and teamwork, nearly 40 students and their driver were protected from tragedy. That kind of courage and composure is remarkable at any age—but especially from students so young. They did not wait for someone else to act. They stepped up, took responsibility, and made a difference. These students represent the very best of Mississippi—strong character, leadership, and a willingness to help others in a moment of need.

I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing these young heroes for their actions.

They make our state proud, and they remind us all that courage knows no age.

FREE YEMEN FROM IRAN

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 30, 2026

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, last year I appreciated meeting the President of Yemen, Rashad al-Alimi, during the Munich Security Conference. We both identified Iran as the head of the snake of terrorism.

Yemen deserves independence from Iran and its Houthi puppets. War criminal Putin and the Chinese Communist Party support the Houthis. Sanctions of President Trump on Houthis promotes sovereignty of Yemen with Saudi Arabian aid. Free Yemen from Iran.

As a grateful native of Charleston, South Carolina, which was named in honor of King Charles II, along with Mayor William Cogswell, I was honored to be on the Escort Committee for King Charles III and for having met Queen Camilla earlier at the British Embassy, promoting the most British City in America—Charleston, South Carolina.

In conclusion, God Bless Our Troops as the Global War on Terrorism continues. Trump is reinstating Peace Through Strength, revealing war criminal Putin lies, insulting Trump and mocking Trump, welcoming mass murdering Iranian officials to St. Petersburg this week.

Our sympathies to the family and friends of Citadel Cadet Evan Greenleigh, upon his death last weekend.

HONORING THE LIFE OF RICK LAFRANCHI

HON. JARED HUFFMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 30, 2026

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Rick Lafranchi, who passed away on April 13, 2026. A beloved cheesemaker, coach, and community leader, Rick was a positive force for many.

Rick was the second oldest of six siblings in the Lafranchi family of Nicasio, a multigenerational ranching family whose roots date to his grandfather’s immigration from Maggia, Switzerland and the founding the Lafranchi Dairy in 1919. He helped establish and serve as the public face of the award winning Nicasio Valley Cheese Company, a farmstead creamery cofounded with his brother Scott in 2010 and renowned for its production of organic cheeses.

Rick often spoke about the importance of protecting West Marin’s working landscapes, and he matched those words with action through his service on the board of the Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT), including as chair from 2012 to 2014. He credited MALT’s conservation tools with helping his family expand its pasture and build the family’s creamery.

Long before cheesemaking, Rick invested in the development of future generations as a high school baseball coach at his alma mater, Archie Williams High School. He also owned