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## CT Democracy Center Celebrates Champions of Democracy: Announces Winners of Prestigious Annual Awards

(HARTFORD, CONN) – The Connecticut Democracy Center (CTDC) is pleased to announce the recipients of the second annual Connecticut Democracy Center Awards. This year the *2025 CTDC Community Leader Award* will be presented posthumously to [Karen Hobert Flynn](#), former president of Common Cause. [Pursuit Aerospace](#) has been selected to receive the *2025 CTDC Business Leader Award* in recognition of its [Second Chance Program](#), and [Hartford Foundation for Public Giving](#) will be honored with the *Mary C. Gawlicki Philanthropic Leader Award*.

The awards program was established to recognize those committed to strengthening democracy through acts of citizenship, service, and community engagement. The 2025 Connecticut Democracy Center Awards will pay tribute to award recipients at Connecticut's Old State House on **Thursday, March 13, 2025**. Tickets to the ceremony are \$100 and will go on sale on **Thursday, January 2, 2025**.

As a leader in Connecticut civics education, The Connecticut Democracy Center brings people of all ages together through its programming, inspiring them to strengthen our democracy and community through productive civic engagement. The Connecticut Democracy Center Awards will recognize Connecticut community, business, and philanthropic leaders who represent the

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best of that engagement and whose stories encourage others to do the same. “Civics is the art of the possible,” says Terry Mitchell Smith, Board Chair of The Connecticut Democracy Center. “We wish to highlight that numerous companies, organizations, and individuals in the state who are working to advance the principles of democracy and emphasize the importance of exercising the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship.”



**CTDC COMMUNITY LEADER AWARD:**

**Karen Hobert Flynn, former President of Common Cause**

Karen Hobert Flynn spent three decades as a democracy reform activist to secure an inclusive democracy for all. For nearly 40 years, she worked for Common Cause, a grassroots nonpartisan organization dedicated to upholding the core values of American Democracy. Under her leadership in Connecticut, she secured landmark reforms — including winning Connecticut’s groundbreaking full public finance system, numerous ethics laws, and disclosure laws. As national president, she helped Common Cause double its membership and expanded its presence in 30 states. In her last year of life, she led a national coalition in the fight to protect and strengthen the right to vote for all. She also oversaw the largest national nonpartisan election protection program for the 2022 midterms. Her legacy continues with her family, including her husband, Robert B. Flynn, and sons John C. Flynn, Peter K. Flynn, Daniel G. Flynn, and Michael D. Flynn.



**CTDC BUSINESS LEADER AWARD:**

**Pursuit Aerospace, in recognition of their Second Chance Program**

*Award accepted by Jacqueline Gallo Ruggiero, Executive Vice President, Fabrications & Small Machining Division*

Pursuit Aerospace is the largest privately held global manufacturer of complex aircraft engine components worldwide, with 19 sites across the globe and five locations in Connecticut. In 2018, Pursuit partnered with the CT Department of Correction (DOC) to offer a work furlough program in which incarcerated individuals are offered life-changing opportunities to earn market wages with benefits while being trained in skilled labor careers in advanced manufacturing.

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“Pursuit is honored to accept this award, which recognizes the deep contributions of many people over many years, says Jacqueline Gallo Ruggiero, Executive Vice President of the Fabrications & Small Machining Division. “These collective efforts have created life-changing career opportunities for the talented people otherwise underserved and left behind in our society. We are proud of the benefit that our prison partnerships have created for the individuals, the company, the communities, and the states in which they operate. There is still much work to do in this area, and we look forward to continuing to disrupt cycles of recidivism. Always Pursuing Better.”

Since the work furlough program began, over 100 talented individuals have completed it and now hold jobs as machinists, inspectors, and production planners as they rebuild their lives.



**MARY C. GAWLICKI PHILANTHROPIC LEADER AWARD:**

**Hartford Foundation for Public Giving**

*Award accepted by Jay Williams, President and CEO*

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for Hartford and 28 surrounding towns. Through partnerships, the Foundation seeks to strengthen communities in Greater Hartford by putting philanthropy in action to dismantle structural racism and achieve equity in social and economic mobility. Made possible by the gifts of generous individuals, families and organizations, the Foundation has awarded grants of more than \$998 million since its founding in 1925.

"The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is honored to receive this recognition from the Connecticut Democracy Center which shares our commitment to inspiring and empowering residents to engage in civic life to build more cohesive and vibrant communities," said Hartford Foundation President/CEO Jay Williams. "We continue to be amazed by the work of Greater Hartford's nonprofit organizations that address the needs of our communities and lift up the voices of the people who are best equipped to develop solutions to the challenges they face. As we celebrate our organization's centennial year, this will continue to be what guides the work we do."

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This award was established in 2023 in memory of Mary Gawlicki, who served on the Connecticut Democracy Center Board from 2018 to 2023. In 1990, Mary and her husband, Ted Gawlicki, teamed up to found Corporate Translations Inc. (CTi). After growing the company, she co-founded the Gawlicki Family Foundation to offer grants to Connecticut and Northeast U.S.-based nonprofits committed to transformative change in education, pulmonary health, and municipal and economic development. Since its inception, the Foundation has awarded nearly \$2.5 million to over 30 organizations, upholding the belief that private dollars power public progress.

The Connecticut Democracy Center, founded in 1998, offers programs that provide people a lifetime pathway to tools to take civic action in their communities. CTDC offers immersive civics and history programs, including *Kid Governor*<sup>®</sup>, *Connecticut History Day*<sup>®</sup>, *The Connecticut Democracy Center Debate Tournament*, and *We The People: The Citizen and the Constitution*. CTDC also manages Connecticut's Old State House in partnership with the Connecticut General Assembly to provide a unique setting for civic exploration. Exhibits, workshops, and events bring together civic experts, educators, historians, public figures, and the public for timely, nonpartisan conversations to explore historical and modern-day perspectives on government, democracy, and social issues. The Connecticut Network (CT-N), also managed by CTDC in partnership with the Connecticut General Assembly, is the state's source for complete and balanced coverage of Connecticut state government and public policy.

For more information on The Connecticut Democracy Center, the awards, and event sponsorship, please visit <https://ctdemocracycenter.org/ctdc-awards/> or email Matthew LaCoille, Ed.D., Director of Development at [matthew.lacoille@ctdemocracycenter.org](mailto:matthew.lacoille@ctdemocracycenter.org).

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*The mission of the Connecticut Democracy Center is to inspire people of all ages to engage in civic life and strengthen their communities. We envision a society where everyone is empowered to participate in our democracy. With an entire family of civic education and engagement programs, CTDC provides audiences of all ages with the information and skills needed to be effective modern citizens and community partners in big and small ways.*