

Twitter Thread by [Dígame Concejal](#)



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When I wrote an opinion piece for the New York Times, there was a pretty extensive fact-checking process (shout out to [@jdesmondharris](#)). Apparently, that is not the case at the Wall Street Journal, at least when a piece advances a highly partisan, fundamentally racist view...

So let's dig into just how wrong Bob Stefanowski's screed against Hartford is. To be clear, Hartford has a lot of problems! But Stefanowski diagnoses them all exactly backwards. He is consistently and astonishingly wrong...

So, yes, Hartford has high violent crime *relative to other cities*. But crime has been at historic lows for a decade, so being the most dangerous doesn't mean "actually dangerous for middle class people who live in the suburbs."

Courant will continue to publish, but its reporters and editors will no longer work the phones in its downtown offices. Some journalists may consider the shift to remote work a relief. Hartford is the state's most dangerous city and, by some measures, among the most dangerous cities in the country.

(It is unsurprising that Stefanowski is more concerned with the mostly white, mostly nonresident staff of the Courant than with the Black and brown Hartford residents who *are* affected directly by violent crime.)

Bob is so close to getting it here. White flight and resource-hoarding (and the loss of manufacturing jobs to globalization and souther states with poor wages) *did* hurt the city badly.

Once famous as the “insurance capital of the world,” Hartford has been in decline for 30 years. In the 1990s, Hartford’s population hemorrhage made national news. Today it is smaller still, less than 70% of what it was in 1950. Hartford’s poverty rate is one of the highest in the nation. The city is falling apart.

Guess what: if you create an education system that puts all the neediest and poorest students together, in a city with a median household income that is half of the regional average, spending marginally more per student won't be enough!

Even before the pandemic, WalletHub.com ranked Hartford 46th among state capitals in affordability, economic well-being, education, health and quality of life. The past nine months are unlikely to have improved that ranking. The city spends more than \$400 million annually on education (\$17,260 per student) yet nearly 30% of its students don't graduate high school on time. Only 18% of students in grades 3 through 8 test at age-appropriate levels in math, and 25% do so in reading.

Now Bob wades into pure fantasy. Bronin did not "embrace" the defund the police mantra. He explicitly rejected it, proposed a \$1m reduction (and 5-year projected increases) and grudgingly acceded to the \$2m reduction (after thousands of BLM protesters showed up at his house).

Earlier this year Mayor Luke Bronin, 41, embraced the progressive mantra to "defund the police" and reduced the city's public-safety budget by \$2 million, or 6%.

Hartford has more than double the average per-capita number of cops, and did not reduce that number after the budget was approved. The spike in gun crime began before the budget was approved and mirrored spikes in other cities that didn't cut public safety budgets.

The spike in gun violence that followed required Mr. Bronin to ask Gov. Ned Lamont, also a Democrat, to send in the Connecticut State Police. There were more than 200 shootings in the city through the first 11 months of the year—making it Hartford’s most violent year in at least a decade. What does Mr. Bronin think is responsible? A Connecticut Public Radio report put it bluntly: “The mayor blames the explosion of gun violence in his city on COVID-19.”

This is my favorite part. Bob accurately notes that the city can't generate enough tax revenue because it hosts the large untaxed services that the whole region uses but doesn't pay for. Then he blames the mayor (who can't fix this) for asking the suburbs (who can) for help.

Instead of putting a plan in place to correct decades of fiscal mismanagement, Mr. Bronin headed to the suburbs to pitch a zany left-wing idea. Progressives call it “regionalism.” Sane people call it a tax grab.

Hartford was critical to the entire region’s success, Mr. Bronin argued, so the surrounding suburbs should share their tax revenue with the city and absorb some of its costs. This, he argued, was essential to ensuring Hartford’s fiscal stability. “You can’t be a suburb of nowhere,” he told residents of West Hartford, a separate municipality. Not surprisingly, West Hartford and other adjacent towns sent Mr. Bronin packing.

Dude! The "well-managed" towns exclude the poor and let impoverished cities provide needed services. THAT IS THE STRUCTURAL PROBLEM, WHICH THOSE CITIES CAN'T SOLVE.

Instead of taking zoning control away from well-managed towns across the state, Mr. Lamont should work with mayors to fix their cities' fundamental structural problems. Bailouts may hide those problems for a while, but they'll return eventually.

The special interest here is suburban legislators and resists unwilling to give up segregated schools and fiscal free-riding! Hartford's taxes are high because half our taxable property is held by nonprofits and government and the state won't reimburse us adequately!

Connecticut desperately needs leaders who are willing to confront special-interest groups and reform the pensions that are crushing city budgets. Cities like Hartford need to lower taxes and reduce regulations to attract business and create jobs. Mayors

Districts wouldn't underperform if they were drawn to be economically and ethnically diverse, because they would then benefit from the political influence of affluent parents, and the motivation for those families to hoard their resources in segregated towns would decline.

and address crime, invest in charter and magnet schools, and allow education funding to follow the child, giving parents the ability to choose where their kids go to school, rather than trapping them in underperforming districts.

OK, I'm done. Stefanowski is advocating for retrenchment the structural problems that have hurt Hartford because he's unwilling to recognize, like most suburbanites here, that he is complicit in an extractive, racist system of segregation.

I have trod this ground before: <https://t.co/pAKTTwAE4J>

Practically every day, I wake up to a story about people inside Connecticut's impoverished cities squabbling over scraps because the town government system leaves them perennially underfunded and overburdened.

— Dxedgame Concejal (@RSGAT) [January 26, 2018](#)

Indeed, I have trod this ground many times: <https://t.co/gN45ScJwql>

School integration based on voluntary opt-in by affluent white parents can't work: they judge school quality not by accepted measures, but by relative whiteness and affluence. CT's town-based school district system makes this a self-fulfilling prophecy. <https://t.co/v2kD6TBkn2>

— Dxedgame Concejal (@RSGAT) [January 29, 2020](#)