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- PRESS RELEASE -

MERRILL: DESPITE CHALLENGES FROM HURRICANE SANDY, CONNECTICUT IS READY TO VOTE!

SECRETARY OF THE STATE REVIEWS FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR ELECTION
DAY; UNVEILS NEW PROGRAM IN COOPERATION WITH CT BAR ASSOCIATION
TO TRAIN VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS – WILL SERVE IF NEEDED AS
SECRETARY’S DESIGNEES AUTHORIZED TO ENTER POLLING PLACES, REVIEW
FOR COMPLIANCE WITH STATE AND FEDERAL ELECTION LAWS

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Denise Merrill today declared that – despite serious challenges presented to Connecticut’s election administrators at the local level due to complications from hurricane Sandy – the state is ready for more than nearly 2.1 million registered voters to cast ballots in tomorrow’s 2012 Presidential election. After power outages in many Connecticut communities over the past week, utility companies have reported to Secretary Merrill that electricity has been restored to all but two out of 773 voting precincts in Connecticut. These two polling locations – one in Bridgeport and the other in New London – are being moved to alternate locations for tomorrow’s presidential election. A specific listing of the polling place changes follows below. At a news conference at the state capitol in Hartford, Secretary Merrill reviewed the Election Day Hotline, acceptable forms of voter identification, and announced a first-of-its kind partnership with the Connecticut Bar Association to have a group of volunteer attorneys serve as designees on Election Day authorized to enter and review any polling place for compliance with state and federal election law.

“Once again I am very proud of the hard work and dedication of our local election administrators in Connecticut who for the second year in a row dealt with a major weather disaster just a week prior to election day and came together to make sure all of us could cast ballots tomorrow,” said Secretary Merrill, Connecticut’s chief elections official. “We are on the job for election day, and keeping an eye on things to make sure we will have an orderly election. We are expecting a very large turnout tomorrow, and we will be ready to respond if any problems arise. I also want to thank the Connecticut Bar Association for providing our office with a corps of volunteer attorneys who can serve as the eyes and ears of my office should an issue at a local polling place require further examination. I urge voters to cast their ballot tomorrow and make their voices

heard. We will have a hotline up and running with our state and federal partners, so call or email us if you encounter any problems at the polls.”

Secretary Merrill was granted new authority in 2011 when the Connecticut General Assembly overwhelmingly passed [Public Act 11-46](#) which states, in part: “...the Secretary of the State, or the Secretary's designee, shall be allowed access to each polling place within the state during any municipal, state or federal election, primary or recanvass for the purpose of reviewing each polling place and recanvass for compliance with state and federal law.” Secretary Merrill first used this new statutory authority by dispatching designees during the municipal primary in Bridgeport on September 27, 2011.

“We are very excited about this program, which has never been tried before, because this means that our office will be able to have our own eyes and ears on Election Day,” said Secretary Merrill, Connecticut’s chief elections official. “We are not anticipating any problems on Election Day, but this allows our office to independently verify reports of any difficulties and do our best to solve problems on site so our democracy’s most sacred practice – voting – can continue unimpeded. I am grateful for the cooperation of the Connecticut Bar Association and the Registrars of Voters Association who have both helped us establish this unprecedented effort. I actually hope I won’t need to deploy any designees, but we will be ready should a situation arise.”

“We are pleased to assist the Secretary of the State’s office in this important role on Election Day,” said Kimberly A. Knox, President-Elect of the Connecticut Bar Association. “This team of attorneys will provide needed support in monitoring issues at the polls in a neutral manner, upholding the right to vote for all citizens.”

The Connecticut Bar Association is a professional association committed to the advancement of justice, the protection of liberty, and to safeguarding the dignity of the legal profession.

The designees will only be dispatched to a polling place if a particular problem is reported to the Secretary of the State’s office and Secretary Merrill determines it is necessary to receive independent confirmation of reported information. Designees have no authority in the polling place other than to observe the local administration of elections and report back to Secretary Merrill on the compliance with state and federal election laws. The volunteer attorneys have been trained in election administration by the Secretary of the State’s office, and have signed an agreement that they will not act in a partisan way on Election Day. In total, more than 100 Connecticut attorneys have volunteered to participate in the program, and are ready to serve in communities all over the state.

Secretary Merrill once again released the Election Day Hotline in coordination with the State Elections Enforcement Commission and the United States Attorney’s Office in Connecticut which is **1-866-SEEC-INFO** or **1-866-733-2463** in addition to an email hotline elections@ct.gov should voters encounter any difficulties at the polls. Secretary Merrill’s office will be conducting several coordination conference calls throughout the day with counterparts at the State Elections Enforcement Commission and federal authorities to monitor any potential irregularities or problems at the polls.

As voters head to the polls tomorrow, Secretary Merrill urged voters to go online at www.sots.ct.gov to see where their polling place is located. The following polling places in Connecticut were moved due to complications from Hurricane Sandy:

Municipality	Old Location	New Location
Bridgeport	Longfellow School	AquaCulture School
New London	Ocean Beach Park	Harbor School

Secretary Merrill is also reminding voters to bring with them some form of identification when they go to cast a ballot. A driver's license will suffice in all cases but if a voter does not have a government issued photo ID then a bank statement, utility bill, paystub, social security card or other forms of identification are also acceptable. Voters should go online at www.sots.ct.gov to see a complete list of acceptable forms of voter identification. Provisional ballots are available to registered voters who for some reason do not appear on their polling place voter lists. Eligible voters in Connecticut who are not registered to vote can still cast a ballot for President of the United States only. These Presidential ballots are available at local town clerks' offices on Election Day.

Polls will be open tomorrow from 6:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. for Election Day 2012, with a turnout of between 75-80% of registered voters expected to cast ballots.