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SECRETARY MERRILL DETAILS PLANS TO MODERNIZE VOTING IN CONNECTICUT, RELEASES ELECTION PERFORMANCE TASK FORCE REPORT

SECRETARY OF THE STATE JOINS LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE IN RELEASING PLAN FOR
ELECTION DAY REGISTRATION, ONLINE REGISTRATION, NON-PRECINCT PLACE
VOTING AND INCREASED PENALTIES FOR VOTE TAMPERING

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Denise Merrill today joined State Senator Gayle Slossberg and Representative Russell Morin (chairs of the legislative committee on Government Administration and Elections), to detail legislation proposed by Governor Dannel P. Malloy to modernize voting in Connecticut, including Election Day Registration, Online Voter Registration, non precinct-place voting, and increased criminal penalties for vote tampering. Secretary Merrill also released the final report of the Connecticut Election Performance Task Force, a body that examined Connecticut's current electoral system with the goals of identifying measures to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the voting process; maintaining its security and integrity; providing future direction for Connecticut's electoral process; evaluating ways to integrate technology into our system; and finding ways to increase voter participation, particularly among underperforming groups.

“When one in three eligible voters in our state does not even bother to register to vote, that tells me we have a crisis of low voter participation,” said Secretary Merrill, Connecticut's chief elections official. “We need to modernize and streamline our voting process, and make it easier for our increasingly busy and mobile citizens to use their constitutional right to vote. I am grateful that Governor Malloy has put forward these long overdue reforms that will finally bring elections in Connecticut into the 21st century.”

“This a great package of ideas to increase voter participation and to make our voting process more accessible to the citizens of our state. Many of these proposals are initiatives that have been priorities in our committee for years and we are thrilled that the Secretary Merrill and Governor Malloy are championing these concepts,” said state Senator Gayle Slossberg, Senate chairwoman of the Government Administration and Election Committee.

Immediately following their announcement and the release of the Election Performance Task Force Report, The GAE committee heard several bills containing legislation proposed by Governor Malloy including:

House Bill No. 5024 “An Act Concerning Voting Rights”

- Implements Election Day Registration in Connecticut
- Establishes an online voter registration system for eligible Connecticut voters with a drivers license.
- Eligible voters could register online from any computer.
- Voter Registration database would interface with DMV database.

House Joint No. 2 “Resolution Proposing a Constitutional Amendment”

- If approved by $\frac{3}{4}$ support in General Assembly, Constitutional question would go to voters this fall to remove restrictions on absentee ballot voting.
- If voters ratify the amendment, General Assembly would be empowered to enact non-precinct place voting options such as: early voting, regional voting, mail-in voting, or no excuse absentee ballots

House Bill No. 5022 “An Act Increasing Penalties for Voter Intimidation and Interference

- Increases maximum criminal sentences for people convicted of attempting to influence or suppress the votes of others by threat of force or bribery.
- Establishes new set of penalty guidelines for various vote tampering crimes.

The legislation proposed by Governor Malloy and Secretary Merrill also addresses some of the key findings of Secretary Merrill’s Election Performance Task Force. Members of the task force included state and local elections officials, representatives of municipal government, voting advocates, and academics. The final report of the task force was released today, and it contained several recommendations, including (the complete report is available online at www.sots.ct.gov):

- Amending the Connecticut Constitution to remove strict absentee ballot limitations
- Creating a Connecticut Democracy Index
- Developing a certification process for Registrars of Voters.
- For the purpose of maintaining the security and integrity of the election process, the implementation of a secure online voter registration process, greater emphasis on ballot security, and the use of other statewide databases to further verify the voter registration database.
- Integrate technology into our election system by implementing a statewide, web-based electronic reporting system for election results.
- Move forward with pilot programs such as those that occurred this November in Torrington, Simsbury where electronic poll books were used on Election Day.

- Increase voter participation in Connecticut by enacting Election Day voter registration
- Further study early voting and regional voting, whereby, voter registration follows the person within Connecticut
- Improve access to voting for people with disabilities
- Make electronic transmission of ballots to overseas and military voters the norm in Connecticut
- Make Election Day a holiday.