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## **MERRILL SEES SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT IN REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND MINORITIES ON STATE BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

SECRETARY OF THE STATE CONCERNED BY DISPARITY BETWEEN HISPANIC  
POPULATION FIGURE AND REPRESENTATION ON BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS;  
OVERALL DIVERSITY NUMBERS STILL NEED IMPROVEMENT

**HARTFORD:** Secretary of the State Denise Merrill today released the latest results of the Office of the Secretary of the State's Biennial Report on the Gender and Racial Composition of Connecticut State Boards and Commissions which showed increases in the representation of Women, African Americans, and Connecticut's Hispanic population on these bodies. However, the report still shows significant disparities between the percentage of women and minorities serving on boards and commissions and their population figures shown in the latest U.S. Census report for Connecticut. Compiled every two years by the Office of the Secretary of the State, the Biennial Report on the Gender and Racial Composition of Connecticut State Boards and Commissions provides a snapshot view of the diversity of state boards, commissions, committees and councils.

"While 2011 numbers definitely show some improvements in the diversity of our state boards and commissions, it is still troubling that the representation of women and Hispanic members of our community on these crucial, deciding bodies is not where it needs to be," said Secretary Merrill. "We see now for the first time since we have collected this data that the percentage of African Americans serving on boards and commissions is finally at parity with the African American population of Connecticut. But even though women represent a slim majority of our state's population, there are still nearly 20% more men on these bodies than women. Likewise, the Hispanic community is the fastest growing ethnic group in our state, yet less than 4% of the appointees on these important panels are Hispanic. Making our state boards and commissions more representative of the population of our state will mean better government oversight and better decision making. And we clearly have more work to do in that regard."

Among the key findings of this report is that in 2011, women only represented 40.1% of the appointed membership on state boards and commissions. This was an increase in representation for women by 1.6 percentage points over 2009 numbers, when women represented 38.5% of the appointed membership on state boards and commissions. Conversely, men represented 59.9% of the appointed membership of State Boards and Commissions, (a decrease of 1.6 percentage points over 2009 numbers). While there was an increase in female appointments, women are still under-represented on state boards and commissions when compared to the overall female population in Connecticut by a figure of 11.2% (U.S. Census figures for 2011 show that 51.3% of Connecticut's population is female). Despite this gap, there was a 10% decrease in the number of state boards and commissions reporting they had no female representation. In 2011, the figure stood at 13.7% compared to the 2009 figure of 15.3%.

In 2011, for the first time since the first statutory report of these statistics in 1993, representation of African-Americans on state boards and commissions reached parity with the percentage of African Americans in the overall population of Connecticut. Between 2009 and 2011, the percentage of African Americans serving on state boards and commissions grew from 8.1% in 2009 to 9.5% in 2011. According to the latest figures from the U.S. Census, African Americans make up 9.4% of the overall population of Connecticut. The number of Hispanic appointees on state boards and commissions grew as well from 2009 to 2011, though by a smaller margin, from 2.8% of the appointed membership in 2009 to 3.7% of the appointed membership in 2011. Despite this growth, there still exists a substantial gap between the Hispanic population of Connecticut and the percentage of appointed membership on state boards and commissions. According to U.S. Census figures, some 13.4% of Connecticut's population is Hispanic, while only 3.7% of the appointed membership of state boards and commissions is Hispanic.

Reacting to the report, Teresa C. Younger, Executive Director of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) said, "As this report shows, women are the only majority consistently treated as a minority," said Teresa C. Younger, executive director of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. "Despite comprising 51% of the overall population, women make up just about 40% of aggregate appointed members of State boards and commissions and, in fact, are not represented *at all* on 24 of the 175 boards reporting, which is a 10% decrease from the last report in 2009. It's imperative that appointing authorities take board diversity more seriously; in addition to bringing more voices to the table, such volunteer service offers women experience that often leads to their running for elected office. And as less than one-third of the General Assembly currently consists of women, here, too, is a chance to make a governing body that more accurately represents the face of the state."

In a letter responding to the report, Glenn Cassis, Executive Director of the African American Affairs Commission, wrote, "Although I am pleased that the representation of African-Americans on State Boards and Commissions is the closest it has ever been to reaching parity with the state's general population (9.5% representation vs. 10.1% in the state's population), challenges still remain."

Werner Oyanadel, Acting Executive Director of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, said, "I am extremely pleased with the data recently released by the Secretary of the State that indicates a small increase in the percentage of Latinos appointed to state boards and commissions. The Commission remains committed to working with our appointing authorities to diversify our decision-making advisory boards in order to better reflect the diversity of our state. LPRAC is currently urging the

Governor's Office to diversify the Judicial Selection Commission and is preparing to launch an aggressive educational outreach campaign to increase our internal talent bank of highly skilled Latinas & Latinos interested in being appointed in these advisory groups."

By law (CSG 4-9B), since 1993 the Office of the Secretary of the State has maintained the filing of Gender and Racial Composition reports by state boards and commissions. Secretary Merrill has taken these filings one step further by preparing a state report on the progress and accompanying statistics with regard to gender and race of these panels. The chairperson or executive officer of each organization with one or more members appointed by the governor or by a member of the General Assembly must file a report with the Secretary of the State's office. Committees of the General Assembly are exempt.

[A copy of the report is available by clicking here.](#)