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-PRESS RELEASE-

MERRILL PRAISES HOUSE PASSAGE OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ALLOWING ASSEMBLY TO ENACT EARLY VOTING

SECRETARY OF THE STATE SUPPORTS EMPOWERING LEGISLATURE TO ENACT EARLY
VOTING, MAIL-IN VOTING OR NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE BALLOTS; MEASURE NEEDS
SENATE PASSAGE TO GO ON 2014 BALLOT

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Denise Merrill today praised the Connecticut State House of Representatives passage of a resolution providing for an amendment to the Connecticut State Constitution empowering the General Assembly to enact early voting in Connecticut. That early voting could come in the form no excuse absentee ballots, in-person early voting, vote by mail, or other options. House Joint Resolution No. 36 was endorsed by a vote of 90-49 in the State House today. If the Connecticut State Senate passes the resolution before the end of the current legislative session, the measure will appear in the form of a constitutional amendment on the November 2014 ballot for voters to ratify.

“This historic vote by the House of Representatives puts Connecticut one major step closer to joining more than 30 other states that have some form of early voting,” said Secretary Merrill, Connecticut’s chief elections official. “I urge the State Senate to take up this constitutional amendment quickly so we can finally send this question on for voters to ratify in November of 2014. It is long past time for those of us in state government to allow Connecticut voters to cast their ballots in a way that works better with their busy, mobile lives. States that have enacted Election Day Registration – as we have – and also allowed voters to cast ballots early have seen turnout percentages rise by nearly 10%. If we make it easy and convenient to vote, more citizens will participate in elections.”

The amendment, House Joint Resolution 36, “Resolution Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution to Grant Increased Authority to the General Assembly Regarding Election Administration,” would amend the state constitution by removing an 80-year-old provision that restricts absentee voting to those who are absent from the town, ill, disabled or forbidden by their

religion from secular activity on Election Day. If passed, the legislature would be able to craft laws making absentee ballots available in more circumstances or without voters needing a specific reason. So called “no excuse absentee balloting” is currently available in a majority of states. The amendment also would remove the requirement that in-person votes be collected on Election Day, a technical change that would permit the legislature to enact some form of in-person early voting or vote by mail.