



DENISE MERRILL
SECRETARY OF THE STATE
CONNECTICUT

For Immediate Release:
May 14, 2013

For more information:
Av Harris: (860) 509-6255
Cell: (860) 463-5939

-PRESS RELEASE-

MERRILL PRAISES OVERWHELMING HOUSE PASSAGE OF BILL EXPANDING USE OF PROVISIONAL BALLOTS

SECRETARY OF THE STATE CALLS ON STATE SENATE TO ADOPT MEASURE
STREAMLINING PROVISIONAL BALLOT USE FOR LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL
ELECTIONS

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Denise Merrill today praised the Connecticut State House of Representatives passage of House Bill No. 5599 “An Act Concerning Provisional Ballots for State and Municipal Offices” that would allow voters to use provisional ballots for state and municipal elections instead of only federal elections, as current statutes provide. The House vote today was 105-37 in favor of sending the bill to the State Senate. Provisional ballots are cast by voters who appear at their polling place on Election Day and claim they are indeed registered to vote, but their names do not appear on the voter list. Provisional ballots are counted in the election only if the voter is later verified as being legitimately registered in that town by the local Registrar of Voters. Currently, provisional ballots can only be used to vote for federal candidates for office. Those voters whose registration status is uncertain at their polling place on Election Day are currently permitted to vote by challenge ballot for candidates for municipal and state candidates. Challenge ballots are usually not counted unless the results of an election are challenged in court and a judge orders challenge ballots to be opened and counted. If enacted, House Bill No. 5599 would eliminate the challenge ballot and make provisional ballots universally available for municipal, state and federal candidates on the ballot.

“This is a common sense change that will streamline our election process so those legitimate voters who for some reason – usually a clerical error – do not appear on the voting list can actually cast a ballot,” said Secretary Merrill, Connecticut’s chief elections official. “I thank the leadership of Representatives Ed Jutila and Matt Lesser for bringing this through the GAE committee and to the House floor for a vote. I urge the Senate to adopt this bill as soon as possible so we can cut down on voter confusion make sure the votes of Connecticut citizens registered to vote will actually be counted.”

“Voting is one of our most sacred rights as American citizens,” said Rep. Ed Jutila (D-East Lyme/Salem), chair of the GAE Committee. “Every vote cast by qualified voters should be counted, and not merely set aside in case the election results are challenged.”

State Representative Matthew Lesser (D- Middletown), vice chair of the GAE Committee, said, “HB 5599 will ensure that all those who are eligible to vote *can* vote,” said Rep. Lesser. “With this increased access to a provisional ballot no voter should be turned away from a polling place due to registration error, a fault on the list, or a lack of identification.”

A provisional ballot are often used when a voter who has recently moved appears at their new polling location and their name has not yet been added to that location’s voter list. This is sometimes the case when voters register incorrectly by leaving off vital information, such as the last four digits of their social security number. This can also occur when errors are made by the Office of the Registrar. To read the full text of House bill No. 5599, click here on the Connecticut General Assembly’s [website](#).