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SECRETARY OF THE STATE
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- PRESS RELEASE -

SECRETARY MERRILL PROMOTES PERMANENT ABSENTEE BALLOTS IN ADVANCE OF 2016 ELECTION

HARTFORD: Connecticut Secretary of the State Denise Merrill released a public service announcement today to raise awareness about permanent absentee ballots, which is a program for voters with disabilities in the state.

Secretary Merrill said, “Every vote matters and no one should ever be disenfranchised because of difficulties getting to a polling place. Permanent absentee ballots are a convenient option for people who face hardship leaving their homes. If people with disabilities choose to go to the polls, we encourage them to do so. They can be assured that every polling place in Connecticut will remain accessible with on-site assistance and we will continue to modernize the system so that casting a vote is as easy and convenient as possible. However, people should have multiple options when it comes to voting so that no one loses the opportunity to participate on Election Day.”

Secretary Merrill will work with non-profit organizations serving people with disabilities in order to get the word out that this option is available.

As of early 2016, there were 2,127 people who were registered as permanent absentee ballot voters.

The public service announcement is viewable here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9W_efa1PDA

Background: In 2012, the Connecticut General Assembly passed Public Act No. 12-57, which established permanent absentee ballot voting status for people with disabilities in Connecticut. The law went into effect on January 1, 2013.

The law permits Connecticut voters to cast absentee ballots for all future elections as long as they submit a doctor's note certifying that they permanently physically disabled and unable to appear in person.

To apply voters must:

1. Obtain a letter from a medical care provider certifying that they are unable to appear in person at a polling place to vote because of a disability.
2. Fill out an application for an absentee ballot
3. Attach the medical care provider's letter to the absentee ballot application and submit both to the Town Clerk's office.

The absentee ballot for all primaries, elections and referenda occurring in the year of application will be automatically mailed to the voter during the month prior to each of these events. Voters will receive confirmation that they continue to reside at the same address and must return the confirmation to continue to automatically receive an absentee ballot.