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-PRESS RELEASE-

MERRILL: NUMBER OF RACES FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY UNCONTESTED BY MAJOR PARTY DECLINES NEARLY 41% IN 2012

SECRETARY OF THE STATE RELEASES FIGURES INDICATING LOWEST NUMBER
OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY SEATS LACKING REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRATIC
CANDIDATES SINCE 1998

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Denise Merrill is reporting today that the number of General Assembly races not contested by a major party in 2012 is nearly 41% lower than the same figure reported in 2010. Only 32 of 187 seats for State Senate or State House lack either a Democratic or Republican candidate this year as compared with 54 total contests unchallenged by a major party in 2010 (a decline of 40.7%). The 17.1% of General Assembly races uncontested by a major party marks the lowest such figure since these numbers were first tracked in 1998 when 26.7% of races were uncontested by a major party.

“I am very encouraged to see so many candidates stepping up and running for office, especially in a year when there are numerous retirements from the Connecticut General Assembly,” said Secretary Merrill, Connecticut’s chief elections official. “The decline in State Senate and State House races not contested by a major party means more Connecticut citizens are becoming involved in our elections. We would still like to see even less seats left unchallenged by a major party. It is probably not a coincidence that the sharp decline in uncontested General Assembly seats since 2008 has happened with the introduction of clean campaign financing of legislative races through the Citizen’s Election Program. It is clear that public campaign financing is having its intended effect, which is to motivate more of our citizens to take ownership of the political process. Connecticut must continue to be a national leader when it comes to clean election laws.”

In State Senate races, five of 36 (13.9%) contests lack a major party candidate, the lowest since 1998 when again just five of 36 races went unchallenged. In races for the State House, only 27 of the 151 district races (17.9%) are uncontested, the lowest percentage of unchallenged elections in that same time period.

The number of General Assembly races uncontested by a major party for 2012 has decreased significantly from those of the past several election cycles. The number of races in which a major party has not fielded a candidate for the State Senate has diminished considerably from 2006 when nine of 36 races (25%) went uncontested. In 2008, seven (19.4%) State Senate races were uncontested by Republicans or Democrats and in 2010 that number dropped to six (16.7%). The most dramatic decline in races uncontested by a major party, however, can be seen in elections for the State House of Representatives. In 2006, 62 races for house seats (41%) lacked a major party candidate, while in 2008, 53 races (35%) remained uncontested. In 2010 the number of uncontested races by a major party was still high at 48 (31.8%). This year, however, that percentage has been cut significantly to 27 (17.9%). In 2008, public campaign financing for Connecticut General Assembly races became available for the first time through the Citizen’s Election Program. That year some 250 of 343 General Assembly candidates, equivalent to 73% of those running, elected to use the clean elections program to finance their campaigns. In 2010, 252 of 362 General Assembly candidates, equivalent to approximately 70% of those running, elected to use the program. Thus, the vast majority of sitting legislators came to office free of special interest money.

Secretary Merrill is also reminding voters that statewide primaries for registered Democrats and Republicans are quickly approaching on August 14th. To register to vote by mail, voter registration cards must be received by the local Registrar of Voters by August 9th. The last day for in person registration at town offices is Monday, August 13th at 12:00 p.m. Unaffiliated voters face those same deadlines if they wish to register with a major party and vote in the primary. Voters can go to www.sots.ct.gov to learn how to register to vote, find polling locations, and download absentee ballots and candidate lists.

State Senate Races

<i>Year</i>	<i>Uncontested by a Major Party</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1998	7 out of 36	19.5%
2000	11 out of 36	30.6%
2002	8 out of 36	22.2%
2004	13 out of 36	36.2%
2006	9 out of 36	25%
2008	7 out of 36	19.4%
2010	6 out of 36	16.7%
2012	5 out of 36	13.9%

State House Races

<i>Year</i>	<i>Uncontested by a Major Party</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1998	43 out of 151	28.5%
2000	60 out of 151	40.4%

2002	50 out of 151	33.1%
2004	60 out of 151	40.4%
2006	62 out of 151	41%
2008	53 out of 151	35%
2010	48 out of 151	31.8%
2012	27 out of 151	17.9%