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SECRETARY OF THE STATE
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-STATEMENT -

SECRETARY MERRILL RESPONDS TO REPUBLICAN LAWSUIT OVER BALLOT ORDER

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Denise Merrill today issued the following statement responding to the lawsuit filed by the Connecticut Republican party arguing that the determination made last year by Secretary Merrill's office for the municipal election, that the party of the Governor, Dannel Malloy, who received the most votes in the last gubernatorial election, should not be on the top line because he received some of those votes on the Working Family Party line:

"My office has previously replied to this claim and shown some of the reasoning we used in interpreting Connecticut General Statutes 9-249a. We are confident we have consistently interpreted the law and applied it correctly. Our legal conclusion was, the party of the governor – in this case the Democratic party – gets the top ballot line in Connecticut elections. The law is well-established. It basically says that the party of the candidate who received the most votes for governor gets the top ballot line. Dannel Malloy received the most votes for governor in the last state election. Governor Malloy is a Democrat. Therefore, his party is awarded the top ballot line for our elections.

This is not a new issue to Connecticut, our office has been dealing with this issue for more than 20 years, well before I was Secretary of the State. Now that the Republican party has chosen to challenge our designation, we will discuss the specifics of this matter in court.

I do feel it is a regrettable distraction to the real job we have to do, as well as a waste of valuable resources and taxpayer money, to go to court over an issue that has dubious, at best, value to the Republican party. The notion that placement on the ballot is causing harm will be difficult to determine. Time and money will be spent by my office and the Office of the Attorney General defending this lawsuit. My staff is already stretched thin

trying to manage the election process to ensure orderly and fair elections. Just to let you know the magnitude of the job we do, we received over 5,000 phone calls on Election Day alone for the last statewide election.

But even more offensive to me was the implicit idea that our decision was somehow partisan. It is no secret that I am a Democrat, but that's not how I make election administration decisions. We look at the law, and interpret the law as professional election administrators. That's our job.

To assert that by disagreeing with the hastily drawn and one year late claim made by the Republican party chair that we are politicizing the decisions we make is irresponsible and an insult to all the hard working men and women in the Secretary of the State's office. Most of my staff are dedicated civil servants who have worked under Democratic and Republican administrations. I have made every effort to reach out to the Republican party since taking office. I even stood next to chairman Labriola encouraging Republican voters to come out and vote in their Presidential Preference Primary this spring. I think I have enjoyed reasonably friendly relations with the Republicans during my time in office, and am sorry to see this type of statement made. I hope, as we move forward, that we can avoid this type of innuendo that makes people lose faith in what is, I believe, a solid election process in our state.

Some improvements have been made in the last two years. I think towns are more prepared with emergency plans and ballot-ordering processes that help us make it even better. My staff and I will do our best to work with the local election officials to ensure a smooth election and primary day in Connecticut. That is our primary job."