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- NEWS RELEASE -

MERRILL MARKS HISTORIC MILESTONE FOR HISPANIC POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN CONNECTICUT

SECRETARY OF THE STATE CELEBRATES 33% INCREASE IN NUMBER OF
HISPANIC STATE LEGISLATORS, MORE THAN 22,000 NEW HISPANIC VOTERS
REGISTERED IN 2012

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Denise Merrill today joined Hispanic elected officials in Connecticut today to mark an historic milestone for Connecticut's growing Hispanic community with the election of Connecticut's first two Hispanic State Senators. The two new Senators and 10 recently elected members of the Connecticut House of Representatives increases the number of Hispanic state legislators by 33% and represents the greatest level of political representation by the Hispanic community thus far in Connecticut state government. Secretary Merrill is also reporting that more than 22,000 new Hispanic voters registered to vote in 2012 alone. Of the new voters, more than 10,528 registered as Democrats, 1,325 registered as Republicans, and 10,169 registered as unaffiliated voters. Overall, Secretary Merrill is reporting that there are more than 157,000 registered voters of Hispanic origin in Connecticut – representing nearly 8% of all registered voters in the state. To estimate and report the figures, Secretary Merrill relied on registration data from the Connecticut Centralized Voter Registration System combined with Spanish surname information from the U.S. Census bureau. A breakdown of key data points follows at the bottom of this news release.

“Today we celebrate the ascension and political empowerment of Connecticut's fast-growing and dynamic Hispanic community, whose members are making great contributions to all cities and towns in our state,” said Secretary Merrill, Connecticut's chief election official. “While U.S. Census figures show us that nearly 14% of Connecticut's population is Hispanic, we now have more than 6% of our state legislature, as well as the mayor of our capitol city and numerous local office holders – all of Hispanic origin. Obviously our government has a ways to go to become more diverse but this is clearly a trend worth celebrating. It is very encouraging to see that more of our

Hispanic citizens are becoming more civically engaged by registering to vote and casting ballots.”

“These numbers reflect a victory for democracy,” said Connecticut U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal. “I am pleased to see an increase overall in voter participation, particularly among Latino voters. The Latino community is to be commended for their civic engagement and diligent efforts to make their voices heard at the polls. I congratulate the Secretary of the State on her commitment to breaking down barriers to registering and voting.”

“I am happy to see the amount of Latinos who have registered to vote this past year,” stated **Senator-elect Andres Ayala (D-Bridgeport)**. “The work that remains is keeping them engaged in the democratic process by encouraging more Latinos to run for office and holding elected officials accountable for policies and issues that are important to them.”

“I am honored to be a Latina legislator in the General Assembly and to be a part of the growing number of Latino elected officials serving across the country,” State **Representative-elect Hilda Santiago (D-Meriden)** said. “Our growing numbers in municipal, state and federal elected office testify to an increasing awareness of the importance of political participation and the impact it has on everyday life.”

Isaias T. Diaz, Esq., Chairman of the Connecticut Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, said, “The Latino vote was clearly the deciding factor in the 2012 elections and the nation and political process has taken notice. It is clear that the Latino influence is here to stay and will consistently grow and increase said influence in this country. As we begin to put 2012 behind us and look forward to the challenges and potential achievements that 2013 has to offer, we cannot overlook the impact the Latino vote had and will have on the political landscape from this point forward. I look forward with great anticipation what the future will hold for Latinos in this country, considering that we are now major players who have gained a seat at the national political table. On behalf of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission we commend our two Senators for their great electoral accomplishment, commend our community for engaging in the electoral process by registering to vote and congratulate Judge Carmen Espinosa for her recent nomination to the Connecticut Supreme Court. If confirmed by the Connecticut General Assembly, she will become the first to serve on the state's highest court.”

“Latinos played a decisive role in the 2012 Election, shaping the nation’s political landscape both as voters and candidates,” stated Arturo Vargas, executive director of the Educational Fund for NALEO, the National Association of Latino Elected Officials. “Connecticut achieved a political milestone last November, with voters electing two Latinos to the Connecticut State Senate for the first time in the state’s history. Looking forward, the future is bright for the community, with Latinos continuing to demonstrate their ability to successfully pursue office and secure broad appeal across all ethnicities and communities.”

-VOTER REGISTRATION FIGURES ON FOLLOWING PAGE-

Secretary Merrill estimates that party affiliation for active registered Hispanic voters in Connecticut is as follows:

Party	Count
Concerned Citizens	34
Connecticut for Lieberman	6
Democratic	81,285
Friends of Saybrook	2
Green	73
Independence	54
Independent	638
Libertarian	55
Republican	12,973
Realistic Balance	2
Reform	9
Spring Glen Party	2
Unaffiliated	62,086
Working Families	34
We the People	7
TOTAL	157,258

The 20 municipalities in Connecticut with the highest estimated number of active registered Hispanic voters in Connecticut are, listed in descending order:

1. Bridgeport	20,839	11. Willimantic/Windham	2,704
2. Hartford	18,575	12. Stratford	2,589
3. Waterbury	13,999	13. West Haven	2,466
4. New Haven	11,481	14. New London	2,190
5. New Britain	9,520	15. Manchester	2,071
6. Meriden	6,712	16. West Hartford	1,998
7. East Hartford	4,462	17. Bristol	1,872
8. Stamford	4,359	18. Naugatuck	1,364
9. Norwalk	3,651	19. Windsor	1,281
10. Danbury	3,302	20. Middletown	1,246

Active Hispanic Voters by Age

Age	Total Voters	Percentage of Total
18-29 years old	31,249	19.9%
30-44 years old	50,908	32.4%
45-59 years old	44,475	28.4%
Age 60 and over	30,446	19.4%
TOTAL	157,258	

Pursuant to the federal Voting Rights Act, the following Connecticut communities are required to provide Spanish language ballots and other voting materials: **Bridgeport, East Hartford, Hartford, Meriden, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Waterbury and Windham.** The Federal Voting Rights Act mandates that a state or political subdivision must provide language assistance to voters if more than five (5) percent of voting age citizens are members of a single-language minority group and do not speak or understand English adequately enough to participate in the electoral process. The U.S. Census Bureau selects the communities subject to this provision of the statute. If a city or town falls into the group selected by the U.S. Census bureau, municipal officials are required to provide information regarding voter registration, elections, voting, including information provided in the polling places and the voting booths, in English and Spanish. It also requires a town to provide Spanish voter registration forms and offer voting assistance in Spanish at the polls.