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MERRILL HAILS COMMITTEE ENDORSEMENT OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW EARLY VOTING

SECRETARY OF THE STATE CALLS FOR FULL LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL;
AMENDMENT WOULD LET LAWMAKERS CHOOSE EARLY VOTING VEHICLE

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Denise Merrill today hailed the Government Administration and Elections Committee's passage of HJR 36 – proposed by herself and Governor Dannel P. Malloy – that would amend the state constitution and allow the General Assembly to enact some form of early voting in Connecticut. With a vote of 8-4 today, the GAE committee sends the measure to the floor of the Connecticut House of Representatives. If approved by both houses of the General Assembly this year and ratified by a simple majority of voters in 2014, the amendment would remove constitutional restrictions on absentee ballot voting and empower lawmakers to decide what form of early voting to enact in Connecticut. These could possibly include: in-person early voting, mail-in voting or so-called “no-excuse” absentee ballots – available to any registered voter with no qualifying reason necessary.

“Today I praise the members of the GAE committee for taking an important step to bring Connecticut closer to early voting,” said Secretary Merrill, Connecticut’s chief elections official. “It is long past time for Connecticut to take the steps that more than 30 other states have done to give our busy voters more convenient options to cast their ballots. This can both increase voter turnout and reduce the pressure on local election officials on Election Day. Following this encouraging and timely vote today, I hope the full House of Representatives takes up this resolution soon and sends it to the Senate for approval. That will give Connecticut voters the final say in November 2014 on amending our state constitution so that lawmakers can finally enact some form of early voting.”

The constitutional amendment was approved in 2012 by a simple majority of the Connecticut General Assembly and by law must be approved by lawmakers in two successive legislative sessions in order to appear on the ballot. If endorsed by a simple majority of the Connecticut General Assembly this year, the amendment will appear on

the ballot in November of 2014 in the form of a constitutional question for voters to ratify. If ratified, the proposed constitutional amendments would empower the General Assembly to enact early voting – either in-person or mail-in – and remove language from state election laws restricting the use of the absentee ballot to a narrow set of reasons.