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SECRETARY OF THE STATE
CONNECTICUT

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- PRESS RELEASE -

SECRETARY MERRILL NAMED CO-CHAIR OF NATIONAL TASK FORCE ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR ELECTIONS

SECRETARY OF THE STATE WILL HEAD PANEL WITH LOUISIANA SECRETARY
OF STATE TOM SCHEDLER; TASK FORCE TO STUDY RESPONSES TO NATURAL
DISASTERS CLOSE TO ELECTIONS SUCH AS HURRICANE SANDY, RECOMMEND
BEST PRACTICES

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Denise Merrill today announced that she has been named a national co-chair of a task force of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) focusing on emergency preparedness for elections. Secretary Merrill will head the panel with Secretary of State Tom Schedler (R-Louisiana) that will focus on identifying laws and practices that enhance the ability of state election officials to prepare for, and respond to, emergency situations. The national initiative includes chief state election officials from twenty-two states and the District of Columbia, and was formed in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, which struck the East Coast just days before the presidential election on November 6, 2012.

“In Connecticut we lived through storm-related and man-made election emergencies in each of the last three years,” said Connecticut Secretary of State Merrill, co-chair of the task force. “We are eager to share what we learned, and study best practices in other states. I look forward to working with my colleagues across the country on this task force so election officials everywhere can save time and money while ensuring that as many votes as possible are counted following a disaster such as Hurricane Sandy.”

Secretaries Merrill and Schedler were appointed to lead the national election emergency preparedness task force by Ross Miller, Secretary of State of Nevada and President of NASS. The task force will work with a wide array of stakeholders, including federal and

state emergency management officials, as NASS develops a white paper with guidance for states.

“Our members want to identify the strategies that worked well for election officials who dealt with the fallout from Hurricane Sandy while avoiding major disruptions to voting on Election Day, and more importantly, find some cost-effective ways in which states can better prepare for such emergency scenarios in the future,” said Miller. “By bringing together a diverse group of Secretaries of State and independent state election chiefs, we hope to offer guidance that will improve the collective capabilities of the states.”

“I am honored to be leading this timely effort aimed at increasing the ability of election officials to prepare for emergency situations,” noted Louisiana Secretary of State Schedler, co-chair of the task force. “Having seen first-hand after Hurricane Katrina how natural disasters can affect variables such as polling place locations, voting lines, balloting procedures and voter outreach, we want to help states plan for what to do both before the storm, such as securing their voting machines out of harm’s way, and after the storm, including how to hold an election when phone lines are down and the electricity isn’t working.”

The NASS Task Force on Emergency Preparedness includes the following members:

Task Force Co-Chairs:

Connecticut: Denise Merrill, Secretary of the State

Louisiana: Tom Schedler, Secretary of State

Task Force Members:

Arkansas: Mark Martin, Secretary of State

California: Debra Bowen, Secretary of State

Colorado: Scott Gessler, Secretary of State

Delaware: Elaine Manlove, Commissioner, State Election Commission

District of Columbia: Clifford Tatum, Executive Director, District Board of Elections

Florida: Ken Detzner, Secretary of State

Georgia: Brian Kemp, Secretary of State

Illinois: Becky Glazier, Assistant to Executive Director, State Board of Elections

Kentucky: Alison Lundergan Grimes, Secretary of State

Maryland: Linda Lamone, Administrator, State Board of Elections

Michigan: Ruth Johnson, Secretary of State

Minnesota: Mark Ritchie, Secretary of State

Mississippi: Delbert Hosemann, Jr., Secretary of State

Nevada: Ross Miller, Secretary of State

New York: Robert Brehm & Todd Valentine, Co-Directors, State Board of Elections

North Carolina: Gary Bartlett, Executive Director, State Board of Elections

Oregon: Kate Brown, Secretary of State

South Carolina: Marci Andino, Executive Director, State Election Commission

Virginia: Donald Palmer, Secretary, State Board of Elections

West Virginia: Natalie Tennant, Secretary of State

Wisconsin: Kevin Kennedy, Director and General Counsel, Government Accountability Board

The task force, which will convene by conference call beginning in March, will determine the range of issues that will be researched and addressed. Emergency planning and response issues that arose due to Hurricane Sandy included emergency voting/absentee ballot procedures, state-local/municipal information-sharing and emergency communications, equipment shortages, emergency authority issues and continuity of elections.

The task force's white paper is scheduled to be released early next year.

About NASS

Founded in 1904, NASS is the oldest, nonpartisan professional organization of public officials in the U.S. Members include the 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa and Puerto Rico. NASS serves as a medium for the exchange of information between states and fosters cooperation in the development of public policy. The association has key initiatives in the areas of elections and voting, state business services and digital archiving, international relations and state securities regulation, as well as several well-established awards programs.

For more on NASS, please visit www.nass.org.