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-PRESS RELEASE-

MERRILL, MALLOY PRAISE FINAL LEGISLATIVE PASSAGE OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT OPENING THE DOOR TO EARLY VOTING

MEASURE EMPOWERING LEGISLATURE TO ENACT SOME FORM OF EARLY VOTING
WILL APPEAR ON NOVEMBER 2014 BALLOT FOR CT VOTERS TO RATIFY

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Denise Merrill and Governor Dannel P. Malloy today praised the Connecticut State Senate's passage of a resolution providing for an amendment to the Connecticut State Constitution empowering the General Assembly to enact some form of early voting. These types of early voting could be in the form of in-person early voting, no excuse absentee ballots, or mail-in voting. Senate passage of House Joint Resolution No. 36 ensures that the Constitutional question will appear on the ballot for voters to ratify in November of 2014 with the following language: "Shall the Constitution of the State be amended to remove restrictions concerning absentee ballots and to permit a person to vote without appearing at a polling place on the day of an election?" House Joint Resolution No. 36 was endorsed by a vote of 22-14 in the State Senate today. The measure passed the Connecticut House on April 17, 2013 and was also approved by both houses of the Connecticut General Assembly during the 2012 legislative session.

"Voting is a great responsibility and this amendment assures the voting rights of every Connecticut resident whether or not they can get to the polls on Election Day," said Governor

Malloy. “While some states are working to suppress voter turnout, we are working to encourage greater turnout by increasing penalties on any effort to block voter access and moving our electoral system into the 21st Century. I want to thank Secretary Merrill for her partnership in our effort to update Connecticut’s election rules, remove barriers to the ballot box and increase voter participation.”

“Today marks a historic and significant step forward for modernizing elections in Connecticut so we can finally enact early voting in our state,” said Secretary Merrill, Connecticut’s Chief Elections official. “This is about allowing Connecticut voters cast their ballots in a way that works better with their busy mobile lives, and in turn getting more voters to participate in Democracy. Some 32 states have enacted some form of early voting or no-excuse absentee ballots and more than 30 million Americans cast their ballots early in the 2012 Presidential election. Early voting works, it is very reliable, and there is no reason we couldn’t make it work in Connecticut. I look forward to Connecticut Voters ratifying this question and empowering our lawmakers in the General Assembly to enact this sensible and long overdue election reform and modernization.”

Secretary Merrill continued, “I commend the leadership of Governor Malloy for backing this Constitutional change, and I also thank the chairs of the GAE committee – Senator Anthony Musto and Representative Ed Jutila – for bringing the amendment through for a vote. This is a great day for Connecticut Voters.”

The amendment, House Joint Resolution 36, “Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Grant Increased Authority to the General Assembly Regarding Election Administration,” would amend the state constitution by removing an 80-year-old provision that restricts absentee voting to those who are absent from the town, ill, disabled or forbidden by their religion from secular activity on Election Day. If passed, the legislature would be able to craft laws making absentee ballots available in more circumstances or without voters needing a specific reason. So called “no excuse absentee balloting” is currently available in a majority of states. The amendment also would remove the requirement that in-person votes be collected on Election Day, a technical change that would permit the legislature to enact some form of early voting or mail-in voting.