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- STATEMENT -

MERRILL: SUPREME COURT RULING ON FEDERAL VOTING RIGHTS ACT AN INJUSTICE

SECRETARY OF THE STATE ISSUES STATEMENT REACTING TO HIGH COURT
RULING INVALIDATING FEDERAL REVIEW OF LOCAL ELECTION LAW CHANGES

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Denise Merrill today issued the following statement reacting to the United States Supreme Court's 5-4 decision in the case of *Shelby County v. Holder*, striking down section five of the federal Voting Rights Act that required some states and local jurisdictions to submit election law changes to a review by the federal Department of Justice.

"Today's Supreme Court ruling is worse than wrong; it is an injustice to the millions of voters in this country that face potential disenfranchisement at the ballot box due to discriminatory election laws that are still passed in many states throughout this country even today.

This ruling dismantles a centerpiece of the civil rights movement that thousands of brave Americans fought to enact. This decision is an affront to the memories of those like the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Jr. and many others who sacrificed everything to allow disenfranchised Americans the simple right to vote.

For decades, section five of the federal Voting Rights Act stood as a critical check and balance against states and local jurisdictions that time after time passed laws in reality designed to exclude certain portions of the electorate – mostly poor, the elderly, young, and minority voters – from casting ballots. Recently, this federal review of local election law changes has successfully struck down misguided attempts to rig the electoral playing field in the name of preventing so-called "voter fraud" that there is barely any evidence to suggest is a real issue. This ruling suggests to me is that basic principles of non-discrimination and universal voting rights are now under siege by those who really don't want every eligible American to vote.

I am grateful that here in Connecticut we are moving in the opposite direction under the leadership of Governor Dannel P. Malloy – enacting Election Day voter registration, enabling voters to register online, and next year allowing voters to change our constitution to allow early voting. Instead of restricting our citizens’ right to vote, we are expanding access to the ballot box and we must stand united with our allies in other states who will fight to prevent discriminatory election laws where they are passed.

Congress should act immediately to rewrite section four of the Voting Rights Act, which was struck down today, so that the Justice Department can continue its nearly 50 years of vigilance in protecting the right to vote for all Americans.”