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**SECRETARY MERRILL STATEMENT ON THE
FUTURE OF THE CITIZENS' ELECTION
PROGRAM**

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Denise W. Merrill, Connecticut's chief elections official, released the following statement today regarding the pending proposal to suspend the Citizens' Election Program for the 2016 election cycle:

"In the early morning of December 1, 2005, a decade ago, I cast one of my proudest votes as a member of the Connecticut General Assembly. On that night, after many hours of debate, in the wake of national focus on the shameful public corruption case against former Governor John G. Rowland and members of his administration, I stood proudly with my colleagues as we cast our votes in favor of creating the Citizens' Election Program. Connecticut became and remains a national leader in clean elections; we were the first state to legislatively enact a public financing program for state elections. The program has exceeded expectations, not only limiting the influence of special interest dollars in state elections, but making running for office accessible to historically underrepresented groups, like minorities, women, younger candidates and those without ready access to deep pocket donors and groups.

We are an example for other states and even Congress. We must not be the first state to legislatively suspend this program. To do so would no doubt endanger the future of the program. Clean elections are important in all economies, and the program likely saves money by discouraging corruption. I call on the governor, the legislature and all allies of public financing to honor that hard-won victory of almost ten years ago by preserving the Citizens' Election Program. In this era of dark money and *Citizens United* the CEP shows there is a better way. Clean elections are an investment in democracy.