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*From the Office of Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz*

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For Immediate Release

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## **STATE RECEIVES OVER \$30 MILLION FOR ELECTION UPGRADES**

### **Funds set aside for future electronic voting**

**Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz** announced that her office has received \$32.7 million in federal funding under the “Help America Vote Act” (HAVA), which was authored by Senator Christopher Dodd in response to the Florida voting debacle during the 2000 presidential election.

“For the first time in our country’s history, our federal government has made a financial investment in our democracy,” said Bysiewicz. “Our most precious civil right is our right to vote. We must improve the integrity and public confidence in our election process.”

**First District Congressman John Larson**, who serves as Ranking Member on the U.S. House Committee overseeing federal elections, joined Bysiewicz at a State Capitol news conference for the announcement.

“The Help America Vote Act, which was overwhelmingly passed with bi-partisan support in 2000, marked a tremendous turning point in our country’s voting rights history,” said Larson. “During the past year, the foundation for a much more efficient voting system has started to take place. I’m very pleased that Connecticut will receive \$32 million out of the \$3.9 billion authorized by the federal government under HAVA for states to upgrade their voting procedures in the wake of the 2000 election.”

HAVA funding will enable Connecticut to meet federal mandates for all states including:

- ensuring that voters with disabilities can vote privately and independently;
- voting machines that produce a paper audit trail;
- voter education;
- a statewide centralized voter registration database.

To meet this and other requirements, Bysiewicz plans to use a portion of the HAVA funds to purchase an electronic voting machine for each of Connecticut’s 750 polling places in time for the November 2005 municipal elections. An RFP (request for proposal) is expected to be completed and available to competing bidders this fall.

"The equipment purchased through this funding will enable many voters with disabilities to cast their ballots with dignity, privacy and, for the first time, on an equal basis with other citizens," said **James D. McGaughey, Executive Director of the state Office of Protection & Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities**, whose office estimates that over 200,000 Connecticut citizens with disabilities do not vote.

Bysiewicz emphasized that there will be no electronic voting machines used in Connecticut during this year's presidential election, though up to 30% of the nation will be voting using electronic systems November 2.

"We are moving very prudently and cautiously," she said. "We want to have the benefit of being able to review the experience of other states using electronic systems this Election Day prior to purchasing any new machines for Connecticut voters."

"State and local governments have traditionally borne these costs with no assistance from Congress," Larson said. "I highly commend Secretary Bysiewicz for proposing last year's successful voting machine pilot project, and for her ongoing commitment to educating our voters about this new technology. It is a remarkable advancement for Connecticut voters, who have been using lever voting machines almost exclusively for over 50 years."

Bysiewicz also announced that towns will be able to apply for additional electronic voting machines through her office on a first come first served basis for use in 2006. Until 2001, mechanical lever voting has been used almost exclusively in Connecticut for over 50 years, but lever machines are no longer manufactured and do not meet new federal standards. Approximately 3,300 lever voting machines are used throughout the state on Election Day.

Four types of electronic voting systems were tested in eight towns during the 2003 municipal elections and an exit poll conducted by the League of Women Voters in conjunction with the Center for Survey Research & Analysis (CSRA) at the University of Connecticut reported that 92% of voters surveyed rated the new technology "excellent" or "good" and expressed confidence that their votes were accurately recorded.

"I congratulate Secretary Bysiewicz on securing funding to support the new federal election requirements, such as the purchase of accessible voting machines for our state," said **State Representative Jim O'Rourke, House Chair of the Legislature's Election's Committee**. "I am glad we now have additional resources to help ensure the integrity and accuracy of our voting process."

All of Connecticut's 169 municipalities are connected to the state's centralized voter registration system as mandated by HAVA. It was at the urging of Bysiewicz that Dodd included provisions requiring states to establish central voter registration systems, which numerous national election studies have identified as the cornerstone of successful voting reforms.