

Office of the Secretary of the State



At a Glance

Office of the Secretary of the State

Denise W. Merrill, Secretary of the State

Scott D. Bates, Deputy Secretary of the State

Established - 1639

Statutory authority - State Constitution; CGS Sec. 3-77 et seq., CGS 9-3, 9-4 and Title 9 Generally; CGS Titles 33-35.

Central office - 30 Trinity Street, Hartford, CT 06106

Number of employees - General Fund: 69 permanent full-time (64 filled)

Recurring operating expenses: General Fund: \$ 8,980,953 (FY 2017-18)

Revenue deposited: General Fund: \$30,782,939 (FY 2016-17), YTD for FY 2017-18 is \$ 13,513,983

Organizational structure –Business Services Division (Commercial Recording) (Chris Drake, Esq., Director); Legislation and Elections Administration Division (Peggy Reeves, Esq., Director); Management and Support Services Division (Blanche Reeves-Tucker, Fiscal Administrative Manager); Information Technology (Thomas Miano, Manager); Publications Division (Kristin Karr, Esq., System Manager)

Mission

Through the commitment of a knowledgeable staff and advanced technology, the Office of the Secretary of the State works as a team to provide a wide range of services for the people and businesses of Connecticut.

We are a repository of records for the state and provide important information and resources regarding business and commercial filings, elections, and authentication as prescribed by the constitution, and federal, and state laws.

We seek to support business development opportunities and to foster a more inclusive political process by educating, informing, and engaging communities and youth in civic participation.

Our vision is to be the leader in providing prompt quality service, increasing access to information, and promoting participation in the democratic process.

Statutory Responsibility

The Secretary of the State is designated by the Constitution and General Statutes of Connecticut as the official keeper of a wide array of public records and documents. The office is a vital source of information regarding various businesses, commercial lenders, elections, legislation, regulations and other areas, and responds to more than 600,000 requests for information annually. It also publishes, distributes and sells the State Register and Manual and other publications.

Connecticut law makes the Secretary of the State responsible for the administration of many aspects of business law including the approval of all certificates of incorporation, organization and dissolution, as well as annual and biennial reports. Trademarks are registered here as well.

As Commissioner of Elections for the State of Connecticut, the Secretary is charged to administer, interpret and implement election laws and ensure fair and impartial elections. Under the terms of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 and the Help America Vote Act of 2002, the Secretary has the same responsibility for federal elections.

Affirmative Action

The Office of the Secretary of the State is firmly committed to a personnel management program designed to ensure equal opportunity for all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, marital status, national origin, ancestry, mental retardation, physical disability, prior convictions of a crime, sexual preference, past or present history of mental disorder or political affiliation. The elimination of sexual harassment and Workplace Violence is also an important element of the agency's comprehensive affirmative action program.

Public Service

The office serves the public through five divisions:

- ***Business Services Division (BSD)*** files and maintains legally required records showing the formation of and fundamental changes to corporations, limited liability companies, limited liability partnerships, limited partnerships, and other business entities. The BSD disseminates that information to the general public and the business, banking and legal communities. Transactions relevant to security interests in personal property are perfected by filing statements under the Uniform Commercial Code statutes with the Research and Response unit. These filings protect the holder of the security interest by securing the lien and providing public notice that such interest exists. Trade, service, collective, certification, and device marks are granted registration and the Division investigates and collects fees and penalties from foreign corporations doing business in Connecticut without authority. BSD offers real time access to corporate and UCC (Uniform Commercial Code) documents via the Internet. Anyone who has access to the Internet can go to the Secretary of the

State's website and then to BSD's database called "CONCORD". The public may obtain names and addresses of corporate officers and directors, business addresses and a listing of all filings made for that business. Most filings can be completed online, and the Secretary introduced online filing of business formation documents. Our Public Service Area is open for customers from 8:30 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. The division is responsible for administering the Address Confidentiality Program (ACP), which provides services to victims of crime.

- ***Legislation and Elections Administration Division (LEAD)*** administers, interprets and implements all state and federal laws pertaining to elections, primaries, nominating procedures, and the acquisition and exercise of voting rights. The Division encourages and monitors the implementation of the federal National Voter Registration Act (motor voter), the Help America Vote Act and other voter registration and election administration laws in Connecticut. In conjunction with local town clerks and registrars of voters, the division provides training for local elected officials. The Division, working with local officials, has put into operation a statewide-computerized voter registry system, which complies with the Help America Vote Act. More recently, the Division has launched online voter registration, Election Day Registration, and improved compliance with the motor voter law at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Additionally, the Division is the official keeper of all acts, orders, grants, and resolutions of the General Assembly, receives and maintains legislation and a wide range of other public documents as required by statute, administers Connecticut's notary public program, and updates information on state, local, and federal government on a weekly basis. The Division administers a recently launched state-wide, online calendar of public meetings held by state agencies that includes access to agendas and minutes.

- ***Information Technology*** is responsible for the administration, support, development, and maintenance of all computer systems and related applications within the agency. It also provides support to the Centralized Voter Registration system, CONCORD (Connecticut Online Commercial Recording Database), Agency website, and all E-Government initiatives within the agency. Within the Secretary's office, Information Technology also has the primary responsibility for ensuring the cybersecurity of the agency, as well as coordinating the agency's cybersecurity efforts with other agencies.
- ***Management and Support Services*** supports the office in the areas of human resources, affirmative action, fiscal administration, business, revenue depositing, purchasing, data processing, and other support services. It also serves as the sales agent and distributor of the *Connecticut State Register and Manual*.

- ***Publications Division*** administers eRegulations, the online platform for the promulgation and publication of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies. All aspects of the system are electronic, including notice, drafting, and final publication. It also publishes the Connecticut State Register and Manual (the “Blue Book”) and other agency publications, including online publications.

In addition, the Office of the Secretary of the State administers a wide range of programs and services for Connecticut’s voters, citizens, and businesses. These include:

- **Civic Health Initiatives** – The Secretary of the State’s civic health initiatives are designed to foster civic participation, increase interest in civic institutions, and supplement civic education initiatives for Connecticut’s students. These initiatives include the Red, White, and Blue Schools program, the Civic Ambassadors program, work with the Connecticut Kid Governor, and various other programs, many undertaken in conjunction with the state Department of Education.
- **The Address Confidentiality Program (ACP)** – The ACP program became effective on January 1, 2004. Program participants are residents of the State of Connecticut who have recently relocated because of abuse and whose new location is unknown to their abuser and undocumented in government records. The goal of the ACP is to help crime victims (family violence, sexual assault, injury or risk of injury to a minor, or stalking) keep their new address confidential. The Address Confidentiality Program offers its participants two services, each of which helps keep the victim’s new location private. One component is the participant’s use of an ACP substitute mailing address. The ACP provides cost-free mail forwarding services. The Office of the Secretary of the State serves as each program participant’s legal agent for service of process and receipt of first class mail. The second component of the program prevents public access to a participant’s actual address on government records including voter registry lists and keeps marriage records confidential.
- **Business Initiatives** – The Secretary of the State’s business initiatives include partnering with other economic development efforts to promote events, webinars, and other activities to foster business growth. Specifically, the agency works with the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. General Services Administration, and affiliates of the Small Business Development Center and Small Business Administration. Topics covered include export opportunities, federal and state contracting, and other initiatives. The Secretary of the State communicates directly via email with hundreds of thousands of businesses registered at the Secretary of the State’s office to inform them of these helpful events which, if followed through on successfully, can lead to increased revenue, higher profits, and new jobs created.

- **Records Management** - The Records and Archiving Unit supports the Secretary's constitutional duty to "have the safe keeping and custody of the public records and documents" by providing records management, archives and library services to the Office of the Secretary of the State. It also serves as the office's liaison to the Public Records Administrator, as required by law. It maintains the Office library; administers on and off-site storage of, and access to, the wide variety of records filed with and generated by the Office; researches, prepares and implements record retention schedules for the Office; creates microfilm and digital copies of records; responds to hundreds of annual staff and public reference requests; and creates indexes and guides to Office record series to facilitate staff and public access to information. In addition, the Unit provides indexing, access and preservation services for the original bills, acts, and resolutions of the General Assembly, state agency regulations, and various special documents filed with the Office by state law.

Improvements/Achievements 2016-17

- **Civic Health Initiatives** – In 2017, the Secretary honored nine schools and districts in the Red, White & Blue Schools to reward them for developing programs that foster strong civic engagement among students. Also in 2017, the Secretary launched the Civic Ambassadors program to encourage civic engagement in communities by enlisting citizens to help promote engagement with civic institutions.
- **Automated Voter Registration** – In 2016, the Secretary entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the DMV that set out a framework for implementing Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) over a two-year period, beginning in the short term with semi-automated system that would dovetail with the existing online voter registration system launched by the Secretary in 2014. The first stage of the automated voter registration system was launched at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) on August 8, 2016. In the first year of the system, more than 1,000,000 new voters registered through AVR at the DMV, close to one-third of all new voter registrations (slightly more than one-third came via the online voter registration system).
- **Election Administration Reform** – After the passage of the law reforming the training, certification and accountability of Connecticut's registrars of voters, the Secretary implemented the registrar training and certification system in 2017. The legislation provides for mandatory certification of registrars, annual continuing education, expedited review of the Secretary's referrals to the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC), and suspension or removal of registrars for gross negligence or dereliction of duty.

- **Election Management System (EMS)** – In 2016 the Secretary launched EMS to streamline filings and reports by registrars, town clerks and head moderators, and to provide more convenient, speedier transmission and publication on the Internet of election results in Election Night and the following days. After a successful pilot launch in the 2016 general election, 2017 saw successful adoption of the system for the more complex municipal elections.
- **Expanding Business Services Online** – In 2016 the Secretary launched online filing of business entity formation documents, including corporations and LLC's. The new system also allows foreign (non-Connecticut) entities to register to conduct business in Connecticut. From July 2016 through June 2017, almost 75% of filings were done online, showing the ease and convenience of allowing businesses to file documents online. In 2017, the Secretary successfully advocated for a law to promote the expanded online business services, so that more business could take advantage of the ease and convenience of the online offerings.
- **Business Data** – Working with the non-profit Data Collaborative, the Secretary made aggregated, historical business data available in graphic form, showing trends in business starts, stops and geographic location.
- **eRegulations** – the Secretary's eRegs system, the user-friendly, centrally-located system that provides access to all agency regulation-making records with real-times updates, search, and brows functions, was recognized by the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, as part of its 2017 Bright Ideas initiative.