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

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## **SECRETARY OF THE STATE BYSIEWICZ URGES ALL CT RESIDENTS TO REGISTER TO VOTE**

**HARTFORD** - Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz was joined today by advocates for those with disabilities and a number of community and voting rights advocates at a rally at the State Capitol encouraging all Connecticut residents to vote in the November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006 election.

"Voting is our most precious civil right that we possess as Americans, and it is the very foundation of our great Democracy," Secretary Bysiewicz said. "We need to honor our brave men and women who fight for our country and honor the principles for which we all stand as Americans by showing up to vote on Election Day."

Secretary Bysiewicz was joined today by representatives of the League of Women Voters, the State of Connecticut Office of Protection and Advocacy, Connecticut Disability Advocacy Collaborative the National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut, the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, the Connecticut Chapter of the NAACP, and a number of elected officials from throughout the state at today's rally in the Hall of Flags at the State Capitol.

For the first time in seventy years, Connecticut's citizens with disabilities will have an opportunity to vote privately and independently at their polling places with special telephone technology, Secretary Bysiewicz said. Every polling place in Connecticut will be equipped with a special telephone system that will allow voters with disabilities to vote without assistance from someone else, which Secretary Bysiewicz said will make this a very special Election Day.

"There are 300,000 residents in Connecticut who are disabled and who have never had the opportunity to vote privately and independently," Secretary Bysiewicz said. "This year they will finally have that chance with the Vote-By-Phone system at every polling place in the state."

Secretary Bysiewicz was also joined by Elizabeth Farrelly of Bloomfield, a lifelong

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Connecticut resident who this year will vote in her seventy-fifth (75<sup>th</sup>) straight election. Mrs. Farrelly, a native of Enfield and a longtime Hartford resident before moving to Bloomfield in 1998, first voted in the 1932 Presidential Election and has not missed a vote since.

"It doesn't matter whether you are eighteen or ninety years old; you still possess this amazing right to have your voice heard every year, and by doing that you make our Democracy stronger and more vital," Secretary Bysiewicz said. "When you vote, you honor the sacrifices people have made for our country, particularly the 300,000 veterans living in Connecticut and the 900 young men and women fighting in the War on Terror today."

Connecticut residents who will be 18-years-old by Election Day have until October 31<sup>st</sup> at 8 p.m. to register to vote. They can do so at the Registrars of Voters office at their local Town Hall, Secretary Bysiewicz said, or register to vote by mail by October 24<sup>th</sup>.

Stan Kosloski of the Connecticut Disability Advocacy Collaborative said he wants to see any person with a disability who is not registered to vote to do so in time for this year's election. "We would encourage anyone with a disability to sign up to vote, whether they choose to do so by absentee ballot, or this year at their polling place. Having the Vote-By-Phone system in place will give many people an opportunity to vote independently this year and in private, an opportunity they did not have before."

Kathy Wilson, a member of the League of Women Voters Public Issues Team, offered a quote today from Annie Elizabeth Delaney, the 102-year-old co-author of "Having Our Say": "It's true you can't change the world with just one vote, but if you don't vote you give up your right to complain, and honey, I do not want to give up my right to complain."

"The League of Women Voters of Connecticut hope all Connecticut citizens will earn their right to complain by registering and voting this Election Day," Ms. Wilson added.

Zaydee Santiago, a sophomore at Trinity College who spoke at today's event, said, "Many parallels can be drawn between the struggles of black and Latino to fit in at a liberal arts college such as Trinity, and the struggles of black and Latino men and women to get registered to vote. We often feel discouraged and left out of the process, but the only way to make changes is to be active and vote."

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