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

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Wednesday, December 6, 2006**

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## **SECRETARY OF THE STATE BYSIEWICZ PRESENTS UNION WITH 2006 "DEMOCRACY CHALLENGE CUP"**

Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz today presented officials from the town of Union with the 2006 Democracy Challenge Cup for having the best voter turnout among small towns in Connecticut. Voters in Union won their first Democracy Cup with a voter participation rate of 78.8 percent on Election Day this year.

"Our smallest town today stands as the state's biggest winner in voter turnout. I congratulate the people of Union for getting to the polls at such an impressive rate on November 7<sup>th</sup>, and am honored to present them the Democracy Cup trophy," Secretary Bysiewicz said. "Nearly four out of every five registered voters in Union came out to vote on Election Day, and that is a very impressive number. Voting is the cornerstone of our Democracy and is our most precious civil right. When you choose to vote, you choose to have a say."

"I want to thank the candidates for office this year, particularly in that razor-thin 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District race, for running spirited, issues-based campaigns that brought people out to the polls this year. I also want to thank the grassroots efforts of the town committees and the campaigns for working so hard to encourage voter turnout," Secretary Bysiewicz added. "These efforts made this a great election year in Connecticut."

In addition to Union, the Democracy Cup this year has also been awarded to Westport for having the highest voter participation rate of any medium-sized towns (72.7 percent), and will be presented tomorrow to West Hartford for having the highest voter participation rate of any large-sized cities or towns (69.4 percent). This is Westport's second Democracy Cup victory and West Hartford's fifth.

Co-sponsored by the East Haddam Civic Association in 2000, the Democracy Cup was created as a way to encourage voter participation in each year's elections. Under Democracy Cup criteria established by Secretary Bysiewicz, towns with fewer than 15,000 registered voters are considered small, municipalities with between 15,000 and 30,000 voters are considered mid-sized, and cities and towns with more than 30,000 registered voters are considered large.

“Connecticut's electorate was engaged right from the beginning of primary season this year,” Scot Mackinnon, the co-founder of the Democracy Cup whose East Haddam Civic Association sponsors the Democracy Challenge Cup for best voter turnout each year, said. “The turnout was amazing. Voters were certainly motivated to follow the issues this year. Campaign rallies had more of an old-fashioned feel to them this cycle, especially in the United States Senate race with plenty of stump speeches and voter-to-candidate contact.”

Thomas Fitzgerald, First Selectman of Union, said, “Winning the award is wonderful. We’re a very close-knit town up here; everybody knows everybody. We all get together on Election Day and always produce a good turnout. There is a lot of community pride up here - people want to have a voice and they want to have a say.”

Secretary Bysiewicz noted that with Union’s first-time victory this year, thirteen different towns have now won the Democracy Cup since it was established in 2000.

“It is great for our democracy to see new towns stepping up each year and winning this challenge. In the seven years that we’ve awarded the Democracy Cup, at least one new winner has emerged each year. This year, Union joins the ranks of the state’s winning towns, and they should be very proud of all their efforts,” Secretary Bysiewicz said.

Union will keep the four-foot high Democracy Cup trophy at Town Hall for the next year as a result of winning this year’s challenge. A smaller version of the cup will be awarded to be kept by the town for years to come.

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>SMALL TOWNS</b>	<b>MIDSIZE TOWNS</b>	<b>LARGE TOWNS</b>
2000	Essex	Westport	West Hartford
2001	Washington	Trumbull	Waterbury
2002	Middlebury	Glastonbury	West Hartford
2003	Washington	Naugatuck	West Hartford
2004	Washington	Wethersfield	Fairfield
2005	Middlebury	Shelton	West Hartford
2006	Union	Westport	West Hartford

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