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For Immediate Release:
March 27, 2007

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- NEWS RELEASE -

BYSIEWICZ STANDS UP FOR CONNECTICUT VOTERS – PROPOSES FEB. 5TH PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY DAY

SEC. OF THE STATE SAYS CURRENT PRIMARY PROCESS IS ‘BROKEN’, CALLS FOR REFORM

Hartford: Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz stood with State Senators Gayle Slossberg and Edward Meyer at a news conference Tuesday morning at the State Capitol to propose moving the date of Connecticut’s 2008 Presidential primaries, currently scheduled for March 4th, to Feb. 5th. If adopted, Connecticut would join 22 other states – comprising more than 40% of the nation’s population - which are planning to hold a primary or caucus on Feb. 5th.

“Connecticut voters deserve to have their voices heard,” said Bysiewicz. “As more and more states move their primary date up and leapfrog over Connecticut, our residents are in danger of effectively being disenfranchised. By having Connecticut join this so-called ‘Super-duper’ Tuesday, we are ensuring voters will be able to have an impact on this crucial election.”

"We want the people of Connecticut to have a say in the Presidential primary and not just be a stopping ground to raise money for candidates," said Sen. Slossberg.

“This change of date will bring more attention to Connecticut as other states have moved up their primary dates.”

"Our choice of the next president is probably the most important political decision we will be making in the next decade and Connecticut should participate in that decision making," said State Sen. Edward Meyer. "An early February primary gives us that opportunity."

"It is troubling that as one of the most important presidential elections of our time approaches, the current primary calendar makes Connecticut voters nearly irrelevant," and Andy Sauer, executive director of Connecticut Common Cause. "Candidates -- especially those caught in close races -- will spend their bucks on the state's that deliver the biggest bang and the most votes. The people of Connecticut should have as much a say in the future of their party and county as the voters in New York, California and Texas."

Under the proposal, Section 9-464 of the general statutes would be repealed and the following language would be substituted: On the first Tuesday in February of each year in which the President of the United States is to be elected, each party shall conduct a primary in each town if the names of two or more candidates are to be placed on such party's ballot in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

As the Chair of the Government Administration and Elections Committee in 1995, then State Rep. Bysiewicz, sponsored legislation to move Connecticut's Presidential primary so as to keep it aligned with the majority of New England states. The Connecticut General Assembly approved this measure, moving the date of the state's Presidential primaries from the 4th Monday in March to the first Tuesday in March. Since 1995, Connecticut has essentially been part of a New England primary, voting on the same day in March as Vermont, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. Rhode Island lawmakers are currently considering a proposal to move their primary to Feb. 5th and the Sec. of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, William Galvin, has told Sec. Bysiewicz that it's possible his state could also move its primary.

“In the absence of a rational primary process, we are seeing an ad-hoc national primary take shape,” said Bysiewicz. “Connecticut didn't start this tidal wave but I cannot stand by and allow our voters to become irrelevant. Ultimately, members of both political parties must come together and enact real reform.”

Several organizations, including the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), and Fair Vote, have authored reform proposals. The so-called Delaware Plan was also considered at the 2000 GOP Convention. Details of each plan are listed below.

“The front loading of the primary calendar is in no one’s best interest,” said Bysiewicz. “I am deeply troubled by a process that is getting shorter and more dominated by the candidates with the biggest bank account, not the best ideas.”

“I believe that the American Plan presents a better way,” continued Bysiewicz. “Candidates will begin in smaller states, which allow for more hands-on campaigning and gives underdog candidates a better chance of having their message heard. A longer process, with more candidates, more ideas, and more involvement from voters will be the result.”

Fair Vote: American Plan:

“The American Plan features a schedule consisting of 10 two-week intervals, during which randomly selected states may hold their primaries or caucuses, with a gradual increase in the total population of states and territories holding primaries/caucuses. This 20-week schedule is weighted based on each state’s number of congressional districts.”

“In the first interval, a randomly determined combination of states with a combined total of eight congressional districts would hold their primaries, caucuses, or conventions. In the second period--two weeks later--the eligibility number would increase to 16. Every two weeks, the combined size of the contests would grow by eight congressional districts, until a combination of states totaling 80 congressional seats (8 x 10)--nearly one-fifth of the total--would be up for grabs in the tenth and last interval at the end of June. What ordinarily would be the 7th primary date would be switched with the 4th primary date, to give all the big states a chance at having an earlier primary. As the political stakes increased every two weeks, a steady weeding-out process would occur, as less successful campaigns reached the point at which they were no longer competitive in these larger contests.”

Source: *FairVote: The Center for Voting and Democracy*

RNC: Delaware Plan

“In 2000, the RNC nearly adopted the “Delaware Plan” that would set up a calendar where there would be a month-long gap between primaries, and the population of states holding primaries would grow, with each primary date including bigger states. The big states would vote last, but would maintain influence by having the most delegates. The Delaware plan is designed to allow a less well-known candidate to gain a footing in the early primaries, but not shut out the rest of the states, with party members having more time to consider whether frontrunners best represent their party.”

“Under the details of the plan, the states and territories would be divided into four "pods" based on population. The smallest 12 states, plus federal territories, would vote first, followed by the next smallest 13 states, then the 13 medium-sized states, and finally the 12 largest states. These four consolidated primaries would occur on the first Tuesday of each month, beginning in March and ending in June.”

Source: *FairVote: The Center for Voting and Democracy*

NASS: Regional Primary Plan

“Under the NASS plan, party primaries/caucuses to select national convention delegates would be grouped by region beginning in 2012. A lottery would be held to determine which region would begin the sequence the first year of the plan. The next presidential election year, the region that held the first position would move to the end of the sequence, and the other regions would move forward. Iowa and New Hampshire would retain their leading positions in the presidential selection process based upon their tradition of encouraging retail politics.

Primaries/caucuses in each state of a given region would be scheduled on or soon after the first Tuesday in March, April, May or June of presidential election years. States in the same region wouldn't necessarily be required to hold their primaries/caucuses on the same day.”

Source: *National Association of Secretaries of State*

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