



Susan Bysiewicz  
SECRETARY OF THE STATE  
CONNECTICUT

For Immediate Release:  
May 24, 2007

For more information:  
Derek Slap: (860) 509-6255  
Cell: (860) 573-2019

- NEWS RELEASE -

**AS WEDDING SEASON STARTS, LAWMAKERS VOTE TO CLOSE  
LOOPHOLE THAT ALLOWS VIDEO CONFERENCE WEDDINGS**

SECRETARY OF THE STATE'S OFFICE – WHICH OVERSEES JUSTICES OF THE PEACE  
SELECTION PROCESS & MANUAL – SAYS NEW LAW COULD PREVENT FRAUD

**Hartford:** Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz is pleased that the Connecticut General Assembly has passed S.B. 1190, which closes a loophole that could allow weddings to be conducted via teleconferencing or over the internet. S.B. 1190 states "... in order to be valid in this state, a marriage ceremony shall be conducted by and in the physical presence of a person who is authorized to solemnize marriages." The bill requires the same thing for civil unions, "In order to be valid in this state, a civil union ceremony shall be conducted by and in the physical presence of a person who is authorized to solemnize civil unions or marriages."

"Closing this loophole makes sense," said Bysiewicz. "There is nothing in the current Justice of the Peace manual or the Connecticut General Statutes that prevents someone claiming to be a minister, JP, or clergy member, from conducting a wedding ceremony or civil union over the internet or the phone. The opportunity clearly exists for fraud and I am confident this change will help prevent people from falling victim to fraudulent practices."

Barbara Jay, Vice President of the Justices of the Peace Association of the U.S. – based in Westport, Connecticut – said, "I think it's a reasonable requirement. As fast as technology keeps changing, some tradition ought to remain. One is that the officiator and the couple should be together - in the same physical space. If the couple wants to get married in the islands, find an island officiator!"

There are thousands of Justices of the Peace in Connecticut who perform tens of thousands of marriages and civil unions. The Secretary of the State's Office is responsible for overseeing selection of the Justices of the Peace, maintaining a list of JPs, and printing the Justices of the Peace Manual. The Secretary of the State's Office also advises Justices of the Peace concerning questions of jurisdiction and eligibility.

The State Senate passed the measure on April 15<sup>th</sup> and one month later, on May 16, the House of Representatives followed suit. The Secretary of the State's Office is now awaiting delivery of Public Act No. 07-79 from the Legislative Commissioners' Office. Once it is received it will be sent to the Governor's office for her signature. The new law would be effective October 1, 2007.

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