



Susan Bysiewicz
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- NEWS RELEASE -

TIE ELECTIONS CAN NO LONGER BE DECIDED BY A COIN-FLIP

NEW LAW CLOSES ELECTION LOOPHOLE AND REQUIRES TIE VOTE IN A PRIMARY TO BE SETTLED BY VOTERS, NOT BY CHANCE

Hartford: Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz is announcing that with the passage of Public Act 07-194, An Act Concerning the Integrity and Security of the Voting Process, no election for state, district, or municipal office that ends in a tie will ever again be decided by the flip of a coin. Secretary Bysiewicz's office received the bill – just signed by the governor – on Friday July 6th.

Connecticut law already prohibited a general election which ended in a tie from being resolved by lot – or luck – but a different standard existed for primary elections. For at least the past 50 years, Section 9-446 of the general statutes has read, “If two or more candidates receive the same number of votes at a primary... the Secretary of the State shall dissolve such issue by lot [chance].”

The new law states that in the case of tie in a state, district, municipal, or town committee primary, an additional election will be held exactly three weeks after the initial primary, and according to the law, “... the primary shall be conducted in the same manner as on the first day, except that the votes shall be cast for such office only.”

Secretary Bysiewicz joined State Rep. Elissa Wright in proposing the legislation after the 2006 Democratic primary for the 41st General Assembly District (Groton) – in which Ms. Wright was

a candidate – ended with a tie vote. (Elissa Wright and Rita Schmidt each had 457 votes). Ms. Wright ultimately won the election because she won the coin-toss. If Secretary Bysiewicz's proposal had been law at the time, voters in Connecticut 41st General Assembly District primary would have had another chance to have their voice heard – in a special election three weeks later.

“Tie votes are of course extremely uncommon in elections,” said Bysiewicz. “In fact, there have been no other ‘ties’ in Connecticut in at least 50 years. Still, there are plenty of close elections – a few years ago a candidate for the General Assembly won by just one vote – that it makes sense to change the law. No candidate should have to worry that a tie would mean a coin-flip, and more importantly no voter should fear being disenfranchised. All elections, no matter what the outcome, should be in the hands of the voters.”

The General Assembly's Office of Legislative Research issued a report on tie elections in December of 2006 and stated that Connecticut treats a tie vote in a general election differently, “based on the office for which the candidates are running... If statewide office candidates tie in a general election, the General Assembly elects the winner... if legislative candidates tie in a general election, the election is adjourned and a runoff is conducted three weeks later.”

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