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-NEWS RELEASE-

CONNECTICUT ONE STEP CLOSER TO ENFRANCHISING NEARLY 10,000 YOUNG ADULTS

PROPOSAL TO ALLOW 17 YEAR-OLD VOTING WINS APPROVAL IN LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Hartford: Sec. of the State Susan Bysiewicz is thrilled that today the Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee voted 10-1 to approve HJ-21, a resolution that would allow thousands of 17 year-olds to vote in a primary election, so long as they turn 18 before the general election. The resolution is now headed to the House floor for consideration.

“Today, Connecticut moved one step closer to being among the national leaders when it comes to voting rights,” said Bysiewicz “Now it is up to all members of the General Assembly, Democrats and Republicans, to take a stand and enfranchise nearly 10,000 young men and women in this state.”

House Joint Resolution No. 21 states, “That article fourteenth of the amendments to the Constitution of the State be amended to authorize seventeen-year-old persons who pre-register to vote and who will attain the age of eighteen years on or before the day of a regular election to vote in a primary for such regular election.”

“This generation continues to prove that they are not only interested in politics, but passionate about making positive change,” said Rep. James Spallone, co-chairman of the GAE Committee. “Allowing our 17-year-olds to vote in primary elections, as long as

they will be eligible to do so in the fall, makes sense and will aid in our goal of creating more lifelong voters.”

The United States Constitution does not deny 17 year-olds the right to vote. The 26th Amendment to the United States Constitution only states that the right of citizens who are eighteen years of age or older to vote shall not be denied by the United States or by any State on account of age. Taking into account that the Constitution does not bar states from lowering the voting age, some states have done exactly that. In the past several years nine other states in the nation have passed measures that allow 17 year-olds to vote in primaries so long as they turn 18 by the general election. The states are; Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia. Currently, several state legislatures including Arizona, Illinois, and New Hampshire are considering proposals that would allow 17 year-olds to vote in primaries.

There are two ways an amendment can be made to the Connecticut Constitution. One option is that three quarters of the House and Senate approve the amendment and then it goes onto the ballot in the next general election that falls on an even numbered year. The other option is for a simple majority in both the House and Senate to approve the measure in two separate legislative sessions. If that happened, it would then go onto the ballot in the next general election that falls on an even numbered year.

Last year a similar resolution won wide support in the General Assembly but fell 9 votes short of having the support of three quarters of the House. The resolution was not raised in the Senate.