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For Immediate Release:
July 8, 2009

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-PRESS RELEASE -

BYSIEWICZ: RELL'S VETO OF HEALTH CARE REFORM BILLS HURTS CONNECTICUT FAMILIES AND SMALL BUSINESSES

SECRETARY OF THE STATE URGES LAWMAKERS TO OVERRIDE GOVERNOR,
ENACT MEANINGFUL LEGISLATION TO OFFER SMALL BUSINESSES, NON-
PROFITS & MUNICIPALITIES AFFORDABLE, QUALITY HEALTH CARE

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz expressed disappointment at Governor Rell's veto of two crucial health care bills. Bysiewicz today is urging the General Assembly to override the governor on both H.B. No. 6600, an Act Concerning the Establishment of the SustiNet Plan, and H.B. No. 6582, an Act Concerning Expanded Access to the State Employees' Health Insurance Plan.

"The Governor's veto represents a huge missed opportunity for our state – an opportunity to take advantage of real savings in the administration of our state's health care system and to promote job growth and economic development that will come from investing in quality, affordable health care for all," said Secretary Bysiewicz, Connecticut's chief business registrar. "The Governor's Executive Order establishing a health care advisory board falls far short. We don't need another commission to study the problem. We know what the problem is and how to fix it. What we really need is health care reform – now!"

Secretary Bysiewicz added, "I urge the legislature to override these short-sighted and ill-advised vetoes by the Governor. We can't take no for an answer. Too many small businesses and hard working families are counting on us for leadership on this critical issue. Thousands of businesses have shut their doors in Connecticut in the last year, and entrepreneurs have told us time and time again that health care is their number one expense. Small businesses have created 90% of all new jobs in Connecticut over the last decade, so anyone who is serious about reviving our economy must support improvements in our health care system to cover more people and bring down the cost. These two bills offer a sensible and comprehensive approach to health care reform in Connecticut and position us well to be ready for federal legislation."

Both the Senate and House passed the bills overwhelmingly, which would allow municipalities, businesses with fewer than 50 employees and non-profits to join the state employee insurance pool. According to some estimates, the bills would trim excess costs from the \$22 billion private and public providers spend each year in Connecticut on health care, and would provide more options for Connecticut's small businesses. The Sustinet Plan proposes to unite the HUSKY and SAGA plans into a self-insured health plan and may cut health care costs by as much as \$1.7 billion by 2014,. The benefit package will include mental and dental health care. Sustinet would be funded by a combination of individual premiums, and modest contributions from businesses with an annual payroll greater than \$318,000 that do not offer health insurance to their employees.

The CT Healthcare Partnership would also provide an affordable option to cover the employees of small businesses and non-profits by allowing them to buy into the state employees health insurance pool. While Rell vetoed a similar bill in June 2008, Bysiewicz hopes that the Legislature will override the most recent vetoes.

The Health Insurance Policy Council in its 2007 report "A Framework for Health Care Reform for Connecticut" cites that 52.2% of uninsured workers and dependents are in firms with less than 50 employees which confirms that a large part of Connecticut's uninsured population is found with small employers. Also, a recently released Families USA report found that 758,000 people lacked health insurance in Connecticut at some time during the years of 2007-2008.