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- NEWS RELEASE -

SECRETARY OF THE STATE'S OFFICE TO HOST 1ST OF ITS KIND LATINO VOTING SUMMIT

NEW REPORT INDICATES LATINOS ARE JUST 4% OF STATE'S ELECTORATE:
ORGANIZERS DETERMINED TO INCREASE TURNOUT FOR UPCOMING ELECTIONS

(Hartford: August 20, 2007) – Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz and Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission Executive Director Fernando Betancourt, in an effort to increase voter turnout among Latinos, are announcing that they will host a Latino Voting Summit next month in New Haven.

“We are heading into an important election season that begins with competitive municipal races, some of which are taking place in communities with large Latino populations, and ends a year later with an historic presidential election” said Secretary Bysiewicz. “It’s crucial that we learn how to better engage our Latino residents and increase turnout in this community. This Summit is a big step in the process of further engaging the Latino community in our state.”

According to a new study from the Pew Hispanic Center, Latinos constitute about 7.7 percent of eligible voters in Connecticut – the highest in any New England state - but they made up only about 4 percent of the 2004 electorate. The percent of eligible voters who are Latino ranges from 10.7% in Connecticut’s 4th Congressional District to 3.5% in the 2nd Congressional District. Nationally, 58 percent of eligible Hispanic voters were registered to vote compared to 75 percent of whites and 69 percent of African Americans.

Summit organizers also hope to better understand discrepancies between Latino voter turnout figures in Connecticut and those of Latin America. “There is a misconception that Latinos in the

United States don't vote," said Fernando Betancourt. "Latinos in Connecticut, who are able to vote, do so in large numbers. We just don't see voter turnout as high as that in some Latin American countries."

The Latino Voting Summit, titled LATINO VOTES COUNT, is being organized by the Secretary of the State's Office, with collaboration from the Connecticut Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC), DemocracyWorks, and the Organization of Latin American Students at Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU).

The event is designed to generate momentum for a voter education and registration campaign in Connecticut's Latino community that will engage college students, elected and government officials, community-based organizations, churches, businesses, and professionals.

The summit, will take place on Saturday, September 22, 2007, from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Michael J. Adanti Student Center on the Southern Connecticut State University campus in New Haven, Connecticut. It will feature panel discussions on such topics as voter outreach and education strategies, reaching young voters, civics education, leadership development in the Latino community, and "get-out-the-vote" best practices led by locally and nationally renowned leaders such as Dr. José E. Cruz, the State University of New York at Albany; Mr. Luis Cabán, Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance in Hartford; and keynote speaker Dr. Juan Andrade Jr., President and Executive Director of the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute.

The Summit will conclude with a plenary session that will establish a steering committee to develop strategies for effective Latino voter outreach leading to the 2008 presidential election.

Organizers expect the event to draw at least 150 participants, including state and local elected officials, professionals, students, and religious and community leaders.

The Latino Voting Summit is free and open to the general public on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Secretary Bysiewicz and Mr. Betancourt will be speaking on the importance of the Latino vote and promoting the voting summit at a series of news conferences to be held on September 10, 2007 in Hartford, New Haven, and Bridgeport, three of the cities with the largest Latino population in the state.

For more information or to register for the 2007 Latino Voting Summit, call the Office of the Secretary of the State at (860) 509-6200 or visit www.cga.ct.gov/lprac to download a registration form.

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