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SECRETARY OF THE STATE

CONNECTICUT

Government Administrations and Elections Committee Public Hearing Testimony February 24, 2014

H.B. No. 5126 AN ACT CONCERNING AN AGREEMENT AMONG THE STATES TO ELECT THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES BY NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE

Passage of this bill would make Connecticut the next state to adopt an interstate compact providing for the election of the president by a national popular vote. I support the concept of moving away from the current Electoral College system of electing our president.

Four times in our history the person elected president did not receive the most votes. This resulted in constitutional crises and long-term effects on policy, including the abandonment of Reconstruction after the 1876 election.

This plan is consistent with the Constitution, which provides for both interstate compacts and the right of each state to decide how to select and allocate presidential electors. I actually think that this compact will lead to Connecticut having a more relevant role in our presidential elections – particularly in the general election.

In the 2008 Presidential cycle, we had visits from major presidential candidates before the primary in February. But generally, on the rare occasions that presidential candidates come to Connecticut, they are here for one purpose: fundraising. I dare say that engaging a few select

people to open their checkbooks is not the same as engaging the general public about the issues facing our nation.

Electing our president by popular vote would mean candidates and parties would focus on turning out voters – particularly in densely populated areas like the Northeast, but every state would be in play. This would be in sharp contrast with recent elections in which candidate appearances and campaign spending to get out the vote has focused on just a handful of swing states. Ten jurisdictions have already passed this bill: the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Washington, Vermont, California, and Rhode Island. I support this compact as a sensible way to improve our presidential elections.