

Office of the Secretary of the State



At a Glance

DENISE W. MERRILL, *Secretary of the State*
James F. Spallone, *Deputy Secretary of the State*
Established - 1639

Statutory authority - State Constitution; CGS Sec. 3-77 et seq., CGS 9-3, 9-4 and Title 9 Generally; CGS Titles 33-35.

*Central office - 30 Trinity Street,
Hartford, CT 06106*

Number of employees - General Fund: 84 permanent full-time (70 filled)

Recurring operating expenses: General Fund: \$ 9,246,485.00 (FY 2016-17)

Revenue deposited: General Fund: \$31,609,062.56 (FY 2015-16), YTD for FY 2015-16 is \$ 31,587,718.97

Organizational structure –Business Services Division (Commercial Recording) (Sonia Worrell Asare, Esq., Director); Legislation and Elections Administration Division (Peggy Reeves, Esq. Director); Management and Support Services Division (Blanche Reeves-Tucker, Fiscal Administrative Manager); Information Technology (Thomas Miano, Manager); eRegulations (Kristin Karr, Esq., System Manager)

Mission

Through the commitment of a knowledgeable staff and advanced technology, the Office of the Secretary of the State works as a team to provide a wide range of services for the people and businesses of Connecticut.

We are a repository of records for the state and provide important information and resources regarding business and commercial filings, elections, and authentication as prescribed by the constitution, and federal and state laws.

We seek to support business development opportunities and to foster a more inclusive political process by educating, informing and engaging communities and youth in civic participation.

Vision

Our vision is to be the leader in providing prompt quality service, increasing access to information, and promoting participation in the democratic process.

Statutory Responsibility

The Secretary of the State is designated by the Constitution and General Statutes of Connecticut as the official keeper of a wide array of public records and documents. The office is a vital source of information regarding various businesses, commercial lenders, elections, legislation, regulations and other areas, and responds to more than 600,000 requests for information annually. It also publishes, distributes and sells the State Register and Manual and other publications.

Connecticut law makes the Secretary of the State responsible for the administration of many aspects of business law including the approval of all certificates of incorporation, organization and dissolution, as well as annual and biennial reports. Trademarks are registered here as well.

As Commissioner of Elections for the State of Connecticut, the Secretary is charged to administer, interpret and implement election laws and ensure fair and impartial elections. Under the terms of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 and the Help America Vote Act of 2002, the Secretary has the same responsibility for federal elections.

Affirmative Action

The Office of the Secretary of the State is firmly committed to a personnel management program designed to ensure equal opportunity for all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, marital status, national origin, ancestry, mental retardation, physical disability, prior convictions of a crime, sexual preference, past or present history of mental disorder or political affiliation. The elimination of sexual harassment and Workplace Violence is also an important element of the agency's comprehensive affirmative action program.

Public Service

The office serves the public through five divisions:

- ***Business Services Division (BSD)*** files and maintains legally required records showing the formation of and fundamental changes to corporations, limited liability companies, limited liability partnerships, limited partnerships and other business entities. The BSD disseminates that information to the general public and the business, banking and legal communities. Transactions relevant to security interests in personal property are perfected by filing statements under the Uniform Commercial Code statutes with the Research and Response unit. These filings protect the holder of the security interest by securing the lien and providing public notice that such interest exists. Trade, service, collective, certification and device marks are granted registration and the Division investigates and collects fees and penalties from foreign corporations doing business in Connecticut without authority. BSD offers real time access to corporate and UCC (Uniform Commercial Code) documents via the Internet. Anyone who has access to the Internet can go to the Secretary of the

State's website and then to BSD's database called "CONCORD". You may obtain names and addresses of corporate officers and directors, business addresses and a listing of all filings made for that business. Most filings can be completed online, and the Secretary recently introduced online filing of business formation documents. Our Public Service Area is open for customers from 8:30 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. The division is responsible for administering the Address Confidentiality Program (ACP), which provides services to victims of crime.

- ***Legislation and Elections Administration Division (LEAD)*** administers, interprets and implements all state and federal laws pertaining to elections, primaries, nominating procedures, and the acquisition and exercise of voting rights. The Division encourages and monitors the implementation of the federal National Voter Registration Act (motor voter), the Help America Vote Act and other voter registration and election administration laws in Connecticut. In conjunction with local town clerks and registrars of voters, the division provides training for local elected officials. The Division, working with local officials, has put into operation a statewide-computerized voter registry system, which complies with the Help America Vote Act. More recently, the Division has launched online voter registration, Election Day Registration and improved compliance with the motor voter law at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Additionally, the Division is the official keeper of all acts, orders, grants and resolutions of the General Assembly, receives and maintains legislation and a wide range of other public documents as required by statute, administers Connecticut's notary public program, and updates information on state, local, and federal government on a weekly basis. The Division administers a recently launched state-wide, online calendar of public meetings held by state agencies that includes access to agendas and minutes.

- ***Information Technology*** is responsible for the administration, support, development and maintenance of all computer systems and related applications within the agency. It also provides support to the Centralized Voter Registration system, CONCORD (Connecticut Online Commercial Recording Database), Agency website and all E-Government initiatives within the agency.
- ***Management and Support Services*** supports the office in the areas of human resources, affirmative action, fiscal administration, business, revenue depositing, purchasing, data processing and other support services. It also publishes, distributes and serves as the sales agent for the *Connecticut State Register and Manual* (the "Blue Book") and other agency publications.

- *eRegulations* administers the online platform for the promulgation and publication of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies. All aspects of the system are electronic, including notice, drafting and final publication.

In addition, the Office of the Secretary of the State administers a wide range of programs and services for Connecticut's voters, citizens, and businesses. These include:

- **Civic Health Initiatives** – The Secretary of the State sponsored a first-of-its kind voter registration contest for high school students during the month of October 2013. With teams from different high schools competing against each other, the goal of the contest was for these high school students to register the highest number of eligible citizens to vote in their community before the voter registration deadline of October 29th prior to the November 5, 2013 municipal elections. The contest was won by a group of students at High School. This was a fun way for the Secretary to promote civic engagement for young people that is both concrete and meaningful.
- **The Address Confidentiality Program (ACP)** – The ACP program became effective on January 1, 2004. Program participants are residents of the State of Connecticut who have recently relocated and whose new location is unknown to the abuser and undocumented in government records. The goal of the ACP is to help crime victims (family violence, sexual assault, injury or risk of injury to a minor, or stalking) keep their new address confidential. The Address Confidentiality Program offers its participants two services, each of which helps keep the victim's new location private. One component is the participant's use of an ACP substitute mailing address. The ACP provides cost-free mail forwarding services. The Office of the Secretary of the State serves as each program participant's legal agent for service of process and receipt of first class mail. The second component of the program prevents public access to a participant's actual address on government records including voter registry lists and keeps marriage records confidential.
- **Business Initiatives** – The Secretary of the State's business initiatives include partnering with other economic development efforts to promote events, webinars and other activities to foster business growth. Specifically, the agency worked with the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. General Services Administration and affiliates of the Small Business Development Center and Small Business Administration. Topics covered include export opportunities, federal and state contracting, and other initiatives. The Secretary of the State was able to communicate directly via email with hundreds of thousands of businesses registered at the Secretary of the State's office to inform them of these helpful events which, if followed through on successfully, can lead to increased revenue, higher profits and new jobs created. In several instances the events publicized by the Secretary of the State's office saw record turnout, where many networking connections were made that will hopefully lead to future business deals. Secretary Merrill also

led her second trade delegation to the People's Republic of China to execute a business agreement involving Bloomfield-based Kaman Aerospace Group's sale of several firefighting helicopters to China's Department of Forestry.

- **Records Management** - The Records and Archiving Unit supports the Secretary's constitutional duty to "have the safe keeping and custody of the public records and documents" by providing records management, archives and library services to the Office of the Secretary of the State. It also serves as the office's liaison to the Public Records Administrator, as required by law. It maintains the Office library; administers on and off-site storage of, and access to, the wide variety of records filed with and generated by the Office; researches, prepares and implements record retention schedules for the Office; creates microfilm and digital copies of records (more than 695,412 images in fiscal year 2013/2014); responds to hundreds of annual staff and public reference requests; and creates indexes and guides to Office record series to facilitate staff and public access to information. In addition, the Unit provides indexing, access and preservation services for the original bills, acts and resolutions of the General Assembly, state agency regulations, and various special documents filed with the Office by state law.

Improvements/Achievements 2015-16

- **Civic Health Initiatives** - In January of 2016, the Secretary of the State released the 2015 Civic Health Index, a follow up to the inaugural 2011 edition, measuring the state's civic health. Also in 2016, the State Department of Education and the Office of the Secretary of the State launched the Red, White & Blue Schools initiative that rewards schools that develop programs which foster strong civic engagement among students. The initiative began at the start of the 2016-17 academic year. Each year there will be a different topical theme which will be taught using various interdisciplinary lessons and activities.
- **Enhanced Compliance with the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA or Motor Voter)** - At the start of the 2016 legislative session, the Secretary recommended a bill that would implement enhanced, automated voter registration (commonly called "automatic voter registration or AVR) at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to improve Connecticut's historically weak execution of the NVRA. While the bill did not win passage, the Secretary did enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the DMV that set out a framework for implementing AVR over a two-year period, beginning in the short term with semi-automated system that would dovetail with the existing online voter registration system launched by the Secretary in 2014. Also in the spring, the state received a letter from the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) stating that the state was not in compliance with the NVRA, and that it was prepared to bring legal action. The state entered into negotiations with DOJ. Due to the significant progress already made by

the Secretary and DMV, the DOJ agreed to enter into a rare Memorandum of Understanding with Connecticut in lieu of a lawsuit and judgment or consent decree. The first stage of the automated voter registration system was launched at DMV on August 8, 2016. Within one month nearly 15,000 citizens registered to vote through the new system exceeds the number of voters who registered at the DMV in the years 2013, 2014 and 2015 combined. Thousands of others changed their status.

- **Social Media Promotion of Online Voter Registration** – In conjunction with National Voter Registration Day, September 27, 2016, the office launched a social media campaign around “#MyVoteCT,” encouraging creative photographs and messages using the hashtag. Public officials and public figures from sports and the media participated along with many members of the public. During that day, 6,099 people registered to vote online, nearly ten times the number of the previous week.
- **Election Administration Reform** – During the 2015 legislative session, the Secretary successfully advocated for a bill to reform the training, certification and accountability of Connecticut’s registrars of voters. The legislation provides for mandatory certification of registrars, annual continuing education, expedited review of the Secretary’s referrals to the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) and suspension or removal of registrars for gross negligence or dereliction of duty. During 2015-16 the Secretary has worked with the Registrars of Voters Association of Connecticut (ROVAC), SEEC and the University of Connecticut to roll out the certification program.
- **Election Management System (EMS)** – In 2016 the Secretary launched EMS to streamline filings and reports by registrars, town clerks and head moderators, and to provide more convenient, speedier transmission and publication on the Internet of election results in Election Night and the following days.
- **Online Filing of Business Formation Documents** – In 2016 the Secretary launched online filing of business entity formation documents, including corporations and LLC’s. The new system also allows foreign (non-Connecticut) entities to register to conduct business in Connecticut.
- **Business Data** – Working with the non-profit Data Collaborative, the Secretary made aggregated, historical business data available in graphic form, showing trends in business starts, stops and geographic location.