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SECRETARY BYSIEWICZ, SENATOR MEYER ISSUE EARTH DAY CALL FOR ELECTRONIC FILING OF ANNUAL BUSINESS FILINGS

HOUSE BILL # 6644 WOULD SAVE MONEY, STREAMLINE SECRETARY OF THE
STATE'S OFFICE AND ELIMINATE AT LEAST TWO TONS OF PAPER WASTE
ANNUALLY

Hartford: Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz today joined State Senator Ed Meyer (D-Guilford) in issuing an Earth Day call for the General Assembly to pass House Bill # 6644, "An Act Concerning Business Entity Filings." H.B. # 6644 would require businesses registered in the State of Connecticut to file their annual reports with the Secretary of the State's office online instead of filling out paper documents and sending them by mail. If enacted, the bill would save taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, streamline and improve customer service, and eliminate at least two tons of paper waste generated and processed by the Secretary of the State's office every year.

"Earth Day was created in this country nearly 30 years ago to inspire awareness and appreciation of our planet and our environment, and we must continue this call to make our business practices in state government more environmentally sustainable," said Secretary Bysiewicz, Connecticut's chief business registrar. "Passage of this bill will have a major impact in reducing the carbon footprint of the Secretary of the State's office, and it serves as an example of how we can make government services less costly and more efficient, reducing waste while adding value. This is what we mean when we speak of green business practices. With a new online filing system, we will save millions for taxpayers in the long run and dramatically reduce the amount of time we spend processing and reviewing annual reports so we can focus more on customer service with our clientele, which is over 340,000 businesses and non-profit agencies in Connecticut."

"It's Earth Day, and I'm pleased to be doing something important for planet Earth," said Sen. Meyer, who is Senate Chairman of the Environment Committee. "This bill is a

wonderful way to demonstrate not only our responsible stewardship of the environment, but to streamline the functions of state government and save taxpayers money. Every two tons of paper we can do without saves 34 trees and 12,000 hours of state labor. A decade from now, this bill will have saved the equivalent of a small forest and 57 years worth of labor costs. That's a win-win for Connecticut's environment, its businesses, and its taxpayers."

In requiring Connecticut businesses and non-profits to file their annual reports online, House Bill # 6644 would create hardship exemptions for entities that do not have internet access or an ability to pay their filing fees online. The bill also gives the Secretary of the State's Office the option to notify businesses electronically when their annual reports are due with the expectation that this notification will largely shift to electronic platform instead of paper mail. The online filing system will bypass the cumbersome and tedious steps of reviewing the paper files of the annual reports since businesses will know instantaneously if their report had sufficient information to be processed. Any filings lacking requisite information will instantly be rejected and the businesses or non-profits will be told what data is lacking.

In addition, those filings accepted by the online process will be directly entered into the online CONCORD database of more than 340,000 Connecticut businesses and non-profits registered with the state. Secretary of the State Bysiewicz estimates this will save a significant amount of time spent every year by staff reviewing and processing the reports, converting them to microfiche, and shredding the reports once the information is entered into the CONCORD database.

H.B. # 6644 was passed unanimously in the Judiciary on April 1, 2009 and has received a number on the House Calendar but has not yet come up for a vote. The bill also contains language that Secretary Bysiewicz estimates will significantly increase the rate of compliance of businesses with the statutory requirement to file an annual report. The General Assembly's non-partisan Office of Fiscal Analysis estimates that the bill would result in significant revenue generation for the state budget.

Secretary Bysiewicz added, "Much of our commerce in the private sector has already shifted to an online platform, and state government needs to do the same. This bill is a much needed modernization of the services we provide businesses and taxpayers. It will eliminate hundreds of thousands of dollars we spend every year on paper, postage, and the disposal of waste. It eliminates more than two tons of paper waste every year. And it also would save thousands of hours in labor time that can be better spent making continual improvements to customer service. Bottom line: this bill is great for taxpayers, businesses, non-profits, and the environment and I urge the General Assembly to pass it."