

## **Biography**

### **Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz**

First elected in 1998, and then re-elected in 2002 and 2006, Secretary Bysiewicz is the chief elections official and business registrar for the State of Connecticut. Secretary Bysiewicz is an ardent advocate for election integrity, job creation and saving taxpayer dollars. She has also fought to secure landmark campaign finance and ethics reform, as well as initiatives to protect consumers and safeguard personal privacy.

Throughout her tenure, Secretary Bysiewicz has transformed the Secretary of the State's office through the innovative use of technology. As a result, a wealth of public records and other information housed in her office are readily accessible on-line to all Connecticut citizens. She led the nation in implementing the CONCORD system to allow for searches of essential information about the more than 350,000 companies registered to do business in Connecticut. Secretary Bysiewicz also created the first statewide voter database in the nation known as the Connecticut Voter Registration System (CVRS) to streamline voter registration, protect voter rights, and prevent voter fraud. Through CVRS, she also located thousands of lost Connecticut policyholders and beneficiaries of major insurance companies who were eligible for stock or cash during initial public offerings.

With the emergence of new technology, Secretary Bysiewicz has worked to ensure that confidential personal data within her agency is appropriately protected or altogether eliminated from the public domain. She won passage of a law to safeguard citizens' privacy by removing all social security numbers from voter registration rolls. In 2004, Secretary Bysiewicz also created the "Safe at Home/Address Confidentiality" program which protects victims of domestic violence and sexual assault by keeping their addresses confidential. Her groundbreaking effort to bring the CONCORD, CVRS, and other systems to the global community has resulted in national and state recognition for her leadership and commitment to expanding e-government.

Throughout her career in public service, Secretary Bysiewicz has been a tireless advocate for open, ethical, and accountable government on all levels. As a State Representative, she won passage of legislation that made Connecticut's lobbying and campaign finance disclosure laws among the strictest in the country. As Secretary, she has long fought for sweeping ethics reform by calling for the revocation of pension benefits for those government officials convicted of a crime related to their jobs, and to prevent the unnecessary sealing of judicial branch court cases involving prominent business leaders, politicians, and judges. Secretary Bysiewicz has also supported legislation that would penalize state contractors who defraud the state, and that would establish strict municipal ethics codes in every town and city across Connecticut.

As the state's business registrar, Secretary Bysiewicz has worked to enhance and provide efficient customer service to Connecticut's business community.

With small businesses generating more than 96% of new jobs over the last ten years, Secretary Bysiewicz is also a leading proponent of providing technical assistance and support to small and minority-owned businesses. In 2000, Secretary Bysiewicz created CTShowcase through her office's Small and Minority Business Unit which encourages the creation of more small and minority-owned businesses through networking events, business roundtable discussions, and a series of seminars. Having assisted thousands of businesses throughout Connecticut, CTShowcase has contributed to the state's overall tax base and a more vibrant and diverse statewide business community.

To ensure a level playing field for all businesses in Connecticut, Secretary Bysiewicz and Attorney General Blumenthal established a partnership to crackdown on businesses operating illegally in the state. In the last three years alone, their efforts resulted in the recovery of approximately \$4 million in state revenue. In 2009, Secretary Bysiewicz won legislative approval to increase the penalties imposed on illegal businesses by over 80%. Secretary Bysiewicz has also saved Connecticut taxpayers' money by returning \$4 million allocated to her office to assist with deficit reduction. Furthermore, over the past nine years, Secretary Bysiewicz has returned more than \$224 million to the state from fees collected by her office.

In her role as the chief elections official in Connecticut, Secretary Bysiewicz's top priority has been to ensure that our state's voting process is fully reliable, secure, and private for all voters. In 2002, she helped write the landmark Help America Vote Act (HAVA) with U.S. Senator Christopher Dodd to protect the integrity and improve the accessibility of our nation's electoral system. In 2006 and 2007, she oversaw the successful statewide implementation of both optical scan voting technology and vote-by-phone technology that allows Connecticut residents with disabilities to vote privately and independently at the polls. To assure voters of the reliability of Connecticut's elections, she won passage of the strictest, mandatory audit law in the country for which she has earned national acclaim. Secretary Bysiewicz also established a partnership with the University of Connecticut which independently reviews Connecticut's election procedures, and announced the creation of a new Voting Security and Accessibility Board to further enhance security at the polls.

Deeply committed to promoting voter registration and participation in every election, Secretary Bysiewicz regularly works with civic and advocacy organizations, businesses, schools and others to implement voter registration drives and encourage civic engagement. Having visited hundreds of high schools and registered thousands of students to vote, she also encourages young people to become active citizens at all levels of government through several educational programs, including annual essay, poster, and citizenship award contests. With the rapid growth of the Latino community in Connecticut, Secretary Bysiewicz has hosted several statewide Latino Voting Summits to encourage greater participation in elections. In 2008, she also launched a comprehensive initiative to register thousands of Latino voters prior to the

Presidential election. Secretary Bysiewicz also led a national effort in 2008 to overturn a policy established by the US Department of Veterans' Affairs that banned non-partisan voter registration drives at VA Hospitals nationwide. The Secretary also fought for and won passage of a Constitutional Amendment in Connecticut allowing 17 year-olds to vote in primaries if they will turn 18 by the general election, a change that is expected to extend the ballot franchise to 10,000 new young voters in Connecticut.

Secretary Bysiewicz's dedication to expand voter registration and participation paid off in both the 2000 and 2004 Presidential elections, when Connecticut's voter turnout was among the highest in the nation. Her foresight to move Connecticut's 2008 Presidential primary from March to February most recently enabled record numbers of young and new voters to participate in the "Super Tuesday" primary along with more than 20 other states. In 2009, she also successfully fought to change Connecticut's U.S. Senate vacancy law which now allows voters to choose their U.S. Senator by special election in the event of a vacancy rather than providing authority to the Governor to appoint a successor.

To acknowledge the tremendous civic contributions of leaders and volunteers in our state, Secretary Bysiewicz also implemented a Public Service Award program through her office in 2000. Through this effort, thousands of World War II veterans, volunteer firefighters, emergency response workers, elected and appointed officials, poll workers, and sports coaches have been recognized by the Office of the Secretary of the State.

Before she was elected as Secretary of the State, Secretary Bysiewicz represented the 100<sup>th</sup> Assembly District towns of Middletown, Durham, and Middlefield in the State House of Representatives from 1992 to 1998. In that capacity, she also served as House Chair of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. A graduate of Yale College and Duke University School of Law, she practiced corporate and international law at White and Case in New York City. She has also practiced corporate and banking law at Robinson and Cole in Hartford, and health care and pension law at the Aetna Insurance Company.

While in law school, Secretary Bysiewicz authored the book [Ella: A Biography of Governor Ella Grasso](#), the former Connecticut governor who was also the nation's first woman governor elected in her own right. A native of Middletown where she grew up on a farm and attended public schools, Secretary Bysiewicz continues to reside in Middletown with her husband David Donaldson and their three children. Together, they raise and train Fidelco guide dogs that then provide assistance to people with visual impairments. Secretary Bysiewicz is also the granddaughter of Polish and Greek immigrants, and the first Polish-American and Greek-American to be elected to statewide constitutional office in Connecticut.

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