

U.S. soldiers stand guard behind barbed wire as Afghans sit on a roadside near the military part of the airport in Kabul on Aug. 20, 2021, hoping to flee from the country after the Taliban's military takeover of Afghanistan. (WAKIL KOHSAR/AFP via Getty Images)



Ukrainian soldiers help a man on a wheelchair as people try to flee crossing the Irpin River in the outskirts of Kyiv, Ukraine, Saturday, March 5, 2022. (AP Photo/ Emilio Morenatti)

The Resilience and Resolve of Refugees and Those Who Aid Them

The Statue of Liberty famously holds a poem by Emma Lazarus, called 'New Colossus' that concludes, "[s]end these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door." For centuries, America has been a promising door to immigrants seeking new life and opportunity and to tempest-tost refugees searching for the safety and tranquility of life in America.

Connecticut is no exception. According to the Department of Social Services, five hundred to one thousand refugees settle in Connecticut every year. Due to increased global strife, those estimates have been well exceeded by the vital increase of refugees into our state this year.

Though relocating to Connecticut offers safety, life for a newly arrived refugee remains challenging. Connecticut is lucky to have two immigrant and refugee resettlement organizations that work tirelessly to ensure that each immigrant and refugee can seamlessly integrate into their new home.

Founded in 1982, Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services (IRIS) in New Haven is the largest organization helping refugees start a new life in the state. IRIS typically assists more than three hundred refugees a year, but the withdrawal from Afghanistan dramatically increased the need. From



IRIS: Run for Refugees. Top (left to right): Kelly Bee, Katherine Lawder, Akram York, Julie Davis, Ashley Makar, Marthe Annan Kingsley, Barbara Davis, Faiz Mandozay, Afghan newcomer, Afghan newcomer, Chris George. Bottom: Zeenie Malik, Ann O'Brien,Daad Serweri, Gladys (Ndengo) Mwilelo

October 2021 to March 2022, IRIS helped resettle over four hundred and seventy Afghans into Connecticut, and that reached close to seven hundred for all refugees by summer 2022, many of whom risked their safety and their family's safety to help the United States' military. "2021 was the largest year for IRIS," said Community Sponsorship Developer Barbara Davis, "and 2022 is shaping up to be the same."

Founded in 1918, the Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants (CIRI) in Bridgeport typically helps about one hundred and ten individuals resettle through the standard federal Reception and Placement program per year. But like IRIS, America's withdrawal from Afghanistan dramatically increased demand. "The biggest difference with the Afghanistan program is that we are provided almost no notice prior to the person's arrival," said Executive Director Susan Schnitzer. "The average notice was about seventy-two hours, but we have had as little as eighteen hours in one case." Since October 2021, CIRI has helped over two hundred Afghans find jobs, homes, and start new lives here in Connecticut.



Smoke rises from a deadly explosion outside the airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, Thursday, Aug. 26, 2021. Two suicide bombers and gunmen have targeted crowds massing near the Kabul airport, in the waning days of a massive airlift that has drawn thousands of people seeking to flee the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. (AP Photo/Wali Sabawoon)

In August 2021, the United States withdrew all forces from Afghanistan, ending twenty years of military involvement. Simultaneously, the Taliban began taking back control over areas of the country, imposing archaic laws on women and girls, and seeking vengeance on Afghans who had assisted the American effort. Kabul, the Afghan Capital, fell on August 15, 2021,

before American troops had fully withdrawn. Faiz Mandozay, who is now a resident of West Haven, Connecticut, was among the thousands of Afghans that fled to Hamid Karzai Airport, where they attempted to escape amid the chaotic and horrific scene.

Mandozay arrived in America on May 14, 2019, after living most of his life in Kabul, Afghanistan. Born in Khost Province on the Pakistani border, Mandozay spent almost twelve years assisting the United States mission in Afghanistan through his work with the Afghan National Army, National Police, and the Ministry of Public Works. Prior to the Taliban takeover, Mandozay had a good life, with a well paying job in human resources and a degree in computer science. "I never wanted to leave," he said, but in 2019 he was convinced by a supervisor that he should leave for his safety and entered the United States on a Special Immigrant Visa. He settled in Connecticut with the assistance of IRIS, which helped him find a job in manufacturing and a small apartment in West Haven.



Afghan Refugees: (left to right): Hamesha (daughter), Faiz Mandozay (father), Anees (son)

In 2020, Mandozay lost his father and was unable to return to Afghanistan for the funeral due to COVID-related travel restrictions. In June 2021, he finally returned on the first anniversary of his father's death. He was there when United States forces withdrew, allowing the Taliban to gain control of Kabul. At the time, Mandozay was staying in the home of his younger brother, which the Taliban searched. Mandozay hid, knowing that they were looking for Afghans that had assisted the Americans.

Fortunately, he successfully evaded the Taliban and was able to leave Afghanistan with his immediate family, but his mother and younger brother were left behind. “They are scared. No one has a job and there is very little to eat,” said Mandozay, describing the conditions back home. He returned to Connecticut in November 2021.



Lyubov Kuznetsova, Newington, CT

Just six months later, Russia commenced war on Ukraine, sending the world’s third-most powerful army to invade its smaller, democratic, and westward-leaning neighbor. Thousands of Russian troops entered Ukraine from the north, east, and south, attempting to encircle the capital of Kiev and placing the country in a state of war. Ukrainian families immediately began fleeing to the border countries of Romania, Moldova, Hungary, Slovakia, and, principally, Poland. Among these refugees were Iryna Sklepova and her two children, as well as Lyubov Kuzhnetsova, all of whom now call Newington, Connecticut home.

Leaving family behind is a heart-wrenching decision for people deciding to flee violence. Sklepova formerly worked as an English teacher and with her local city council on projects funded by the European Union. On February 24, 2022, Russian troops entered Ukraine and shelled for the first time her city of Ivano-Frankivsk. A city of nearly 240,000 residents, Ivano-Frankivsk sits at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains in the far west of Ukraine, near the borders of Romania, Moldova, Slovakia, and Poland. The Russians bombed the city at least three more times in the ensuing weeks and Sklepova decided it was too dangerous to stay, preparing to leave with her son, 15, and daughter, 8. Her husband—like many Ukrainian husbands—stayed behind as men between eighteen and sixty were not permitted to leave.

The Sklepovas were fortunate to have family already living in Newington. When war broke out, their Connecticut family did not hesitate to act. In early March 2022, Viktor Bukhvak, Sklepova's father-in-law, closed his mechanics shop in Newington and began preparations to help Iryna and her children leave. He boarded a plane in Hartford and eventually made his way to Warsaw, Poland. From Warsaw, he traveled by bus to the Ukrainian border, which he crossed on foot to meet the Sklepovas. They all made their way across the Polish border and eventually to Warsaw, where they were granted visitor visas to the United States, as the temporary protected status visa did not yet exist. The family arrived in Connecticut on March 23, 2022.

In many respects, Violetta Kuzhnetsova's story is the mirror image of Sklepova's. Kuzhnetsova moved to America in 1997 with her husband, a doctor with the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. However, her now eighty-five-year-old mother, Lyubov Kuzhnetsova, chose to stay in Vinnitsa, Ukraine, about two hundred and fifty kilometers southwest of Kiev, where Lyubov had lived her whole life. For twenty-five years, Lyubov lived safely in Vinnitsa and her daughter in the United States, but that all changed in 2022 when war erupted and Vinnitsa was targeted. On March 25, 2022, Russian cruise missiles bombarded the Ukrainian Air Command located in Vinnitsa and on July 14, 2022, Russian missiles struck an office building in Vinnitsa, killing twenty-one people, including three children.

Given that her elderly mother was now living in an active war zone, Violetta Kuzhnetsova knew she must act. In early March, she flew to Moldova to bring her mother to Connecticut, out of harm's way. She had brought tourniquets and other supplies to donate to the war effort, but those items were confiscated by security at the airport. She then arranged with a family friend to transport her mother to the Dniester River that forms the border between Moldova and Ukraine. There, with her daughter's assistance, Lyubov crossed the border on foot, carrying whatever she could fit in her bag, beginning her long journey to Connecticut and leaving—perhaps forever—the place she called home for eighty-five years.

Refugees, upon resettlement, are immediately faced with hardships such as lack of financial stability, unemployment and an inability to speak English. Faiz Mandozay is quick to point out that his settlement in America—though far from easy—was aided by his ability to speak English and his background and education in Computer Science. "Put yourself in the shoes of a person from rural Afghanistan with no education and no English," he said. "It's very stressful." Likewise, Iryna Sklepova was already fluent in English and has the support of her husband's family, who were already

here. As IRIS's Davis explained, historically American immigrants settled with others from their ethnic or cultural groups, which provided a safety net of sorts to the new arrivals not yet accustomed to the American way of life. "With refugees, this often isn't the case" explained Davis. "They have no one, so groups like IRIS step in to fill those gaps and provide community."



St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church, located at 70 Oak Street in Willimantic, collected and forwarded donations to the Ukrainian Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia, which forwarded donations directly to the people of Ukraine.

Federal assistance for refugees is minimal, about two thousand dollars per person—barely enough to cover rent for a month or two, let alone groceries, clothes, and other essentials. With Afghans, the federal assistance is about enough to cover three months' rent and the Connecticut General Assembly has matched that amount, but in most cases the assistance is exhausted in six months or less, and the refugees must become self-sufficient. IRIS and CIRI do receive private donations to help bolster the meager federal benefits, but they also provide support to the new refugees in their journey to self-sufficiency, whether it be finding a job, an apartment, opening a bank account or any number of other things one must do when starting life over from scratch.

The Ukrainian situation is even more muddled, with those arriving early on visitor visas—like Iryna Sklepova and Lyubov Kuzhnetsova—entitled to no federal benefits. "The lack of medical insurance is the most difficult part," said Sklepova. "When my children needed physicals and vaccinations for school, I had to pay out of pocket, but fortunately they are very healthy." Violetta Kuzhnetsova pointed out that her mother's visitor visa will eventually expire, but it is not possible for an 85-year-old woman to go back to a country at war. Since going back is not an option, she is living in America with no medical coverage at all.

Getting work is also a challenge. "They get on their feet very quickly," said CIRI's Schnitzer. "They get jobs, go to school and learn a new language, and often they do so working more menial jobs than they did in their home country." Because she is here on a visitor visa, Iryna Sklepova is not able to work, but she is applying to transfer her visa to temporary protected person status so she can be employed. Faiz Mandozay's first job in America was far more menial than his work in Afghanistan, paying him fifteen dollars an hour working for a manufacturer. "I feel like I wasted the first two years here," he said, "just trying to put food on the table." After returning to Connecticut, Mandozay took a job directly for IRIS as a community co-sponsor case manager. Now he helps newly evacuated Afghans become self-sufficient. He also coaches community groups who are assisting IRIS in settling refugees throughout Connecticut's cities and towns, but he continues to look for work that matches his skills and interests, taking online courses to improve his computer science skills.

"Refugees are incredibly resilient people," said Barbara Davis of IRIS. "One of the benefits of the Afghanistan program is that they are able to work right away, but since they do not technically have refugee status, they have the added stress of having to go through the legal process of asylum to be able to stay here permanently." The same holds true for Ukrainians who wish to stay. Asylum is usually the long-term solution, but the asylum courts are backlogged, with too few attorneys to represent asylum applicants and too few administrative judges to adjudicate the cases. According to the Department of Homeland Security, there are over 300,000 pending asylum cases at any given time.

Though life here in Connecticut is peaceful, there is the constant concern for family and friends left behind. Iryna Sklepova's husband continues to work as a lawyer in Ivano-Frankivsk. Because it is situated in the western edge of Ukraine, the city is currently away from the heavy fighting in the east and south, but Russia's intentions are unknown and the progress of the war

uncertain. She also has family and friends living in Kiev and surrounding areas, under constant threat of Russian air strikes and missiles.

Faiz Mandozay is also worried about his family back in Afghanistan. The Taliban has repeatedly searched the house of his younger brother, looking for Faiz and his older brother, who also assisted the American mission, and is a refugee living in Virginia. Mandozay desperately wants to reunite his entire family here in America and continues to reach out to the State Department and Connecticut's federal delegation in hopes that something can be done to help them leave Afghanistan.

Although life is not easy for newly arrived refugees, Connecticut offers opportunity for safety, prosperity and a better life. After several tumultuous years, Mandozay, his wife, and two children are now together and settled in West Haven. His daughter and son attend West Haven Public Schools, where they are making friends and succeeding. Incredibly, Iryna Sklepova's fifteen-year-old son finished middle school in Ukraine remotely from the safety of Newington and now attends Newington High School. He is making friends, playing soccer, and reports that he is excelling in math for the first time in his life. Her daughter, eight, has made many friends in third grade and is becoming proficient in English, so much so that she now slips into English when speaking to her mother around the house.



Ukrainian Refugees: (left to right): Ruslan (son), Yeva (daughter), Iryna Sklepova (mother)

Connecticut's state motto, "Qui Transtulit Sustinit," translates to "he who transplanted, sustains." After Faiz Mandozay, the Sklepovas and Lyubov Kuzhnetsova were welcomed by Lady Liberty to the United States, we welcomed them to Connecticut. They, and the thousands of other refugees who have settled here over more than three hundred and fifty years, are a vital part of who we are as a state and as a community. I would like to

thank the refugees who shared their stories for this dedication. They are a reminder of the human toll caused by armed conflict, as well as the imperative that America keep open its promising door to those who need its help. I would also like to thank IRIS and CIRI for their work and commitment to helping people throughout the world find refuge, safety and hope right here in our great state of Connecticut. Refugees, themselves, are offered safety and opportunity here, but in return they enrich our community with their culture, work ethic and values. That is why I dedicate the 2022 Connecticut State Register and Manual to the refugees that now call Connecticut home, to the resettlement organizations that provide them assistance and support, and to the neighbors in this state who volunteer to welcome them to their new home.



Ukraine's national flower is the sunflower, which represents peace. Scientists refer to sunflowers as hyperaccumulators because they have the ability to absorb high concentrations of toxic materials. After the Chernobyl disaster in 1986, fields of sunflowers were planted to absorb radiation from the polluted soil. Ukraine is also one of the world's largest exporters of sunflower oil.

Mark F. Kohler
Secretary of the State



Demonstration for reduction in voting age, Seattle, 1969. Photographer: Tom Barlet, Seattle Post-Intelligencer. Property of the Museum of History & Industry Collection.



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First to Vote

Bruce Sievers of East Haddam enters voting booth Thursday, making him the first 18 year old to vote in Connecticut and possibly the first in the nation since the 26th amendment to the constitution was ratified Wednesday. The amendment extends voting rights to 18 year olds in state and local elections throughout the nation. Story on Page 3 (Courant Photo by Robert B. Ficks).

Young Republican Casts Historic Ballot

By PAUL MINDUS

EAST HADDAM — Bruce Sievers, a graduate of Hale-Ray High School, Thursday became the first 18-year-old to vote in a Connecticut election and possibly the first in the nation since the 26th amendment to the Constitution was ratified.

The amendment extends voting rights to 18-year-olds in all state and local elections throughout the nation. Ohio ratified the amendment Wednesday, fulfilling the requirement that 38 states do so to make it law.

Sievers was one of five persons under 21, out of 29 registered, who voted on a referendum here.

He had a proper introduction to the heritage of American elections.

A registered Republican, he voted against a referendum to abolish the town's Board of Finance. The board's chairman, Democrat Frank Davis, s Sievers' employer at Frank Davis Resorts in Moodus.

Sievers' ascribed the low voter turnout among 18-year-olds to the fact that most young people were working and did not know they could vote.

He had a day off from work and was phoned by his mother, Mrs. Albert Sievers, a Courant correspondent, who told him that according to Town Clerk Mayer Breslow he could vote on the referendum.

As soon as he arrived at Town Hall, Bruce was met by a Courant photographer and together they went inside, where Bruce checked in with Mary Dean, Republican registrar of voters.

Had it not been for Sidney Wheaton, a voting machine tender Sievers might not have voted, however.

"The photographer and I went back to the voting machine booth," Sievers said, "and I went inside and posed with my hand on the lever, making believe I was going to close the curtain. Then he took some shots.

"He said he was through, and I stepped out of the booth and started walking away," he said. "Sidney Wheaton reminded me that I'd forgotten something. So I went back inside and proceeded to vote."

Sievers said he attends town meetings regularly and is a member of the legislative committee of the Connecticut Flyfisherman's Association, a conservation lobby group in Hartford.

A former president of student council at his high school, Sievers will attend Bucknell University, Lewisburg, Pa.

He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Sievers of Power House Road, Moodus.

Image courtesy of The Hartford Courant.

Spotlight: Bruce R. Sievers of East Haddam Becomes the First 18-Year-Old to Vote in Connecticut

On July 1, 1971, the 26th Amendment, which lowered the voting age to 18, officially became part of the United States Constitution. On that day, 18-year-old Bruce R. Sievers cast a ground-breaking first vote in East Haddam on a town referendum, becoming the first 18-year-old to do so in Connecticut.

Sievers' political participation in 1971 was influenced by his mother, Mrs. Alberta Sievers, a Hartford Courant correspondent during that time. Mrs. Sievers saw an opportunity for her son to make history by voting on a town referendum and encouraged him to go to the polls. His historic ballot gave him a vote, a voice, and a seat at the table.



September 2022: Bruce Sievers accepted the NASS Medallion award, which recognizes individuals, groups, and organizations with an established record of promoting NASS' goals in elections, civic education, service to state government, or a commitment to giving through philanthropic contributions.

Sievers' civic engagement extends beyond becoming the first 18-year-old in Connecticut to vote. From 1979 to 2009, he dedicated his career to instilling civic responsibility in his students as a high school English and Social Studies teacher, and later as a principal. Sievers is now President of the East Haddam Historical Society. He also works part-time as the Associate Director of the Commission on Public Schools for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

Proposed in the wake of protests over the war in Vietnam, the 26th Amendment made the age to vote commensurate with the age to be drafted and sent to war. Connecticut became the first state to adopt the 26th Amendment on March 23, 1971, but it did not formally become part of the Constitution until North Carolina ratified it on July 1, 1971.



Stained glass portrait of Thomas Hooker, created by Louis Comfort Tiffany, located at Center Church in Hartford. Background image: Fourth page of the Fundamental Orders, provided by the Connecticut State Archives.

The Fundamental Orders

Walter W. Woodward[1]

Connecticut is called the Constitution State because of the Fundamental Orders, the document that formally created colonial Connecticut's government on January 14, 1639. Widely praised as "the world's first written constitution" and "the foundation for constitutional government in the western world,"[2] the Fundamental Orders are also hailed as a landmark in the development of political democracy. However, both points—whether the Fundamental Orders are first, a constitution, and second, an icon of democracy—are contested.



This marker, located on Wells Road, directly past the Spring Street intersection, greets visitors to Wethersfield's historic district, which contains over 150 structures that predate 1850.

The Fundamental Orders were the product of a unique combination of challenges faced by the early English settlers of Hartford, Windsor, and Wethersfield—the Pequot War; competition with Massachusetts; English royal pressure on Puritans; and unclear lines of political authority. The river towns' settlers had emigrated from Massachusetts, which expected these new towns to remain under its government. A group of wealthy English Puritans, however, with a grant to the Connecticut river lands called the Warwick patent, also claimed the settlers' land and loyalty. Faced with

1. Associate Professor, University of Connecticut & Connecticut State Historian Emeritus

2. Gary L. Rose, "Introduction, The Constitution of the State of Connecticut" (2011). Government, Politics & Global Studies Faculty Publications. Paper 2. http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/gov_fac/2; Walter Woodward, "Creative License, or Fundamental Fact," Connecticut Explored vol. 3, no.2 (Spring 2005)

competing claims, the Connecticut migrants crafted, and Massachusetts issued, the March Commission, a compromise which allowed a group of 8 of the leading men in the new towns to govern independently from March 1636 to March 1637, while a solution was worked out with the English grandees.[3] No solution appeared, however, and when the expiration of the Commission was followed within a month by a Pequot and Wangunk Indian attack on Wethersfield that left 6 men and 3 women dead, the river towns independently formed a General Court (comprised of six magistrates, and three "committee" men from each town) to declare and prosecute war on the Pequots.



The Founder's Stone, located in Windsor on the campus of the Loomis Chaffee School, was erected in 1898 by the Abigail Wolcott Ellsworth Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution to commemorate the settlement of Windsor in 1633.

This ad hoc General Court met throughout the successful conflict, and continued meeting during 1638, demonstrating Connecticut's intent to continue self-directed government. In May of that year, Hartford's minister Thomas Hooker preached a sermon on the nature of government historians have seen as a crucial influence on the Fundamental Orders. In it, Hooker notably stated that "the foundation of authority is laid first in the free consent of the people."[4] This was a radical departure from the common form of

3. Charles M. Andrews, "The beginnings of Connecticut, 1632–1664" Tercentenary Commission of the State of Connecticut, Committee on Historical Publications (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1934), 29.

4. James Hammond Trumbull, "Abstracts of Two Sermons by Reverend Thomas Hooker," in Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society, vol. 1 (Hartford, 1860), 19-21.

government in Hooker's era, in which people believed in the "divine right of kings" and located sovereignty in the government itself.[5] Connecticut's third state historian Albert Van Dusen, like many others, saw the statement as confirmation that "Hooker believed that successful government required the free consent of the people." "It seems almost certain," Van Dusen wrote, "that Hooker's sermon deeply influenced those who later in 1638 devised the new governmental document." Recently, other historians have challenged this view, asserting that Hooker was addressing congregational rather than political governance, and that his democratic leanings have been vastly overstated.[6]



Hartford Founders Monument, located at the Old Center Church Graveyard, was erected in 1986 by the Society of the Descendants of the Founders of Hartford to commemorate the 350th Anniversary of the city (replaced the original Sandstone Monument of 1837).

Whatever Hooker's influence, a document outlining the structure of an independent government for Connecticut was drawn up and adopted, presumably by the General Court, on January 14, 1639. Connecticut's first state historian, George Matthew Dutcher, noted that the Fundamental Orders were probably the work of Roger Ludlow, then the colony's only trained lawyer. At the time, they were not called the Fundamental Orders, though their fundamental significance was certainly clear. That name was first applied in the minutes of the General Court of November 10, 1643.[7] In writing them, Ludlow probably had the assistance of a committee,

5. Christopher Collier, "The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut and American Constitutionalism," Connecticut Law Review vol. 21.4 (1989), 863-869.

6. Michael Besso makes a strong argument against a political interpretation of Hooker's sermon in, "Thomas Hooker and His May 1638 Sermon," Early American Studies 10.1 (Winter 2012), 194-225; Albert Van Dusen is quoted in Besso from Albert Van Dusen, Puritans Against the Wilderness: Connecticut History to 1763 (Chester, CT, Pequot Press, 1974), 35. 47.

7. George Matthew Dutcher, "The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut," Tercentenary Commission of the State of Connecticut, Committee on Historical Publications (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1934), 2.

whose members included John Haynes and Edward Hopkins, the colony's first two governors, and other leading men.

In eleven brief, numbered paragraphs, the Fundamental Orders establish the manner, places, and times of elections; the roles and duties of elected officials and authorizes them to set rules and regulations governing the towns and their people. Notably, whether it was influenced by Hooker's sermon or not, it locates sovereignty in the people themselves. The document expressly notes that if government officials fail to call the semi-annual legislative sessions, the freemen themselves can call the legislature and act without them.[8] Significant, too, in a different way, is that the Fundamental Orders make no mention at all of the British monarch, or allegiance to the crown.

But did the Fundamental Orders really qualify as a constitution? The answer to this question depends entirely on how you define the term. If, as Connecticut's fourth state historian Christopher Collier noted, you think of a constitution as something that "defines and limits a government," then the Fundamental Orders definitely were a constitution. Constitutional scholar Wesley Horton agrees. "It reads like a constitution, and . . . the document has aways been treated with the respect a society normally reserves for a document enshrining the society's most important principles."[9]

But other elements seen as essential in a modern constitution are missing. They were not written by a special convention of delegates expressly chosen for that sole purpose, and they were not ratified directly by the people. Importantly, they were not unalterable by any entity except the people.[10] On those grounds, it could be said that the Fundamental Orders do not qualify as a constitution in the modern sense.

Connecticut's towns formally united as an independent colony under the provisions of the Fundamental Orders in 1639, and the provisions it enshrined were transferred virtually intact into the Charter of 1662 and given royal sanction.[11] The net effect of this was that Connecticut as a colony acquired virtual independence more than a century before the American Revolution.

8. Collier, "The Fundamental Orders," 867-868.
9. Collier, "The Fundamental Orders," 867; Wesley W. Horton, "Connecticut State Constitution," (Oxford University Press, 2011), 7.
10. Collier, "Fundamental Orders," 863.
11. Horton, "Connecticut State Constitution," 8.

Denise W. Merrill
Public Servant, Civic Leader

Denise W. Merrill served as Connecticut's Secretary of the State from January 5, 2011 until June 30, 2022. While the preceding sentence lays down historical markers for Secretary Merrill's term in high office, the sentence falls far short of describing a remarkable life and career in public service to date.

Merrill is a self-described daughter of California. Born on the West Coast, she embraced the carefree, outdoor lifestyle associated with America's most populous state. She surfed the rugged coastlines of northern California in the era of Beach Boys hits and wood-paneled station wagons. She was also an avid skier, attacking moguls in the Mountain West. To this day, she is a fierce competitor on the tennis court. True to a lifelong broad range of interests, Merrill is also an accomplished classical piano player, studying music for a time in Europe.



Session Opening Day 2015—Former Secretary Merrill addresses the Connecticut State Legislature from the floor of the Connecticut State House of Representatives on the first day of the legislative session; 2015.

The University of Connecticut in Storrs, a presence in her career for decades, is Merrill's undergraduate alma mater. She also studied at San Francisco Law School. While she did not complete her three years there, she took on the arduous task of reading for the bar. She passed the California Bar Examination and was admitted to practice there. She practiced law

for a time in San Francisco, and while Merrill did not pursue a career at the bar, her legal education and training served her well decades later.

Merrill's travels and family life eventually brought her back East, and she settled in Storrs. While raising three children, she became involved in community affairs and education. In the 1980's and 90's, Merrill worked as a consultant for the Connecticut State Department of Education, served as executive director of the Consortium for Law and Citizenship Education and as director of the Training Resource Academy at the Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut. Her lifelong commitment to civics education was a hallmark of her public service career.



Former Secretary Merrill swears in Connecticut's 2019 Kid Governor at the Connecticut Old State House

It is said that timing is everything in politics. In the fall of 1993, a seat representing Storrs and the surrounding area in the Connecticut House of Representatives opened up upon the unexpected resignation of the incumbent. Merrill was approached by local activists, ran and won the seat. She has always emphasized the importance of asking people to run. She approached her new position with her usual energy and enthusiasm. When she ran for a full term a year later, the Hartford Courant endorsed her, writing, "Denise Merrill, 46, has been Mansfield's state representative for just a year. She won a special election to replace the popular Jonathan Pelto, who resigned. Already, she has shown signs of being a splendid representative of the one-town 54th House district, which includes the University of Connecticut. Like her predecessor, she has the potential for leadership. Ms. Merrill, a Democrat, helped obtain needed money toward the restoration

of UConn's Homer Babbidge Library. She pushed for campaign finance reform by seeking increased disclosure of contributions. A lawyer with a historian's interest in the law, Ms. Merrill has an impressive professional and civic background. She deserves the chance to continue her promising work at the state Capitol."

In the General Assembly, Merrill was hard-working, respected, and well-liked. She had a wide range of legislative interests and made her mark on issues as diverse as education, campaign finance reform and the environment. In her first leadership post, vice-chair of the Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee, she introduced Connecticut's first public campaign financing bill and supported other reform measures. During a legislative career that spanned over seventeen years, Merrill served as vice-chair of the GAE Committee, vice-chair of the Education Committee, chair of the Appropriations Committee and House Majority Leader. In a Connecticut Magazine poll of her colleagues, then Representative Merrill was voted "Most Respected by the Other Side of the Aisle" and "Most Effective Legislator."

In 2010, Secretary of the State was an open seat for the first time in twelve years. Merrill entered the race late, deferring an announcement until after a protracted budget crisis, which she felt demanded her attention, was resolved. By the time she got into the race in December, other Democrats were crisscrossing the state, visiting Democratic town committees. She went all-in, visiting roughly 80 towns in short order. She prevailed after a floor fight at the State Democratic Convention in May of 2010, but faced a competitive primary. After winning the primary, she secured the office in November.

The November 3, 2010 general election set the tone and agenda for Merrill's first years in office. A shortage of ballots in the state's largest city, Bridgeport, led to a court order extending voting hours on election day. Reports of this and election administration problems in other towns and cities led to calls for reform. Merrill set out by building consensus through forums, public hearings, visits with election officials and engagement with the press and public. Improving administration of elections became her primary focus, and the result was a package of election integrity reforms passed by the General Assembly and signed into law.

In her first two years, more crisis management was in store for Merrill, as the state was hit by two powerful storms; one bearing snow in October and then a tropical storm just prior to election day. Working with the cities, towns, and Governor's Office, she ensured the elections went forward and votes were counted. In 2014, polls in a major city failed to open for lack

of lists. Employing similar strategies she used in the 2011 effort, Merrill proposed and worked to pass comprehensive reforms to ensure the training and accountability of local elections officials.

Merrill also led reform efforts on election day registration and constitutional amendments to permit early in-person voting and universal access to absentee ballots. The latter two reforms await approval by Connecticut voters. These were not easy tasks, requiring sustained commitment over decades in the face of recurrent opposition and occasional defeat. In 2016, Merrill achieved another voting milestone when she entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Justice to implement automatic voter registration (with an opt-out provision) when eligible persons interact with DMV. This hard-won reform also allowed Connecticut to more effectively implement "Motor Voter," a 2002 federal reform.

Merrill launched a pioneering partnership with the Connecticut Bar Association called the Secretary's Lawyer Assistance Program. Volunteer attorneys can serve as the secretary's nonpartisan, informed eyes and ears at the polls across the state on election day, reporting on problems observed or reported to them, to allow for rapid response.

An unprecedented crisis presented itself in March of 2020 when Connecticut and the world faced the COVID-19 pandemic. An ongoing presidential primary season highlighted the challenge facing election administrators. An historic pandemic, that made large gatherings inadvisable, spanned an entire election season. Merrill quickly went to work, teaming up with the Governor's Office, the Attorney General and General Assembly to ensure that all voters could cast absentee ballots if they chose, placed in secure drop boxes in every town. The 2020 election in Connecticut was one of the smoothest and most efficient in recent election history.

Merrill was also focused on the business services functions of the office. From the beginning she insisted on technology upgrades and user-friendly automation. She introduced online business registration and renewal. She worked to create a business one-stop, so entrepreneurs could move, virtually, from one state agency to another as they set up and maintained a business organization. She helped promote Connecticut, working with chambers of commerce around the state, and undertaking a Connecticut trade mission to China.

Merrill never lost her focus on civics education. She worked with the Connecticut Bar Association, the State Department of Education and the Democracy Center at Connecticut's Old State House to promote civics and develop programs and events for young people.

Merrill was reelected in 2014 and 2018. She announced in the summer of 2021 that she would not seek another term in 2022. About a year later, she stepped down a few months early due to health challenges faced by her husband, Dr. Stephen Leach.



Mentoring the next generation of leaders is something former Secretary Merrill included in every aspect of her work. Here she welcomes the Summer Internship class of 2014.

Denise W. Merrill—San Mateo, California, native; Connecticut Nutmegger by choice; surfer; skier; musician; cook; world traveler; mother; grandmother; education advocate; legislator; reformer; 73rd Secretary of the State of Connecticut; leader; friend. Colleagues past and present wish to thank former Secretary of the State Denise W. Merrill for her lifetime of dedication to civic engagement and public service.

Preface

Readers of the Connecticut State Register and Manual—the "Blue Book"—will note some changes in content and appearance for 2022.

The increased size of the Blue Book is most obvious. In addition, glossy paper is now used throughout the book enhancing the ability to print color images and creating a modern look.

The book's cover remains blue—as it has been since 1935—and its content is focused to achieve its most fundamental original purpose: to provide an authoritative annual source of information on the elected officers and officials of state and municipal government in Connecticut.



Mark F. Kohler
Secretary of the State