

STATE OF NEBRASKA

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Gale urges overseas voters to cast absentee ballots

LINCOLN – Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale urged Nebraska residents living outside the United States, whether in the military or for other reasons, to participate in the Nov. 2 election by using absentee ballots.

Gale said he wanted to use Armed Forces Voters Week, the period of Sept. 3-11, to call attention to the voting mechanics for Nebraskans living in foreign countries.

“I want to make sure that Nebraskans, no matter where they are living, have the chance to vote,” Gale said. “I want to make a special outreach effort to military personnel, considering the many deployments of Reserve and National Guard units.

“If you have relatives, friends or colleagues in foreign countries who are eligible to vote in Nebraska, I urge you to contact them and help them with the voting process.”

He said an easy way for Nebraskans living in foreign countries to apply to vote is to fill out a Federal Post Card Application, which can be used for registering to vote and/or requesting an absentee ballot.

Absentee ballots are available from county election offices. There is a deadline of 4 p.m. Oct. 27 for a county election office to receive a written request to send an absentee ballot to a specific address. The request may be made by fax.

The 2004 Legislature enacted a bill that allows Nebraskans living outside the United States to receive an absentee ballot by fax. People need to request a faxed absentee ballot and include their fax number.

“This is a huge improvement adopted by the Legislature,” Gale said. “Faxing the ballot cuts the total transmission time in half.”

However, Nebraska law does not allow for voted absentee ballots to be returned by fax. Therefore, Gale urged Nebraskans living in foreign countries to allow plenty of time to return their ballots, which may be done by mail or any other delivery process.

A county election office must receive absentee ballots before the close of polls on Nov. 2 for the ballots to be counted.

“The strength of our American democracy comes from the voice of our citizens, which comes in many ways, from letters to their elected leaders to peaceful rallies, from political party activity to coffee-break discussions,” Gale said. “However, the most effective voice of all comes at the ballot box.”

Information on foreign voting, including a request form for an absentee ballot and addresses and phone numbers for county election offices, is available at www.sos.state.ne.us. The Federal Post Card Application is available at www.fvap.gov. Questions may be directed to the secretary of state’s office at (402) 471-2555 or county election offices.

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