



Secretary of State Update

News & Updates from your Nebraska Secretary of State John A. Gale

Issue 4

Winter 2004

Secretary Gale reflects on 2004, extends warm holiday wishes



As a life long Nebraskan, I have never failed to enjoy our change of seasons. Each season has it's own special qualities. The spring turns the Sandhills green, the geese and the sandhill cranes fill the sky with their migrating calls, and the early blooming crocus and daffodils remind us that warm weather is coming soon; the summers are remembered for hot days and brilliant blue skies, lots of baseball and soccer, hotdogs and fairs, sandpit fishing, and long evening barbecues; our falls are our favorite with the richness of color, fields of pumpkins and golden corn, brisk winds, harvest moons, and lots of good football and hunting; winters can be cold, bringing lots of snow and ice, but a good time for fireplaces, snowmen, icicles, and family sledding in the neighborhood parks.

With our changing seasons, we now move from a fall chill of a good Halloween to a crisp and bracing cold as we near Christmas. It is hard not to be caught up in the holiday spirits as we remember our recent Thanksgiving Day feasts, and we sense from the lights and music around our towns that Christmas and New Year's Day rapidly approach.

We pause to acknowledge the blessings and freedoms that we do share so richly in our country, and our deep hope for a brighter dawn of freedom in the world.

It has been a challenging year for America with a close presidential election, an unstable future foreseen in Afghanistan and Iraq, and a somewhat wobbly economy behind us but getting better as the year ends. The drumbeat is now subdued with the election conducted and President Bush reelected by a clear margin avoiding the constitutional crisis of 2000, new evidence of small olive branches being seen in Palestine/Israel, Ukraine, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and robust signs of employment and growth for our country's economy.

As you know, there are some headline political changes taking place right now in Nebraska with more coming in January, but they are exciting and almost heady events. For Governor Johanns to be selected to be our nation's next Secretary of Agriculture is of tremendous importance to our state's largest industry, agriculture. In addition, Lieutenant Governor Dave Heineman will move up to assume the Governor's chair. He is well-qualified and well-trained to carry on the Johanns agenda and vision for Nebraska. There will be a new Speaker of the Legislature and a new Lieutenant Governor. Such changes are breathtaking, for sure, but they provide the exciting hope for new opportunities for Nebraska in the future!

I continue to enjoy every day that I serve as Nebraska's Secretary of State. It has been a busy year for me as your Chief Elections Officer, Chief Protocol Officer, and Chief Records Officer. Besides my normal duties, I serve as Chair of the State Real Estate Commission, the State Records Board (e-government), State Brand Committee, and Collection Agency Review Board, and as a standing member of State Pardons Board, State Accountability and Disclosure Commission, and State Canvassing Board (elections). For 2004, I also served as Chair of the State Quarter Design Committee, as well as the Vote Nebraska Initiative Task Force (reviewing voter education and voter turnout issues).

Have a wonderful Christmas and New Year! I will be looking forward to seeing you this year as I travel around the state doing the state's business as Nebraska's Secretary of State. I have developed a clear vision for this office, centering around the future of business services, elections, and e-government, and will continue to make this vision a reality for a better Nebraska tomorrow.

Carol and I are expecting our three grown children home for Christmas together with our oldest son's family which includes our only grandchildren, Jack (6) and Charlie (2). We are looking forward to the good food, good cheer, and some challenging board games!

God bless you and your families during this holiday season, and God bless all Americans at home and abroad as we enter the New Year 2005.



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Without your vision and assistance, the Secretary of State's Diplomatic Conference could not have been such an incredible success!



Secretary Gale visits with Governor Johanns and top dignitaries from around the world. Breakfast at the Omaha Hilton was hosted by Kawasaki Motor Corp. Guests of the Conference had a full day touring Omaha businesses and educational institutions. The Conference ended with a reception at First National Tower hosted by First National Bank.

Chief Protocol Officer Invites Foreign Dignitaries to Secretary of State's Diplomatic Conference Oct. 13

You may recall, in its 2003 session, the State Legislature designated me as Secretary of State to act as Chief Protocol Officer for the State of Nebraska. In this capacity, it was determined that my office would welcome international visitors and be instrumental in Nebraska forging relationships with her global neighbors. In two years, my office has welcomed nearly 600 visitors from around the world, presenting them with Honorary Citizenships to the State of Nebraska as a measure of goodwill on behalf of the citizens of Nebraska.

As Chief Protocol Officer, the Governor and I hosted a Diplomatic Conference on October 13 in Omaha with over 35 countries represented and some 150 Nebraska business and political leaders in attendance. We showcased the dynamic and progressive face of Nebraska agriculture, education, and industry in the 21st Century. The Conference was the first of its kind to be hosted within our state's borders, and was a great success.

All in all, it was a terrific example of what can be accomplished by a working partnership of government, business, and academia. The 43 foreign dignitaries and honorary consul generals and consuls were all impressed, pleased to be included, and ready to tell their respective governments about their exciting and informative trip to the State of Nebraska.



Gale Implements Youth Programs to Encourage Participation



Nebraska Secretary of State John A. Gale; Tom Wolf, Chairman of the Nebraska Bankers Association; and George Beattie, President of the Nebraska Bankers Association select savings bond winners of the Youth Election Worker Savings Program.

My office sponsors many program to enhance voter awareness, increase election turnout and ultimately make citizens aware of the importance of active participation in our democracy.

My youth initiatives in this area continue to broaden:

—My office held nine Statehood Birthday Parties for fourth-grade students in 2004. We plan to host 12 such parties across the state in early 2004, entertaining and sharing civic pride with some 6,000 students.

—Some 108,000 students in over 500 schools across the state participated in student vote programs in 2004, up from 90,000 participating students in 2002. These programs promote civic knowledge and give students a chance to vote in mock elections. We appreciate our media partners, the Omaha World-Herald and Lincoln radio station KFOR, for their key help in preparing our students to be good citizens.

—My office developed a Youth Election Worker Program in 2004 to encourage 16- and 17-year-old youths to help with elections. Participants were eligible for the drawing of five savings bonds made available by the Nebraska Bankers Association.

—I have spoken regularly to middle school, high school, and college students about citizenship, probably reaching some 1,000 students in 2004.

—My office supports County Government Day, Boys State and Girls State, Capitol Forum and Veterans Days events in schools.



In an effort to continue to keep you apprised of the activities of the Secretary of State's Office, please take a moment to fill out the following information so that we can keep our database current and you an informed citizen in matters relating to my office.

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2004 General Election Met with Record Registration, High Turnout

The year 2004 marked a busy year for elections. With four amendments, four initiative petitions, and a number of elective offices on the ballot, this election cycle proved challenging. Complying with the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), we worked diligently to ensure that all 93 counties were ADA-compliant, that county clerks were acquainted with the new changes for the year including provisional balloting, and that all poll workers were properly trained.

I was very proud of Nebraska voters in our general election. We had a record 792,827 voters cast ballots in the November general election, with 68% statewide turnout. This was a clear break with the disturbing 20 year trend downward of the percentage of registered voters going to the polls. Our registration numbers were over 89% of eligible residents registered.

Voter Registration Statistics	
Republican	575,778
Democrat	396,764
Libertarian	4,716
Nebraska	4,590
Green	398
Nonpartisan	177,947
TOTAL	1,160,193

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