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News Release

Oct. 24, 2005

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School-consolidation referendum to appear on ballot

LINCOLN – Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale announced today that the referendum petition filed by Nebraskans for Local Schools to repeal a school-consolidation law had collected enough valid signatures to be placed on the November 2006 ballot.

The petition effort collected 87,006 valid signatures statewide and had valid signatures of 5 percent of registered voters in 67 of the state's 93 counties, Gale said. To qualify for the ballot, the petition needed a total of 56,435 valid signatures (5 percent of registered voters in the state) and valid signatures of 5 percent of registered voters in 38 counties.

Gale said the petition effort did not meet the signature threshold to suspend the operation of the school-consolidation law, LB 126, until the November 2006 election. Suspension would have required approximately 113,000 valid signatures (10 percent of registered voters in the state).

LB 126, passed by the 2005 Legislature, requires the state's Class I, or elementary-only, school districts to merge into K-12 districts. It also requires Class VI, or high-school-only, districts to merge with their feeder Class I districts.

After a petition is submitted to the Secretary of State's Office, county election offices have the job of verifying whether petition signatures are those of registered voters.

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