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## **All 93 Nebraska counties now on statewide voter system**

LINCOLN – Nebraska has reached a major milestone in elections with the inclusion of all of the state’s 93 counties on a computerized, statewide voter-registration system, according to Secretary of State John Gale.

Previously, each county in Nebraska maintained its own voter-registration records.

“The conversion from 93 county systems to a centralized system was a massive undertaking by my office and county election officials, considering there are over 1.1 million registered voters in the state,” Gale said.

“The new system will revolutionize the way voter registration is done in Nebraska,” he said.

Gale’s office spent two years planning the system, and the conversion of all 93 counties took another five months to complete. On Nov. 21, Sarpy County became the final county to go live on the new system.

With the new system, Nebraska is in compliance with a mandate of the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) that each state implement a centralized voter-registration system by Jan. 1, 2006. Under HAVA, the electronic record in the statewide system is the official record that must be used for all election functions.

The cost of the \$4 million project includes equipment, software, project services and training. The cost will be paid primarily with federal funds, with limited state matching funds.

“While the typical voter will not experience any changes in the registration process, this state-of-the-art technology represents a major upgrade for handling elections,” Gale said.

“The system allows for uniform maintenance of voting rolls to eliminate those who are ineligible to vote,” he said.

Gale said the system offers the following benefits:

--To prevent fraud, the system will verify identification information with the state Department of Motor Vehicles and federal Social Security Administration.

--If a voter moves to another county, the registration record with all voter history is transferred to the new county. This eliminates problems with duplicate records, provides more accurate voter counts and reduces the potential for voting problems.

--The system will match against vital statistics records and criminal justice records to remove voting records of people who have died or been convicted of felonies.

--The system has numerous capabilities that will allow county officials to better manage elections. These include automatically placing voters in the correct precincts, tracking early/absentee voting, managing provisional voting and verifying petition signatures.

--The system should increase productivity and efficiency for county election offices.

“We made every effort to study the systems that were in place and to provide improved functions from what the counties had before,” Gale said.

“Much of the planning time was spent with county election officials,” he added. “We met with each local official to determine their wants and needs and tried to meet those expectations.”

The vendor for the system is Elections Systems & Software of Omaha, the world’s largest election-equipment supplier. The project will continue into 2006 with software improvements.

Based on cost per voter, the Nebraska system is one of the most economical voter-registration systems in the nation, Gale said.

“We are very proud of how far we have come with the new system, and we look forward to building on this technology well into the future,” he said.

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