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Gale reports voting figures from May 9 election

LINCOLN – The May 9 primary election in Nebraska drew 400,687 voters, or 35.1 percent of 1,140,741 registered voters, according to Secretary of State John Gale.

The turnout exceeded his prediction of 32 percent. He said high-profile Republican races for governor, the Senate and the 3rd Congressional District helped boost turnout.

The 3rd Congressional District led in voter turnout with 41.6 percent followed by the 1st District with 35.9 percent and the 2nd District with 27.2 percent.

“Compared to turnout in other recent primary elections – 22.7 percent in 2002 and 21 percent in 2004 – 35.1 percent was a big leap,” Gale said. “This might be an indication that we’re turning the corner on declining voter participation.”

He released voting figures from the May 9 election in connection with the June 5 meeting of the Nebraska Board of State Canvassers to certify results of the election.

Other voting figures included:

--The number of people using early voting was 36,740, or 9.2 percent of the total casting ballots.

--Of 3,400 provisional ballots cast, 2,790, or 82.1 percent, were accepted. Provisional ballots are used when there are questions about a person’s voting eligibility.

--The number of military/overseas voters was 222.

“I’m pleased that we were able to accommodate the needs of so many people in these categories,” Gale said.

He said early voting is increasing much faster in other states than in Nebraska. “Nebraskans still like the social and community experience of voting on Election Day,” he said.

Gale said the rate of provisional balloting dropped considerably from the 17,003 cast in the November 2004 general election. “The new statewide interactive voter-registration system helped eliminate many registration challenges that would have otherwise resulted in a provisional ballot,” he said.

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