



SECRETARY OF STATE UPDATE

The Honorable John A. Gale

Winter 2007

Nebraska in the spotlight at diplomatic conference

The Nebraska Secretary of State's Diplomatic Conference on Oct. 30-31, 2006, in Omaha allowed Nebraska to showcase itself to foreign representatives.

The event, sponsored by Secretary of State John Gale, highlighted the state in the areas of agriculture, business, education and technology. The theme of the conference at the Omaha Hilton Hotel was "Nebraska: America's International Heartland."

"The conference was an excellent way to show the progressive and dynamic quality of our state to diplomatic officials," Gale said.

"The conference was part of my continuing efforts to build strong ties between Nebraska and foreign nations in the areas of commerce, cultural exchange and educational studies," he said. "A priority of the conference was to promote Nebraska exports and encourage foreign investment in our state."

Forty-four diplomatic officials from 28 countries registered for the conference, which also was attended by Nebraskans representing agriculture, business, education and government.

The conference opened with an evening reception on Oct. 30. Events on Oct. 31 included a breakfast, a morning program focusing on developments in Nebraska, a luncheon, afternoon site visits and an evening reception at Joslyn Art Museum.

Gov. Dave Heineman delivered a keynote address at the breakfast. Speakers at the luncheon were Nebraskan Meryn Carlson, deputy undersecretary for natural resources and environment at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Raymond Martinez, deputy chief of protocol of the U.S. Department of State. U.S. Sen. Chuck Hagel of Nebraska spoke at the closing reception.

In his address, Heineman outlined what makes Nebraska a great investment and a dynamic trading partner.

"Nebraska may be most widely known as an agricultural state, but the diversity of our products and trade relations with countries worldwide often astounds people," he said. He noted that Nebraska exports to more than 180 countries each year.

The governor said the state is "one of the best places to live, work and grow a business," citing a strong work ethic in the labor force, excellent quality of life, quality education and a business-friendly environment.

"We have much to

offer companies looking to locate operations in the U.S., and we are always open to new ways to expand and diversify trade with our international partners," Heineman said.

Gale held the conference in his role as the state's chief protocol officer for international relations.

This was the second time that Gale has sponsored such an event. The inaugural diplomatic conference was held in Omaha in 2004.



Among the speakers at the conference were (from left) Gov. Dave Heineman, Omaha Mayor Mike Fahey and Greg Ibach, director of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture.



Pictured at the conference are (from left) Petr Kolar, ambassador of the Czech Republic; Secretary of State John Gale; Raymond Martinez, deputy chief of protocol of the U.S. Department of State; and Oleh Shamshur, ambassador of Ukraine.

Office to increase UCC online filings

Plans are underway to allow business interests to file more Uniform Commercial Code documents online with the Secretary of State's Office.

Currently, online filing of UCC documents is limited to original filing statements, continuations and terminations. Amendments to original filing statements, such as changes regarding the debtor, the secured party and collateral, must be filed with paper documents.

However, work is underway to allow the online filing of amendments of original filing statements, according to Secretary of State John Gale.

It is anticipated that the change will be accomplished by spring 2007.

"The change will increase the efficiency of the Business Services Division as it will substantially reduce the amount of paper work for our staff to handle," Gale said.

In 2005, the Business Services Division recorded 45,985 UCC electronic filings and 32,532 UCC paper filings.

Gale noted that the expanded use of online UCC filings will benefit filers economically. A paper filing costs \$10 while an electronic filing costs \$8.

Online UCC filings require a subscription to Nebraska.gov, which provides Internet services to the state of Nebraska.

Jobman named to head Business Services

Secretary of State John Gale has appointed Judy A. Jobman, former Buffalo County clerk, as deputy secretary of state for business services.

Jobman, who started her new position on Jan. 2, succeeds Debbie Pester, a 27-year veteran of the Secretary of State's Office.

The Business Services Division registers business entities, trademarks and trade names; records Uniform Commercial Code and other security-interest filings; oversees notary commissions and document authentication; and operates the Address Confidentiality Program for domestic-abuse victims.

Teri Sefna, who has worked for the Secretary of State's Office for nearly 22 years, has been promoted from deputy manager to office supervisor of the Business Services Division with additional duties. She will be responsible for the day-to-day personnel and staff operations.

Jobman worked in the Buffalo County Clerk's Office for 19 years, including eight years as the elected clerk.

Prior to joining the clerk's office, she was involved in the ownership of an ambulance service and retail stores in Sidney.

"Judy Jobman has a wealth of experience in county government that will serve the public well in her new position," Gale said.



Jobman



Pester

tion," Gale said.

Pester resigned as deputy secretary because she will be moving to Gillette, Wyo., to join her husband, Bruce, who has taken a position there.

For an interim period, she will continue working in the Business Services Division, overseeing the design and development of new information technology functions.

Pester joined the Secretary of State's Office in 1979 as the personal secretary to Secretary of State Allen Beermann.

She moved to the office's Uniform Commercial Code unit in 1981 and assumed increasing responsibility through the years. She was appointed director of business services in 2002 and named deputy secretary of state for business services in 2004.

"Debbie Pester has done a superb job of advancing our Business Services Division to a very high level," Gale said.

Colleen Byelick appointed licensing director

Secretary of State John Gale has appointed Colleen M. Byelick as assistant general counsel and licensing director.

Byelick, a Lincoln native, started work Aug. 1. She is a May 2006 graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Law.



Byelick

The Licensing Division oversees the licensing of collection agencies, debt management firms, private detectives, plain-clothes investigators, and polygraph and voice stress examiners. The division also handles rules and regulations adopted by state agencies.

In addition to directing the Licensing Division, Byelick provides legal counsel to the Business Services Division and assists Gale with his duties on various state boards.

"Colleen Byelick has quickly taken the reins of the Licensing Division and her other duties," Gale said. "She is going to be a real asset to our office."

The Licensing Division recently assumed responsibility for the rules and regulations unit, which was moved from the third floor to the first floor of the State Capitol.

Bess Boesiger has been named as the rules and regulations assistant.

She joined the Secretary of State's Office in February 2005. Previously, she worked as a foster care specialist with OMNI Behavioral Health for 10 years.

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General election sees smooth sailing

From Secretary of State John Gale's perspective, the Nov. 7, 2006, general election in Nebraska was a winner.

The interest level among citizens was high, resulting in a record number of voters for a non-presidential election. Election machinery and procedures worked well. And there were no major problems or controversies.

"The election went very smoothly," Gale said. "Our county election officials and our voters experienced an extraordinary day of success."

A total of 610,499 people voted, which was the highest number for a non-presidential election since statewide voter registration started in 1968. The previous high was 604,195 in 1990.

The number of people voting exceeded Gale's predicted turnout of approximately 603,000.

He said a factor that helped boost turnout was the large number of people

who voted early by mail or at county election offices – 107,746, or 17.6 percent of the total.

The right to cast a provisional ballot again helped a large number of people exercise their right to vote, he said. Of 7,121 provisional ballots requested, 6,000 (84.3 percent) were counted as valid. Provisional ballots are used when registration issues arise for voters.

Gale noted that the significant election improvements that Nebraska recently has made fared very well during the general election.

The improvements include an interactive, statewide voter registration system, a statewide system of tabulating ballots using optical scanners, voting machines for disabled people and the use of provisional ballots.

The changes were made to comply with the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002.

Program honors 320 youth election workers

Secretary of State John Gale and the Nebraska Bankers Association honored 320 youths in Nebraska who served as election workers during the Nov. 7, 2006, general election.

The youths participated in a program designed to encourage students to learn about the election process firsthand.

The participants served in 36 counties and worked a total of 1,457 hours. Each participant received a recognition certificate from Gale.

As part of the program, the Nebraska Bankers Association awarded \$50 savings bonds to five participants. The winners were picked in drawings.

The winners of the savings bonds were Kevin Rohrer of Verdigré, Krista Zarybnicky of Odell, Jordan Watson of Phillips, Dawnie Ross of Grant and McKenzie Steger of Chappell.

This is the third election for the youth election worker program, and the program continues to grow. There were 85 participants for the November 2004



Becky Richter, assistant election manager, and Secretary of State John Gale draw names of winners of \$50 savings bonds in the youth election worker program.

general election and 201 participants for the May 2006 primary election.

"Thanks to the cooperation of the county election officials and the Nebraska Bankers Association, the program is growing and making a real impact," Gale said. "This program is part of my efforts to encourage new generations to be good citizens."

High court upholds secretary's decisions in two petition cases

Secretary of State John Gale's decisions on ballot eligibility in two high-profile petition cases were upheld by the Nebraska Supreme Court.

The court ruled on Sept. 15, 2006, that a constitutional initiative to allow three casinos in Nebraska and a companion statutory initiative providing for the distribution of gambling tax receipts were not eligible for the Nov. 7, 2006, ballot.

The court ruled on Oct. 27, 2006, that a statutory initiative to authorize video keno was eligible for the Nov. 7 ballot. The measure was defeated by voters.

Both cases centered on the Nebraska Constitution's resubmission provision that says the "same measure, either in form or essential substance," shall not be submitted to voters by the initiative process more than once in three years. The November 2004 ballot contained initiatives to allow expanded gambling in Nebraska.

On July 12, 2006, Gale announced that the casino gambling measures were not eligible for the ballot but that the video keno proposal was eligible. He said he based his decisions strictly on whether the measures qualified under the resubmission provision.

In the casino gambling case, Gale said the fundamental nature of the 2006 and 2004 measures would open Nebraska to casino gambling in a comparatively similar fashion.

He said the essence of the video keno initiative was to amend statutory provisions in the Nebraska County and City Lottery Act and was a much different measure than the expanded gambling proposed under the 2004 initiatives.

The Supreme Court said an interpretation of the resubmission provision requires a broad, conceptual analysis and comparison of "the fundamental theme and purpose of each initiative measure."

Gale noted that the Supreme Court's decision in the casino gambling case marked the first time the high court had interpreted the resubmission provision.

Vote program attracts over 42,000 students

Elementary, middle and high school students across Nebraska got a taste of the election process by participating in Nebraska Student Vote in connection with the Nov. 7, 2006, general election.

The program, sponsored by Secretary of State John Gale and the Omaha World-Herald, involved 42,152 students from 313 schools.

Participating students received civics instruction, benefited from readership of the Omaha World-Herald and voted Oct. 30-Nov. 2 in a mock election.

“This program helps advance civics education by teaching students some of the basics of government and giving them experience in voting,” Gale said.

“The World-Herald is pleased to work with the state of Nebraska to bring such a valuable, educational tool to our state’s students,” said Joel Long, director of public relations for the newspaper.

The mock election showed students favored Republican Dave Heineman for governor, Democrat Ben Nelson for the U.S. Senate, and Republicans Jeff



Fortenberry, Lee Terry and Adrian Smith for the U.S. House of Representatives. Those were the candidates that prevailed in the general election on Nov. 7.

Nebraska Student Vote is conducted every two years in connection with the November general election.

“Civics education has been a very high priority of my office,” Gale said. “Nebraska Student Vote has been well received by Nebraska schools since its inception in 1996 and is highly regarded nationally.”

Tribute to veterans is available online

Secretary of State John Gale says an excellent tribute to American veterans has been added to his office’s Web site.

“Vote in Honor of a Veteran,” a 45-minute video, can be accessed at www.sos.state.ne.us under Youth Services. The video is available in video-streaming format (Windows Media Player).

The program can be shown to a group using a projection system. Previously, the video was available only through videocassette or DVD.

The video centers on the gripping tale of Bernard W. Nider of Lincoln, who was one of the first liberators to reach Omaha Beach at Normandy, France, on D-Day, June 6, 1944.

“By telling the story of a Nebraska veteran who protected our country and freedoms we cherish, we hope our young people will be able to personalize the importance of being active citizens and lifelong voters,” Gale said.

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