

JOHN A. GALE

Nebraska Secretary of State

Phone: (402) 471-2554

www.sos.ne.gov

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Contact: Gary Seacrest
(402) 471-8408, gary.seacrest@sos.ne.gov

Gale issues statement on campaign items at polling sites

LINCOLN – Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale today responded to an e-mail that has been circulating regarding wearing items supporting candidates or issues into a polling place.

“The message is correct that it is improper to wear any apparel or logo supporting a candidate or issue into a polling place. Such an action is a criminal act,” Gale said.

“However, the e-mail wrongly concludes that voters will automatically be turned away from the polls if they arrive wearing campaign items,” he said. “Other steps are available to avoid the violation and to allow the citizen to vote.”

It is a misdemeanor to electioneer within 200 feet of a polling site.

Gale said many items such as hats, stickers or pins can easily be removed during the time the voter is in the polling place. Other clothing items such as T-shirts or sweatshirts are a bigger challenge, but there are options such as turning the clothing inside out or covering the logo or message on the clothing.

“It is certainly not our intent in Nebraska to arbitrarily refuse citizens the right to vote, but it is our intent to enforce the laws to prevent campaigning within 200 feet of any polling place,” Gale said.

“The polling place is a place for voters to be free of the partisanship and rancor of the campaigns as they cast their ballots,” he added.

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