

JOHN A. GALE

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Nebraska practices in line with new federal voting law

LINCOLN – Nebraska already is in substantial compliance with a new federal law designed to eliminate obstacles to voting for military personnel wherever they are stationed and overseas civilians, according to Secretary of State John Gale.

“Being able to vote is of critical importance to American citizens, especially those in the military who are protecting our country,” Gale said. “In recent years, Nebraskans in the National Guard have been serving abroad in significant numbers and on frequent deployments.”

Recognizing the challenges facing military and overseas voters, Gale said, his office has taken numerous steps in past years to ensure that they receive ballots and have their ballots counted.

The Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act, which was signed by President Barack Obama on Oct. 28, received strong bipartisan support in Congress. The act includes the following provisions regarding military and overseas voters:

--Requires that states provide these voters with ballots at least 45 days prior to an election. This has been the practice in Nebraska since 2006.

--Requires that states provide electronic transmission of voter registration forms, absentee ballot requests and ballots to these voters. Nebraska law already allows such transmission. In some cases, Nebraska even allows completed ballots to be returned by fax or e-mail.

--Prohibits states from rejecting ballots for lack of a notarized signature. Nebraska does not require a notarized signature with a returned ballot.

--Requires that states establish a free access system that will allow these voters to check the status of their ballot requests and their ballots. Gale said he looks forward to implementing such a system in Nebraska.

“My office has worked closely with the Legislature to continuously update our state laws to provide fair access for our military and overseas voters, which has not been the case nationwide,” Gale said. “This federal law helps assure fair and speedy access for these voters in every state.”

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