

*Secretary Gale submitted this article to Nebraska newspapers for their consideration.*

## **Gale urges Nebraskans to become informed, regular voters**

By John Gale  
Nebraska Secretary of State

Nebraskans will have the opportunity to vote in two statewide elections this year – the May 11 primary election and the Nov. 2 general election. This raises a key question: What kind of voter are you?

Are you a regular voter, an occasional voter or a non-voter?

As Nebraska's chief election officer, my goal is to make you a lifelong voter who never misses an election.

To get to that point, you first have to register to vote. The process is extremely easy.

You can download a voter registration form from my office's Web site at [www.sos.ne.gov](http://www.sos.ne.gov), fill it out and mail it to your county election office. Other options include registering in person at a motor vehicle office or your county election office.

Voting in Nebraska also is extremely convenient.

On Election Day, you can vote at a polling place near your residence. If that's not convenient, you can vote early either by mail or in person at your county election office.

Not only do I want you to become a regular voter, but I also want you to take two further steps.

First, I want you to become informed about the races and issues on the ballot. Good tools for this purpose are sample ballots and voter's guides. Such study is important to the process and shouldn't be a burden on your time.

Second, I want you to vote the entire ballot, not just the high-profile races and issues. Good citizenship requires that you consider all the levels of government on the ballot. The exercise of voting has to be more than casting a ballot for U.S. president every four years.

At times, Nebraskans have demonstrated a strong commitment to voting.

In the last two presidential elections, Nebraska has set records in terms of the total number of voters. The 2004 general election saw 792,906 voters (68.3 percent of registered voters), and the 2008 general election topped that with 811,923 voters (70.2 percent of registered voters).

Aside from presidential elections, Nebraska voting numbers in statewide elections are not as encouraging.

I'm particularly concerned about our low turnout in primary elections. Here are voting percentage figures for recent primary elections: 22.7 percent (2002), 21 percent (2004), 35.1 percent (2006) and 23.3 percent (2008).

We need much better voting participation in our primary elections. It's part of being a good citizen.

The U.S. system of representative democracy works best when we have high turnout at all elections. Such civic participation fulfills the eloquent words of President Abraham Lincoln that we are a "government of the people, by the people, for the people."

I need your help to get out the vote. Please encourage your family members, friends and work colleagues to vote. Register to vote and cast your ballots in the 2010 elections. Make your mark!

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