



From the Office of Secretary of State

John A. Gale

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Leadership elected for Nebraska Sesquicentennial Commission

LINCOLN – Secretary of State John Gale has been elected to serve as chairman of the Nebraska Sesquicentennial Commission for 2015. Sara Crook of Peru will serve as vice-chair. They are among 17 commissioners appointed by Governor Dave Heineman, after state senators passed legislation this year forming the commission.

In addition to the election of the chair and vice-chair, members have also formed subcommittees, created a mission statement and have heard presentations from directors of several state agencies.

“We’ve managed to accomplish a great deal in the three meetings held since September,” explained Gale. “It’s clear that this is a highly focused group of individuals, each with their own ideas and opinions, but with a combined goal of creating something special for the state of Nebraska.”

In addition to Gale and Crook, Mike Smith, director of the Nebraska State Historical Society, will serve on the coordinating subcommittee which will help set the objectives and priorities for the commission. Chairpersons for the other subcommittees are as follows: Frank LaMere, arts and culture; John Strobe Jr., communications; Ann Bird, education; and, Jamesena Grimes Moore, government. Those positions, including that of chairperson and vice-chairperson, are elected annually.

Gale said creation of strong subcommittees would be essential in accomplishing the goals of the commission. “Each of those subcommittees will be working with various state agencies, organizations and groups to coordinate activities across the state related to the sesquicentennial.”

As part of an effort to acquaint themselves with some of the agencies with which they will be working, commissioners have heard presentations from various state agencies, with more to follow.

"This is all part of an education process. We want agencies to understand the meaning and purpose of the Nebraska Sesquicentennial Commission and for them to establish some lines of contact so that they know who we are going forward," said Gale.

Citing the commission's recently adopted mission statement "...to reflect on who we were, celebrate who we are and inspire future generations, while embracing our cultural diversity," Gale acknowledged that planning for the sesquicentennial was in its infancy. "We're taking the first steps in a long journey to what will be a memorable year of celebration for Nebraska. However, by all accounts, we're off to a very positive start and we'll be laying more of the groundwork in the months ahead."

Nebraska Sesquicentennial Commissioners

Barbara Batie (Lexington) – Farmer and freelance journalist specializing in agriculture.

Ann Olsen Bird (Omaha) – Speech & language pathologist, special education consultant for Nebraska Department of Education.

Denise Christensen (Kearney) – Executive Director, Merryman Performing Arts Center.

Dr. Sara Crook (Peru) – History/Political Science Professor, Peru State College.

Nancy Faber (Elkhorn) – Former principal, Omaha South Magnet School.

Deanna Frankforter (Grand Island) – Community leader and volunteer.

John Gale (Lincoln) – Secretary of State.

Becky Herian (Alliance) – Former teacher at Alliance Public Schools.

Christi Janssen (Omaha) – Executive Director at the Durham Museum.

Donna Kush (Omaha) – Vice President of Public Affairs-Northern Region at Union Pacific Railroad.

Frank LaMere (South Sioux City) – Native American community leader.

Jamesena Grimes Moore (Bellevue) – Former Vice-President of United Way.

Dora Olivares (Gering) – Gering Junior High School principal.

Marty Ramirez (Lincoln) – Retired psychologist and Latino community leader.

Dr. John L. Strobe, Jr. (Lincoln) – Retired college professor in education administration and law.

Leann Widhalm (Norfolk) – Special education teacher, Norfolk Junior High School.

John F. Zimmer, V (Lincoln) – University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Law student.

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