



From the Office of Secretary of State

John Gale

402-471-2554

[www.sos.ne.gov](http://www.sos.ne.gov)

**For Release**

April 4, 2014

**Contact:** Laura Strimple

402-471-8408

[laura.strimple@nebraska.gov](mailto:laura.strimple@nebraska.gov)

### **Early Nebraska voters first to see changes affecting primary ballots**

LINCOLN – Early voters will be the first in Nebraska to note changes affecting this year’s primary ballots, says Secretary of State John Gale. Most notably, some partisan races will not appear, based on passage of LB 56 in the current legislative session.

Under the new law, Republican and Democratic candidates in certain county races will advance to the general election without appearing on the primary ballot if they are uncontested. “The change affects partisan races in nearly every county,” explained Gale. “In several counties, all of the candidates running for county office will automatically advance. They won’t even appear on the ballot.”

For example, Sarpy County has 27 partisan races for county offices that will not be on the ballot. Only three races will appear. In Merrick County, eight races will advance and four will appear on the ballot. In Otoe County, party candidates in the 12 contested county races will automatically advance. Already in Nebraska, nonpartisan candidates in county and other local races are advanced, if the number of nominees does not exceed twice the number of vacancies.

“Obviously, this will make the ballots much shorter in some precincts, depending on the races,” noted Gale. “That may save some counties significant money in terms of the number of ballots they have to print.”

However, Gale also said it means that some candidates may feel they are at a disadvantage, because they will not have the recognition that comes with having their name on the primary ballot. “Those candidates may have to work harder to let

voters know who they are. It will also be up to the voters to learn more about the candidates who appear only on the general ballot.”

Another change this year will impact that type of primary ballot that registered nonpartisan voters in Nebraska receive. Current state law prohibits those voters from casting ballots in party primaries, except for federal offices. However, political parties can open up their own primaries.

The state Democratic and Libertarian parties both opened their primary election this year to allow nonpartisan voters to vote in any race where their party is nominating a candidate for partisan office. As a result, those voters can request a partisan ballot early from their county election office or at their polling place on Election Day.

The first wave of early voting ballots will be mailed out to voters starting April 7. The first day to vote early at county election offices is April 12.

“A lot of people took advantage of early voting in the 2012 presidential election and we suspect the same will be true in this primary and again in the general election this fall,” said Gale.

He also mentioned that this is the time that voters should make sure they are properly registered to vote. “Registration forms can be found on the Secretary of State’s website, as well as early voting request forms. We also have sample ballots posted for the statewide races.”

That address is: [www.sos.ne.gov](http://www.sos.ne.gov). Voters can also check the status of their registration through the Voter Information Center under the “Elections” tab of the website.

The Nebraska primary is May 13.

###