



From the Office of Secretary of State

John A. Gale

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Secretary Gale praises new 2015 election laws

LINCOLN – Secretary of State John Gale is praising Senator Jim Smith of Papillion and the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee chaired by Senator Murante of Gretna for their success in expanding the types of issues decided during special elections conducted by mail. Vote by mail in special elections on economic issues has become very popular in counties across the state, but by mail special elections for candidate issues has not been allowed until passage of LB 575.

Gale says citizens will now be able to fill vacancies, conduct recalls and handle any other candidate issues, all by mail. LB 575 signed by Governor Pete Ricketts, makes that change and several others related to state election law.

“Expanding all-mail elections to include candidate issues is something I’ve championed in the legislature several years now,” explained Gale. “All-mail special elections have proven to be an affordable and desirable option for many of our election officials. It reduces the cost per ballot and ultimately, results in higher voter participation.”

“Increased voter participation at all levels of elections has been a major goal of the Secretary of State Office and our 93 county election officials”, Gale said, “and we are finding that conducting special elections by mail on economic issues has significantly improved turnout. It is our hope that the same will be true for by mail candidate special elections.”

That measure was originally contained in LB 319, introduced this session by Senator Jim Smith of Papillion.

Another change included in LB 575 may also prove to be convenient for voters. Anyone wishing to vote early will be able to make that request by email. Previously requests were handled by mail or by fax. Emailed requests will need to be received by the appropriate county election official the Wednesday prior to the election, in order to ensure that a ballot is mailed out in time to vote.

"We're making several changes to expedite and modernize the registration process as well as the voting process," said Gale. "Later this year, we'll be launching an online voter registration system that can be used on a laptop computer, a tablet or even a smartphone."

There were more than 15 provisions related to election law that were included in LB 575. With the addition of the emergency clause, all of them go into effect immediately.

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