



From the Office of Secretary of State

John A. Gale

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**Sec. Gale touts formation of election system task force in 2017**

LINCOLN – Determining how Nebraskans will vote in the future, as well as what equipment or technology will make that happen, is the focus of a bill supported by Secretary of State John Gale. LB 1107 calls for the formation of a 16-member task force that will study those issues and make recommendations to the legislature. Members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs committee heard from testifiers supporting the bill during a hearing today.

“This bill proposes bringing together multiple stakeholders – all with a vested interest in making sure that our state election system is not only the most modern possible, but that it is also accessible to all voters, secure and reliable,” noted Gale.

Vote tabulation machines and AutoMARKS, machines that help disabled voters cast an independent and private ballot, will reach the end of their life cycle in about five years. When the current machines were purchased in 2006, they were paid for with federal funds, provided through passage of the Help American Vote Act (HAVA). Those funds won’t be available this time around.

“This gives us the added challenge of identifying a voting system that the state and or counties can purchase and continue to maintain, without breaking the bank,” acknowledged Gale.

If passed, the newly assembled task force would meet throughout 2017, presenting its findings to state lawmakers at the end of that year. Membership would include

county election officials, representatives from minority groups, the disabled community, major political parties, state senators, and others.

"We want participants to have a strong voice in this process," stressed Gale. "There are important decisions that will have to be made. Fortunately, we now have the time to do that type of thorough analysis."

Reacting to reports from other states, Gale admitted, Nebraska seems to be in a much better position. "I think some states are finding themselves in a tighter time crunch with regard to finding alternatives for their current voting systems. It's my belief that we will be able to maximize the lifespan of the equipment we currently have on hand, and roll smoothly into the next voting system that is selected."

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