



From the Office of Secretary of State John A. Gale

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Contact: Laura Strimple

402-471-8408

Public hearings set for death penalty issue on November ballot

LINCOLN – Interested voters are invited to participate in three public hearings related to the death penalty. By state law, Secretary of State John Gale is required to host hearings in each of Nebraska’s congressional districts, whenever a petition issue is on the general election ballot.

The hearings are scheduled in October for Referendum No. 426. That’s the number that will appear on the ballot, asking voters to either retain or repeal Legislative Bill 268. In 2015, state lawmakers voted in favor of LB 268, which abolished the death penalty and also set a maximum penalty for a first degree murder conviction at life in prison.

Referendum No. 426 will be the only statewide issue on the ballot. It qualified following a petition drive that resulted in enough signatures for ballot placement, as well as enough signatures to keep LB 268 from going into effect until voters could weigh in.

Those supporting Referendum No. 426 will be invited to speak first, followed by those opposing the measure. Hearings are moderated by Secretary Gale. Anyone is welcome to testify or just attend and listen.

“This is more than an informal town hall meeting,” noted Gale. “All comments become part of a permanent record on the issue. The purpose of the public hearings is to help educate citizens and the media through a meaningful exchange of views on the subject prior to the general election.”

“Witnesses will be able to address the underpinnings of what this issue is about, but also how to interpret the language when it appears on the ballot,” explained Gale. “In this case, voting to either retain or repeal doesn’t apply to the death penalty itself. Rather, voters are being asked to decide whether to repeal LB 268, thereby, reinstating the death penalty.”

The dates, times and locations for each hearing are as follows:

- October 11, 2016, 6:30 p.m.
University of Nebraska, Omaha
Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center, Rooms 201, 205 & 209
6400 University Drive South
Omaha, NE
- October 13, 2016, 6:30 p.m.
University of Nebraska Kearney
UNK Nebraskan Student Union, Ponderosa E
1013 West 27th Street
Kearney, NE
- October 18, 2016, 6:30 p.m.
Nebraska State Capitol, Room 1525
Lincoln, NE

In addition to the hearings, the Secretary of State is responsible for printing and distributing written materials about Referendum No. 426. County election officials usually keep copies of those pamphlets in their offices. Some may also distribute them locally, to libraries and such, so that they are available to the public.

Gale said the pamphlets will go out in the coming weeks. In addition, a copy will be published on the Secretary of State’s website: www.sos.ne.gov.

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