



From the Office of Secretary of State John A. Gale

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Early voting off to robust start

LINCOLN – If the numbers are any indicator, early voting is off to a robust start, says Secretary of State John Gale. On Monday, 24,615 ballots were mailed out by 73 counties to voters who had already submitted a request. That number far exceeds the number of ballots mailed out during the first five days of early voting during the primaries in 2014, 2012, 2010 and 2008.

“Of the ballots mailed out so far, 87 have been returned, which isn’t surprising given that the ballots went out recently,” explained Gale. “Those ballots include those returned by military and overseas voters,” said Gale.

The breakdown of requests by party include: 11,396 Republicans, 11,163 Democrats, 1,994 Nonpartisans and 62 Libertarians.

Through the first five days of early voting in 2014, 23,447 requests were received. In 2012, 23,182 requests were submitted during that same period.

“Given that we are looking at a remarkable increase in the number of requests for a single day, I’d say that we can expect this primary to be an active one, which will hopefully translate to higher turnout, both from early voting and on Election Day,” said Gale.

Up until the law changed in 1999, early voting was referred to as absentee voting. Those requesting a ballot had to provide a reason to have one mailed to them. In the 2008 primary, 15,713 requests for ballots were received during the first five days of early voting. That number increased to 18,549 in 2010 and has gone up ever since.

“Obviously, we’re looking at a much larger spike in requests this year. But those ballots only matter if they are returned and counted,” stressed Gale.

Voters can track the status of their mail-in ballot through the Voter Information Center on the Secretary of State’s website. The application is located under the “Elections” tab at www.sos.ne.gov.

“Voters can see when their ballot request was received, when it was mailed out and the date it was returned to the county election office,” said Gale. “By state law, counties can begin to count early voting ballots the day prior to Election Day.”

If someone is tracking their ballot through the Voter Information Center and does not see a return date, they should contact their county election office to check its status. Registered voters in Nebraska can request an early voting ballot 120 days prior to the election. Mail-in ballots are due at the county election office by the close of polls in Election Day.

“The application can be faxed or emailed to the appropriate county election official. If the person is not yet registered to vote, an application will also be included if the request is received by April 22,” noted Gale. “The last day someone can request that an early ballot be mailed to them is 4:00 p.m. on May 4. That request must be signed.”

Gale said the easiest method for receiving an early voting ballot is to request it from the county election office. Forms are also available on the Secretary of State’s website. Signed forms must be mailed, emailed or faxed to the proper county election office for processing.

In-person early voting at county election offices will commence on April 11. It ends on May 9, the day before Election Day.

“Given the many opportunities that voters have to cast a ballot, I’m hopeful participation will be high during the primary,” said Gale. “It is important to have as wide a consensus on candidates and issues as possible, to ensure that the voice of the people is truly represented.”

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