



From the Office of Secretary of State John A. Gale

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Voter turnout exceeds expectations; Regent race left off county ballots

LINCOLN – Secretary of State John Gale says he is pleased that voter turnout in the primary exceeded initial expectations. Provisional ballots and some early voting ballots have yet to be counted. Unofficially, voter turnout reached 26.5 percent. That's the highest it has been for a presidential primary since 2000 (30.1 percent).

"Although the competitive nature of the Republican presidential race was slightly diminished due to the outcome of the Indiana primary, I'm glad to see that many citizens saw the value of voting in other important races for the legislature, natural resource districts, the Nebraska Board of Education, public service commission and U.S. Congress."

Gale noted that while an overwhelming number of people threw their support behind Donald Trump, as the presumptive Republican nominee for president, other party candidates on the ballot still garnered votes.

Seven counties exceeded 50 percent turnout in the primary, including McPherson, which was the highest at almost 60 percent turnout. An additional eight counties had greater than 40 percent turnout. Douglas County had the lowest turnout, skirting just above 20 percent.

"Voter participation does matter and it's something that people in many of the smaller counties have embraced," said Gale. "My hope is that the same enthusiasm impacts voter turnout in the general election this fall."

Of 1,165,371 voters registered for the Nebraska primary, 309,079 cast ballots. Provisional ballots need to be reviewed and reported by the counties on or before May 17.

Depending on the final certified numbers, there are three races that face the greatest possibility of qualifying for an automatic recount. They include Legislative District 7, Public Service Commission District 5 and Board of Regents District 6. Per state statute, races are automatically recounted if the margin between candidates is less than one percent of the total votes received by the top vote-getter.

An additional situation complicates the results for Board of Regents District 6. Gale confirmed that the Webster County election clerk left that race off all ballots distributed in the county, affecting more than 700 voters.

“Unfortunately, voters in Webster County won’t get a second bite at the apple,” explained Gale. “There’s no provision in statute that provides for that. We’ll have to wait until the meeting of the State Canvassing Board on June 6, to see what is ultimately determined for that race, beyond granting an automatic recount.”

Any recounts approved by the State Canvassing Board would take place on June 8.

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