



From the Office of Secretary of State John A. Gale

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Sec. Gale: Nebraskans are registering, now they need to vote

LINCOLN – Voter registration has soared in Nebraska. Will that translate to greater turnout for Election Day?

Secretary of State John Gale says he’s hopeful, but turnout would need to be nearly record-breaking to make it happen.

“It’s an interesting paradox,” explained Gale. “On one hand, we’ve seen voter registration grow by leaps and bounds, especially in the past year. However, history indicates that we have not seen the same correlation in growth when it comes to voter turnout.”

To date, 1,165,189 citizens are registered to vote in the May primary. That is 13,045 more people than were registered to vote in the primary of 2014 and 28,824 more people than were registered in the primary of 2012.

“When we look at the past three presidential election years, we haven’t cracked 300,000 voters in any of those elections. That doesn’t bode well in terms of overall turnout.”

While not a scientific estimate, Gale noted there were several factors that go into predicting voter turnout.

“We talk to the counties about what they foresee, taking into account any district and local races that might be competitive. We also take a look at what is happening

in the presidential race. There's been a lot of talk about the outcome of the Indiana primary on May 3. That could be very influential."

Gale said if 290,000 people voted in the May primary that would translate to a turnout of just below 25 percent.

"Examining early voter turnout, it appears a lot of people are still sitting on their ballots," continued Gale. "Normally, we see about a 90 percent return on early voting ballots. A week away from the election and counties are reporting that they've received only about half of those ballots back into their offices. That's pretty significant."

Anyone with an early voting ballot should take efforts to get it in the mail, so that it is received by Election Day. In person early voting continues until May 9, the day before the primary.

"Obviously, a large number of people have taken the time to register to vote. Now they need to complete the process and go to the polls or mail in that completed ballot," stressed Gale. "It's our civic duty to ensure that our primary voters give the general election voters the best possible choices for those to be elected into office."

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