



## From the Office of Secretary of State John A. Gale

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**Contact:** Laura Strimple

402-471-8408

### **First ballots out the door, early voting to begin in Nebraska**

LINCOLN – The first general election ballots are out the door and headed to Nebraska voters overseas. Early voting will begin in the state in less than a week, reminds Secretary of State John Gale.

Ballots were mailed out to military members and overseas voters 45 days prior to the election. Ballots will be mailed to in-state voters who previously requested an early voting ballot starting on October 3. On October 10, in-person early voting will also be available at all county election offices. Some county offices may be closed that day in observance of Columbus Day, so voters may want to check in advance.

“In the last presidential election, 26 percent of people voted early, by mail and in person” observed Gale. “Since then, many more counties have conducted special elections by mail, so it will be interesting to see if that translates to more voters casting a ballot by mail for the general election.”

Gale said it is typical to see a large surge in early voting as soon as it is available and then again right before Election Day. “In 2012, county election officials were very busy with early voters. Some counties utilize drop boxes, which also get a lot of heavy use. People receive their ballot, but rather than mail it back, they simply slip it into the drop box.”

Gale said drop boxes are checked regularly to ensure that ballots are not left sitting too long. Nebraska law allows for county election officials to begin counting early ballots the day prior to Election Day.

“Whether returned in a drop box or by mail, voters need to check those early ballots to ensure they are placed in the correct envelope, properly signed and if they are mailed, have enough postage for delivery,” Gale said.

He went onto say that anyone wishing to vote early needs to keep in mind the following deadlines:

- If you are registered, you have until October 28 to ask that an early voting ballot be mailed to you.
- Mailed ballots must be returned to the county election office by the close of polls on Election Day, November 8.
- November 7 is the last day for in-person, early voting at county election offices.

Applications to receive an early ballot by mail are available through the Secretary of State’s website: [www.sos.ne.gov](http://www.sos.ne.gov). Look under “Elections” for the section labeled “Voter Forms.” Applications are available in English and Spanish. They should be mailed to the proper county election office for processing.

Also on the front page of the Secretary of State’s website, voters can see sample ballots in both English and Spanish.

“Whether early or at the polls, by mail or in person, the most important thing is that eligible Nebraskans go vote,” said Gale. “State and local candidates need our support and there are important issues that need to be decided. This is an opportunity to let our voices be heard.”

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