



From the Office of Secretary of State John A. Gale

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Voter turnout less than hoped; two state races may be poised for recount

LINCOLN – Despite outstanding voter turnout in a number of counties, statewide turnout fell below 25 percent based on preliminary totals from the primary election. As noted by Secretary of State John Gale, results are unofficial until counties canvass their results. County offices are still counting provisional ballots, which is likely to boost the total voter turnout, although Gale acknowledged that turnout will not reach his initial prediction of 28 percent.

“Unfortunately, while counties like Blaine and Arthur experienced turnout of better than 70 percent, in some counties, turnout was much smaller than hoped or anticipated.”

Five counties (Douglas, Scotts Bluff, Nance, Thurston and Dakota) had voter turnout in the teens.

“It is disappointing to be sure. When you think about what drives voters to the polls, it is largely about the issues and the nature of the contested races that appear on the ballot. That was true in this election. There were strongly contested races for U.S. Senate, Congress and several state executive offices and yet, a majority of voters chose not to participate.”

Gale said he is nevertheless excited about the potential for doubling the turnout in the general election. “There will be major partisan state races to be resolved, in addition to many contested partisan county offices. Also, Nebraskans will be voting on 17 of 24 contested legislative races that will be on the ballot.”

In terms of voter breakdown by percentages from the primary: 23 percent of counties had above 50 percent voter turnout, 24 percent of counties had above 40 percent turnout and 52 percent of counties had better than 30 percent voter turnout.

Totals will adjust upwards with the inclusion of provisional ballots. By law, counties have until May 22 to complete that process.

The determination as to whether two statewide races will qualify for recount will also be determined once the impacted counties canvass their results. For nonpartisan races, the top two vote-getters advance to the general election.

Megan Hunt was the top vote-getter in the race for Legislative District 8. However, Mina Davis and Josh Henningsen are currently 34 votes apart for second and third place, respectively. If the gap decreases to under 31 votes, that race will be eligible for recount.

Additionally, the Metro Community College race in District 2 is very close between Dennis Womack and Brad Ashby. They are currently five votes apart, which already falls within the threshold for an automatic recount. Erin Feichtinger, who received the largest number of votes in that race, will advance to the general election.

State statute allows for an automatic recount if the margin of votes between candidates is less than one percent of the total votes received by the top vote-getter.

A determination will be made at the meeting of the Nebraska Board of Canvassers as to whether a recount will be ordered, based on the official vote totals.

"For now, we are waiting on the counties to wrap up their tallies, and then my office will prepare for the state Board of Canvassers meeting on June 11," said Gale. "Any statewide recounts that are ordered will take place on June 13."

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