

I. In Focus This Week

Director's Note: Would the Last One out Please Turn out the Lights?

Campaigns, other challenges signal big changes for state election officials after 2010

By Doug Chapin

Last weekend's announcement that Utah Gov. Jon M. Huntsman, Jr. (R) had been nominated to serve as U.S. Ambassador to China led to a rash of stories and speculation about the effect of the appointment on the Republican Party, the 2012 Presidential election and, of course, Chinese-American relations.

If Huntsman is confirmed, his departure will result in the ascension of Lt. Gov. Gary Herbert (R) to the state's highest office – and a vacancy in the Lieutenant Governor's office, which is responsible for overseeing the state's election system.

The Huntsman/Herbert domino effect is being repeated across the nation as chief state election officials are making plans to move on.

For many secretaries of state, the goal is the governor's mansion. This list includes Susan Bysiewicz (D-Conn.), Karen Handel (R-Ga.), Ron Thornburg (R-Kan.), Terri Lynn Land (R-Mich.), and Deborah Markowitz (D-Vt.). [California's Debra Bowen (D) isn't yet a candidate, though there is a [Facebook group](#) dedicated to drafting her in 2010.]

Others are looking to move a little farther away – perhaps all the way to Capitol Hill. That list includes secretaries of state Robin Carnahan (D-Mo.) and Jennifer Brunner (D-Ohio), who are both seeking U.S. Senate nominations. South Dakota's Chris Nelson (R), who is term-limited, has said he's considering a Congressional run, as is Kentucky's Trey Grayson (R), who recently formed an exploratory committee and is being mentioned as a potential challenger to incumbent Senator Jim Bunning (R-Ky.).

Chief state election officials in other states are facing different challenges.

Florida's Kurt Browning (R) may have to resign his post on July 31, 2010 as a consequence of a new state law aimed at preventing officials from simultaneously drawing a paycheck and a pension. Browning, who was appointed to his current post in 2007 by Gov. Charlie Crist (R), chose the July 2010 retirement date back in 2005 while he was still Pasco County's election supervisor – but unless the law is changed, Browning may have to sit out the 2010 election.

Of course, even if Browning does serve through 2010, there is no guarantee that he will be able to continue beyond then, given that Crist has announced his own candidacy for U.S. Senate. Florida's new Governor would have the power to appoint the new Secretary of State.

The impact of elections on appointed state election officials is not confined to Florida, however. As *electionline.org* reported earlier this year, Tennessee already has a new secretary of state, Tre Hargett (R), appointed after Republicans assumed majority status in the state legislature.

New governors elected in 2009 could similarly lead to replacements for New Jersey Secretary of State Nina Mitchell Wells, appointed by Gov. Jon Corzine (D), and Nancy Rodrigues, who serves as secretary of Virginia's State Board of Elections as a result of an appointment by Gov. Tim Kaine (D).

Arizona already has a new Secretary of State, Ken Bennett (R), who was appointed to the job in January by his predecessor Jan Brewer (R) who became Governor when Janet Napolitano (D) resigned to become the Obama Administration's Secretary of Homeland Security.

Whatever the outcome of these various storylines, by January 2011, brand new state election officials in a significant number of states will be cutting their teeth on a Presidential election cycle – one complicated by the decennial census and the resulting need to redistrict legislative districts at every level of government. They will also likely face the consequences of a Congress and an Administration with an appetite for federal action on election reform. Finally, they may be dealing with the aftermath of a Supreme Court ruling on the constitutionality of key parts of the Voting Rights Act.

This is a tall order for even the most experienced election administrator – but in many states in 2011, new officials will be racing down a very steep learning curve with a tight November 2012 deadline.

I have little doubt that the women and men who will step into the shoes of our current crop of state election officials are up to the task – but it will be incumbent on all of us who follow and care about elections in the United States to ensure that they have the tools and support they need to make our states' election systems accurate, convenient, cost-effective and secure.

Change is coming – not just in how we cast our ballots, but in the ranks of people responsible for making sure the system works. Let's start thinking now about the consequences of that change so that we're not surprised when January 2011 rolls around.

Correction: A story in last week's *electionlineWeekly* ("Secretaries of state atwitter over Twitter), incorrectly reported where Secretary of State Debra Bowen learned of an individual misrepresenting contents of a petition. Bowen learned about the signature collector through Facebook.

II. Election Reform News This Week

- Elections were held in several places this week and although turnout was universally low and things went fairly smoothly, that didn't stop the usual crop of issues that can only happen on election day from emerging. In [Somers, N.Y.](#) voting was delayed by over an hour after it was discovered all five voting machines at one polling place were set to accept votes for only one of the four candidates. Voters reported being turned away from one [Utica, N.Y.](#) polling place after a machine malfunctioned. Officials in [Johnstown, N.Y.](#) are blaming a malfunctioning voting machine for the narrow defeat of the extension of a school-bus garage lease. Police were called to one [Pennsylvania polling place](#) after the president of the town's borough council complained that a political activist was partially blocking access to the site. A local newspaper is reporting that [voting machines failed or malfunctioned in five towns](#) on Tuesday. All of the affected machines were in Bucks County. In [Santa Cruz, Calif.](#) it was discovered that words were missing from four initiatives on the electronic ballots, but correct on all paper ballots. And in [Orange County, Calif.](#) voters had to use the backdoor to a polling place after a bee hive was discovered by the front door.
- Hundreds of thousands of Russian immigrants in New York City may soon get help in voting, under a bill passed in the Senate on Tuesday. The measure would provide voting materials, instructions, and voter registration [in Russian, the first new language added in years](#). "Since we want everyone to participate in that process, we want all our material also in those languages that other people do speak," Sen. Velmanette Montgomery told *Newsday*. There are 320,000 residents of New York City born in Russia or other areas of the former Soviet Union and at least 1 million Russian-speaking city residents. In some Assembly districts, as many as 20 percent of residents speak Russian. In other news out of New York City this week, the executive director of the city's board of elections announced that the board will [end the fiscal year with an \\$11.5 million deficit](#). He also projected a \$13.6 million deficit for the next fiscal year - which could grow to \$27 million if there's a citywide runoff election later this year in the elections for mayor, public advocate or controller. The deficit was blamed the deficit partly on the huge costs of conducting

last year's presidential election, which drew a record number of last-minute voter registrations that ran up overtime and other costs.

- [Shake-ups in election administration](#) continue throughout Tennessee. In [Knox County](#), the county's GOP chairman sent a letter to the three Republican election commissioners urging them to open up hiring process, "remove" the sitting administrator and begin accepting resumes from GOP candidates. Although she wasn't fired, [Stewart County](#) election administrator Nellie Anderson was reprimanded over personnel issues in the elections office. Sarah Bailey, election administrator in [Unicoi County](#) had thought her job was safe, but this week the county's election commission said it will hold two meetings in July to discuss her fate. On Wednesday, the [Shelby County](#) election commission voted out election administrator James Johnson replacing him with former commission member Richard Holden. The [Henry County](#) election commission approved a motion this week to consider submitted resumes for the administrator position signaling the likely ouster of current administrator Glenda McNutt. And in [Cumberland County](#), former election administrator Suzanne Smith has filed a \$4 million lawsuit against the three Republican election commission members claiming they conspired before taking office to fire her due to her political beliefs. According to the Herald-Citizen, Smith, who had been election administrator since 1973, filed the suit in Circuit Court. At the same time, she filed a lawsuit in Chancery Court, naming the Cumberland Election Commission and her successor, Sharon York, as defendants. The second suit asks the court to review the actions of the commission, declare the actions illegal, and reinstate her to the job.
- In people news this week, Portage County, Ohio director of elections [Glenda Enders](#) retired after 30 years of working in the county elections office. Enders' co-workers recalled her ability to keep partisanship out of the elections office. "We completely leave our politics at the door," Enders told the *Aurora Advocate*. "We've had good board members; that makes a big difference." After 49 years of working the polls for California elections, long-time poll worker [Helen Kinnier](#) has checked in her last voter. "When I started here my daughter was a baby," she told the *Record Searchlight*. "This year my daughter is turning 50." Kinnier, now a precinct supervisor, worked her first election as a ballot counter. And finally, former Forsyth County, N.C. board of elections chairwoman [Joan Cardwell](#) died at the age of 73 this week. "She was very active in a lot of things in the community because she knew her voice counted," Eric Elliott, the current chairman of the elections board told the *Winston-Salem Journal*. "She turned out to be the perfect person to ensure that other peoples' voices were heard. She was on the board 27 years in part because her decency and honesty were self-evident."

III. Opinion

National: [Popular vote](#)

California: [Elections calendar](#); [L.A. city clerk](#)

Guam: [Electronic voting machines](#)

Indiana: [Vote center veto, II, III](#); [Online voter registration](#)

Michigan: [Absentee ballots](#)

Minnesota: [Primary election date, II](#)

Ohio: [Election reform, II](#)

Oregon: [Young voters](#)

Pennsylvania: [Ex-felon voting rights](#)

South Carolina: [Early voting, II](#)

Washington: [Voter registration database](#); [Confidence in elections](#)

***some sites require registration*

IV. Job Opportunities

All job listings must be received by 12 p.m. Eastern on Wednesday for publication in our Thursday newsletter. Job listings are free but may be edited for length. Whenever possible, include Internet information. Please email job postings to mmoretti@electionline.org