

## **I. In Focus This Week**

### **Checking in with Montana Secretary of State Linda McCulloch**

*McCulloch finds job fast-paced and rewarding*

*Beginning this week, we'll be checking in with the three new secretaries of state to see how things have been going in their first seven months in office.*

#### **How would you assess your first six (almost 7) months in office?**

My first months in office have been rewarding. Just moments after my inauguration, I had the honorable duty of convening the 61st Legislative Session in the House of Representatives. Things have been moving at that pace ever since! Transitioning offices is like moving to a new campus and cramming for the final exam all in one day. I've stayed focused and working with a dedicated staff has helped me achieve my early office goals:

- 1) Legislation – Successfully passed four SOS sponsored bills
- 2) Budget – Cut back costs and saved taxpayer dollars
- 3) Elections – Met local election officials, discussed goals through 2012
- 4) Customer Services – Modernizing office infrastructure to better meet the needs of our customers

#### **Has anything about the job surprised you?**

I have always known that Local Election Administrators and County Clerks and Recorders have some of the toughest and most important jobs in any democracy, but this position accentuates the growing challenges facing Montana's election offices. Right now, I am working with the state's Election Administrators to resolve budgeting issues while working to maintain fair, open and accurate elections that are accessible to all Montanans.

Here in Montana, and elsewhere across the nation, elections offices have accrued additional costs under HAVA. My goal is to secure more money at both the state and county level to continue properly funding our elections and performing our statutory duties.

#### **What's your favorite part about being Secretary of State?**

I look forward to coming to work every day! I know that our staff shares my commitment to securing a bright future for Montana. In addition to fulfilling the office's functions, our staff works tirelessly to go above and beyond their required duty to serve the people of Montana. It is an honor to be Montana's first woman Secretary of State.

One of my priorities as Secretary of State is increasing civic engagement among Montana's young and low income populations. Civic engagement helps students understand how their government works, and how they can make a difference today, tomorrow and down the road. So far, I've focused on the education portion of civic engagement – including helping colleges apply for grants to recruit nonpartisan student poll workers. I look forward to expanding our outreach efforts to include increased involvement in all aspects of elections, as well as young entrepreneurship programs and workforce development that tie into the business services responsibilities in our office.

#### **Is there anything you dislike/find difficult about the job?**

Elections are expensive, and I'm trying to figure out a way to balance our budget while maintaining a fair and accurate elections system. Right now, I'm focused on working with my advisory council, the Montana Election and Technology Advisory Council (METAC) to coordinate a unified response to elections issues and voter database matters across the state. I've also been touring Montana's more rural areas to meet face-to-face with county elections officials to discuss the unique issues facing their offices. I'm learning a lot!

## **There were several pieces of election-oriented legislation this session, how would you describe your relationship with the legislature and what's the status of the legislation?**

I have a good working relationship with the Montana Legislature, because I understand that it's a give-and-take process. I served as a State Representative from 1995 to 2001 and as the state elected Superintendent of Public from 2001-2009. During that time I learned how important it was to reach across the aisle to accomplish the people's work.

My office sponsored four bills this session, all of which were signed into law by Governor Schweitzer:

- 1) SB 155 – Requires post election audits of vote counting machines. (The law does not audit elections staff, it simply ensures the accuracy of voting machine technology.)
- 2) SB 156 – Coordinates certain political filing deadlines.
- 3) HB 475 – Online delivery of administrative rules.
- 4) SB 299 – Training and record keeping for notary publics.

The Legislature also granted our office spending authority for federal HAVA money and for interest generated by HAVA dollars. We are also in the process of utilizing \$1.5 million dollars in American Recover and Reinvestment Act funds to begin planning for a new Web-based computer system that will help us better meet our business customers' needs. I testified in favor of a uniform vote-counting process, the use of AutoMark machines for all elections, a clarification of our state election laws, 16 and 17-year-old election judges, and same-day voter registration just to name a few!

I adamantly opposed legislation that I felt made the voting process complicated, unfair or inaccessible to Montanans – including those with disabilities and those serving in one of our nation's branches of government.

## **What's on your agenda for the next six months and moving forward after that?**

- 1) Improving efficiency of election night reporting
- 2) Continuing to visit local county election officials in their own elections settings (56 county election officials spread across 147,000 square miles)
- 3) Implementing the first phase of a new business services computer system
- 4) Civic engagement and outreach programs, both students and adults
- 5) Maintaining a high level of customer service and satisfaction across the Secretary of State office
- 6) Enjoying my job as the Secretary of State!

## **New report on hotlines makes voters' voices heard**

*Advocates urge lawmakers to start looking ahead*

By [Kat Zambon](#)

In a recent report discussed at a July 23 [Committee on House Administration hearing](#), voting rights advocates proposed election reforms in preparation for the 2010 elections.

“[Uncovering Flaws in Election Administration](#)” by the [Advancement Project](#), [NAACP National Voter Fund](#) and [Voter Action](#) drew from calls that voters made to 866-MYVOTE1 and 877-GOCNN08. Fighting “the broad perception among election administrators that 2008 was a ‘trouble-free year ... the hotline calls offer an unfiltered window into voters’ experiences and often reveal systemic failures and limitations in the administration of elections,” the report said.

“Today, these calls serve another purpose: they can help Congress and election professionals to improve the process for voters before the next federal election in 2010,” the report said.

Congress should require states to offer voter affirmation affidavits to voters whose names are not on the voter rolls, similar to affidavits used in Michigan and Vermont, and have emergency paper ballots on hand in case there are machine breakdowns or long lines at the polls according to the report. Also, states

should accept all forms of photo and non-photo ID currently authorized by the [Help America Vote Act](#) (HAVA), the report said.

“As electrifying as the 2008 election was, it is important to note that the election was not without problems. We must ensure that voters can get on the rolls, can get to the polls and cast their vote without unnecessary impediments,” Rep. Robert Brady, D-Penn., committee chair [said](#).

MYVOTE1 was marketed by the NAACP National Voter Fund towards African American voters on the Tom Joyner Morning Show while GOCNN08 was supported by CNN and local affiliates. Both hotlines were created and run by InfoVoter Technologies. The hotlines received a combined 105,720 calls requesting information on polling place locations and 68,992 calls about problems with election administration. More than 900 calls can be searched and listened to [online](#).

Joyner testified at the hearing and suggested eliminating all voter ID requirements, making more voting machines available and creating national standards for voting machines. He also advocated for providing better training for poll workers and offered to encourage young people to become poll workers on his show.

“I want to make sure your committee addresses these problems now and removes all barriers to making sure all Americans can exercise their right to vote,” Joyner [said](#). “As a nation, we have got to do a better job. My listeners demand it, and so do all Americans.”

When working with the Reform Institute to set up a voter hotline in 2004, Cameron Quinn, former Virginia board of elections secretary was astonished by the number of election offices that were too busy to answer calls. “If phone line capacities are insufficient, then localities need to work with telephone companies to fix the problem, and need to have sufficient help available at election time to answer the phones,” she said.

### **Voter registration, student voting issues addressed in report**

Both the CNN and MYVOTE1 hotlines found that registration issues made up a plurality of problems at the polls. In six states, 22 to 49 percent of all calls received by the two hotlines were related to voter registration.

States shouldn't require that voter registration applications match with Social Security or motor vehicle department databases nor should they require proof of citizenship for voter registration, Elizabeth Westfall, Advancement Project voter protection program director [said](#). Westfall endorsed automatic and election-day registration.

The report also addressed challenges that student voters faced at the polls. Students in Miami and Orlando, Fla., Montgomery County, Ohio and Richmond City, Va. called after having their identification challenged and facing long lines to vote.

“The precinct out in U.C.F., University of Central Florida, the wait in line is still four hours long with probably over 2,000 people yet to vote. The polls closed over half an hour ago. So obviously not enough equipment or manpower there to help,” one caller reported.

Rev. Lennox Yearwood, [Hip Hop Caucus](#) president and CEO also stressed the importance of reaching out to young people who aren't in college. While 70 percent of young voters had gone to college, only 57 percent of U.S. citizens under 30 have ever attended college, Lennox [said](#), but “most youth oriented voter engagement campaigns are targeted at college campuses.”

“The Hip Hop Caucus employs culture, media and celebrities as a method to engaging young people who are outside of institutions,” he said.

## **II. Election Reform News This Week**

- Kansas joined a growing list of states this week when it officially launched its new [online voter registration](#) program. The Web site links the secretary of state's office with the Department of Revenue's Division of Motor Vehicles. Residents may apply to register to vote, using data and an electronic signature verified through their driver's license that already are on file. Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh said the program, which was rolled out about three weeks ago, is the culmination of a multiphase project aimed at improving election participation. Since it launched, 88 Kansas residents have registered. "An online voter registration application is the next step in making the traditional elections process easier, faster and cheaper," Thornburgh told the *Kansas City Star*. "As technology continues to change and evolve, it is important that we implement strategies that will allow the citizens of Kansas to register in a way that is most convenient to them, without sacrificing the security and uniformity that sets our elections system apart." Revenue and secretary of state information technology staff developed the online system using existing resources and staff, he said, keeping costs to a minimum.
- In an effort to reduce costs and boost participation, the state of Hawaii is once again considering [vote-by-mail](#). "The budget crunch is an opportunity for us to think out how we can make the system work better," Brian Schatz, Hawaii Democratic Party chairman told the Honolulu Star Bulletin. "We have got to take a serious look at making some aggressive and quick changes." However, the local GOP chairman is opposed to such a proposal saying it facilitates voter fraud. Schatz said Hawaii's election turnout could be increased by mailing ballots. He said he thinks it would be less expensive than buying or leasing voting machines for more than 260 polling precincts. Last year the state spent \$6.8 million for voting machines. "The time is now to seriously consider mail elections," said Kevin Cronin state elections director, although he added that they should be phased in through several elections.
- The clerk of the [Tennessee Supreme Court](#) said this week that it is possible the court will consider two questions regarding election administrators when it convenes in October. The questions are: Does the position of administrator of elections qualify as an "office of public trust" where no political or religious test shall be used as a qualification? And Is the administrator of elections a county employee or a state employee? The main issue is a Tennessee Attorney General opinion issued earlier this year, which said it is against state and federal law to fire an employee based on political affiliation, unless they are in a policy-making position and elections administrators are not policy-making posts. The administrators want to know if they are county or state employees to determine employer liability. State Supreme Court Clerk Michael Catalano said he has not received the order yet from federal court requesting the Supreme Court justices to answer the questions. Once he certifies the order, the attorneys for the election administrators will have 20 days to file briefs. Then, the opposing side will have 20 days to answer the briefs.

### III. Opinion

National: [Voter registration](#)

Alabama: [Voter registration](#)

District of Columbia: [Election-day registration](#)

Hawaii: [Vote-by-mail](#)

Indiana: [Vote centers](#)

Minnesota: [Primary dates](#)

New York: [Computer tallies](#)

Tennessee: [Voting system](#)

*\*\*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](mailto:mmoretti@electionline.org)*

**Assistant Registrar, Orange County, Va.** — must be a qualified voter of the Commonwealth of Virginia and will be responsible for the successful implementation of elections within the county, including administration and maintenance of the voting equipment, precinct locations, recruitment, training of Election Officials, and will work under the direction of the General Registrar. **Salary** \$27,381.00 - \$35,595. Candidates interested in this position are invited to review the specific job description at [orangecountva.gov](http://orangecountva.gov), click on the link to *County Employment Opportunity*, and apply, or pick up an application 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM at the Orange County Administrator's Office, 112 W. Main Street, Orange, VA 22960; (540) 672-3313. Applications will be accepted and considered until the position is filled. EEO. As of July 16, 2009, there are 21,520 registered voters in Orange County, Virginia, (including the Town of Gordonsville and the Town of Orange). To learn more about Orange County, Virginia, please visit [orangecountyva.gov](http://orangecountyva.gov) or [visitorangevirginia.com](http://visitorangevirginia.com).