

I. In Focus This Week

Checking in with West Virginia Secretary of State Natalie Tennant

Tennant says position allows her to be a cheerleader, innovator, mentor and public servant

How would you assess your first seven months in office?

The first seven months have been filled with excitement, learning, activities, demands and sometimes a whirlwind. The time has been very rewarding and satisfying as we continue to grow and better serve the public. It certainly has been a growing opportunity for me, not just learning about the office, but learning about the employees in the office and how I can help shape them to better serve businesses, voters and other state agencies all the while cutting costs. I have also had the opportunity to implement my open and engaging approach to state government that allows people to see the kind of leader I would be for our state and be a part of it.

From the moment I was sworn into office, it has been busy because the legislative session began very shortly afterwards and we had to prepare our budget proposal as well as bills that we wanted passed.

In the first seven months, we have been able to win a bid to host all the secretaries of state in West Virginia in 2011, I have traveled to Taiwan with other secretaries, implemented new technologies in the office, spoken with hundreds of school children, traveled all over the state, and have given speeches to various groups.

If the rest of my months in office are as successful as the first seven I would be very pleased.

Has anything about the job surprised you?

I was surprised about how many different types of groups and people need and use the SOS website. That is just one of the reasons I have made technology improvements part of my goals for this office.

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

I love everything about being Secretary of State! Even the tough questions, the difficult situations or when someone tells me "no we can't do that." I just ask why not and try to come up with a solution. I ran for this office twice (lost the first time) so I really wanted to be SOS. I truly enjoy being a representative of my state. This position allows you to be an innovator, a cheerleader, a public servant by helping people solve their problems, a mentor, and an example to others and a manager of people.

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

One tough aspect is that because it is so busy and there is always something else coming up, I am not able to "debrief" as well as I would like after an event or activity because we are always working on the next speech, event or activity.

How would you describe your relationship with the legislature and what's the status election-related legislation?

I have a very good working relationship with the legislature. Because the session started so soon after my swearing in, I took a hands-on approach to "lobbying" them. I think that it is important to show the lawmakers that the bills mean something to you and that you respect them and I will continue to be hands on and talk to them personally about the legislation.

We had several significant election bills passed this session including Vote by Mail, Satellite Precinct, and E-Filing of Rules. The Vote By Mail Bill is a two-phase plan that first allows smaller municipalities in West Virginia to conduct their early voting by mail. The second phase allows up to five municipalities of any size conduct their entire election by mail. Satellite precincts bill allows a county's commission, county clerk, and the heads of the two major political parties to agree on an early voting location other than the courthouse. E-filing of rules allows state agencies to file their rules online. This saves a lot of time and taxpayer money for my office and the state agency filing the rule.

You've experienced your first election (on a local level) since becoming Secretary of State, how did that go? What was the experience like?

It was a great learning experience for the office since we had three new people in our Elections Division including the manager. There were a few questions and issues that arose, but we worked together as a team and now have a strong base to solve any other questions that may come up. The municipal elections actually gave me an opportunity to save money at our upcoming Elections Conference. I have decided instead of having municipal clerks attend the training, it would just be county clerks. It didn't make sense that city clerks would be trained after their elections were already over, so instead we will be sending our elections staff to their annual conference, which in turn will save them and us money.

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

I will continue to define my vision for various aspects of the office including civics education, public affairs and communications, cost saving measures and we will also be focusing on upcoming elections and preparing for our 2011 National Association of Secretaries of State conference. We are also going to be launching a new website that is easier to navigate, with applications that are more user-friendly. In the end, it's all about customer service and providing the information people need when they need it.

II. Election Reform News This Week

- The city of [Birmingham, Ala. held a municipal election this week](#), but instead of relying on Jefferson County to provide the voting equipment and support, the city had to rely on ES&S since the county did not have the money to pay for the election. Mark Kelley of ES&S says the private firm had a "short time frame in getting prepared." Kelley says ES&S provided and delivered the voting machines to the 80 voting sites in Birmingham and provided people for technical support. "We'll be operating election central for the city, so we'll pretty much take everything from opening the polls on election morning to closing the polls at night and doing the last tabulation." City Clerk Paula Smith says she's still in charge of overseeing the election. "There should not be a major change. The only that's changed is the vendor." And minus some complaints about a [delay in election](#) results, things went relatively smoothly with no major problems reported.
- The Aspen City Council this week unanimously passed a resolution that will place a question on the November ballot that asks voters to weigh in on the city's first-ever [IRV election method](#), conducted this past May. If the majority of voters want to do away with IRV, the council will have to explore alternatives, which could include going back to the previous method of the mayor getting 50 percent plus one of the vote, and council members getting 45 percent plus one of the vote.
- The [Tennessee State Board of Elections appointed two new commissioners to the Unicoi County election commission](#) this week after Charles Apple and Richard Parshall, both of whom submitted formal letters of resignation just prior to the commission's July 20 meeting citing issues surrounding the retention of Election Administrator Sarah Bailey. Both men cited the discovery of alleged illegal practices by the commission as their reasons for stepping down. In their letters of resignation, both Apple and Parshall state that the 2005 appointment Bailey to her current position was illegal because commissioners did not follow Tennessee Sunshine Law

requirements for that appointment. Paul Monk and Roland Bailey [no relation to Sarah Bailey] were appointed to fill the vacated positions.

- EconomyWatch: [Mesa County, Colo.](#) commissioners are considering canceling a November election because of none of the school board seats up for grabs are contested which means the school district would pull out of the election leaving the full \$140K tab for one ballot question up to the county. [Leon County, Fla.](#) supervisor of elections Ion Sancho wants to spend \$4.5 million to purchase an old Circuit City building to house the elections department and needless to say, the request is stirring debate amongst county commissioners. In [Hawaii](#), the office of elections has decided to pay its utility and other overhead costs for the rest of the fiscal year instead of filling four key positions as the 2010 elections approach. The 2010 budget in [Vigo County, Ind.](#) is in the black, but at the expense of the of two positions in the Voter Registration office. A decision made by council members chose not to fill one position and to eliminate another position for next year. "Our voter registration was pretty high compared to other counties, so that's where the decision was made," Vigo County Budget Chairman Darrick Scott told a local television station. "It's tough decisions, but we have to keep the taxpayers in mind and try and do more with less."
- A fond farewell this week to two long-time elections officials. In [Uinta County, Wyo., clerk Lynn Fox](#) is planning on retiring at the end of September after 19 years and five re-elections. "People keep asking me why? Part of the why is because I can," Fox told the *Uinta County Herald*. "Also there are a lot of things I would like to have more time to do that I can't do with a full-time job." She said another part of the timing — retiring now rather than next year some time — is because the job of County Clerk is very challenging and leaving next year, in the middle of the 2010 election year, would be unfair to her successor. In [Clinton County, Ohio, Roger Bennett](#) resigned as chair of the board of elections, a position he had held for 23 years. Like Fox, Bennett chose to retire now in order to give his successor time to prepare for the upcoming elections in 2010. "The 2010 election for governor will give a new board chair adequate preparation for the 2012 presidential election," Bennett told the *Wilmington News Journal*. Though he has retired from the board, Bennett said he still plans "to be there on election day." He said he wants to be there for the person who takes his place as an election day worker.

III. Opinion

National: [Voter registration](#)

Arizona: [Timely results](#)

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

Maryland: [Polling places](#)

Michigan: [Overseas voting](#); [Absentee voting](#); [Felon voting rights](#)

Mississippi: [Voter ID, II](#)

New York: [Homeless voters](#)

Pennsylvania: [Voter turnout](#)

Tennessee: [Voting changes](#)

Virginia: [Proposed election changes](#); [Voter intimidation](#)

Washington: [Voter turnout](#); [Primary election](#)

West Virginia: [Voting technology](#)

Wisconsin: [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

Deputy Director for Policy, U.S. Election Assistance Commission, Washington, D.C.-- responsible for research, analysis, development and implementation of programs and projects associated with the policy section of the Division. The incumbent provides technical and public policy analysis of the complex requirements of Federal voting laws related to NVRA and HAVA, and on the procedures used by States and local jurisdictions in order to comply with those requirements. As a Deputy Director, the incumbent will develop proposals and provide recommendations to Agency management for resolving a wide range of complex technical and policy issues, and will work to negotiate and resolve matters of controversy so that selected options can be implemented. He/She will manage and oversee the processes for developing agency policies on voter registration matters, on HAVA Title III compliance and on related election policy matters. The incumbent will represent the Division in agency, inter-agency, and EAC Advisory Board meetings on NVRA requirements and HAVA guidance. He/She is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the progress of various policy projects as they relate to EAC's overall mission and strategic plan through briefings, presentations, internal memorandums, and other written communications. He/She provides advice and guidance for resolving issues related to certain policy matters, develops new techniques and approaches, and works to achieve consensus around various policy projects. Competitive applicants will have knowledge of NVRA and HAVA in order to perform the analysis and the eventual development and implementation of policies to be used by States and local jurisdictions. Qualified applicants should visit our Web site for more information. Deadline: September 1, 2009.

Elections Director, Pinal County Government, Florence, Ariz.-- this is a Department Head/Administrative Officer position that works under policy direction and will manage a major department of the organization. The following are examples of some of the duties for this Position: Confers with political party chairs; coordinates department staff activities; prepares and conducts municipal, school district and special district elections for which the County is contracted; plans and recommends for Board approval the establishment for new voting precincts, supervisor districts and Justice of the Peace Precincts; plans, directs and controls the preparation and conduct of elections for which the County has responsibility; prepares bid specifications of election services and equipment; recruits, assigns and trains election board workers; assists in legal actions relevant to elections; develops and administers voter education programs; researches, prepares and submits voter changes to the Voting Rights Section of the Justice Department; selects, trains, supervises and evaluates staff. **To qualify** you must have a Bachelors Degree and three years increasingly responsible, elections management experience, including two years in a supervisory or administrative capacity. Interested candidates should apply by going to www.pinaljobs.com and submitting an online application. **Salary** range for this position is \$76,252.80 - \$105,248.00 DOE.