

# EYE ON ELECTIONS



*Mississippi Secretary of State's Office*  
*Secretary of State Eric Clark*

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## VOTING MACHINE PROJECT

The voting system project is well underway and we have a lot of upcoming events to share with you!

More than half of the seventy-seven (77) counties have received their new voting systems. This process will continue through the end of February for the state-purchased machines, and through the end of April for county-purchased machines with standard delivery.

From a training standpoint, we are just getting started! By the first week of February, all counties will have had an opportunity to attend the project introduction training. This training is intended to help counties become familiar with the voting machine equipment, experience hands-on training for set-up of the machines, and have a first look at upcoming project events. If you missed the training in your area, two (2) make-up sessions are being planned.

During January, the Secretary of State's Office and Diebold staff participated in the Circuit Clerks' Convention and the ECAM Convention. The project team provided training, discussed upcoming

events, and answered questions from the audience.

The Circuit Clerks' Convention included a Demonstration Workshop Training Session where each county clerk received instructions on how to conduct a demonstration on the voting machines. The Secretary of State's Office also issued demonstration memory cards and instructions on physical security for the systems. The Election Commissioners will receive the training in the coming weeks.



*Photos provided by Diebold*

Another upcoming program will be the voter education initiative for the touch screen systems. This effort will include how-to brochures, public service announcements, videos, and other outreach media tools. The voter education portion

of the voting machine project will help ensure that voters are both familiar and comfortable with the machines during the upcoming elections.

February will kick-off the county election official training on the systems. You will receive schedules of this training at the Winter Conventions. These comprehensive sessions will include training on the machines, training on the election process, and information on how to effectively train your poll workers.

Also, don't forget that February 28<sup>th</sup> is the lock-in date for the voting machine price. All county orders must be placed by that date to set our cost and to ensure that deliveries in this fiscal year are scheduled before the end of April.

Thank you for your continued support of the voting machine project. The Secretary of State's Office is here to help you with this project.

Please contact Madalan Lennep at 601-359-6620 or 800-829-6786 for additional information about the voting machine project or if you have any questions, you may also send an email to [mlennep@sos.state.ms.us](mailto:mlennep@sos.state.ms.us).

Thank you!

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### **DID YOU KNOW**

☞ The time and location of poll manager training sessions must be announced to the general public in the county five (5) days before the training is to be conducted.

*Miss. Code Ann.*  
*§ 23-15-239(5)*

☞ It is unlawful for any military officer or other persons to order or keep any troops of armed men at any place within a mile of the place where any general or special election is held, unless it is to be for the purpose of quelling a riot or insurrection in the manner provided by law.

*Miss. Code Ann.*  
*§ 97-13-29*

## STATEWIDE ELECTIONS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (SEMS) UPDATE

The SEMS Project Team has almost completed the implementation phase of the system. With the help of county staffs across the state, seventy-nine (79) counties met the original December 31, 2005 deadline for migration of the voter registration data. Data for the remaining three counties will be expected to be completed by the January 31, 2006 extension date due to Hurricane Katrina.

While the SEMS Project Team is pleased with this accomplishment, it would not have been possible without the help of the SEMS Focus Group. These individuals helped shape the system to meet the needs of Mississippi, served as business matter experts, and continue to provide support and suggestions to make the system the best it can be. The Secretary of State's office is grateful to the group for their dedication and commitment to this project.

In addition to the SEMS Focus Group and the User Acceptance Test Group, the county users, and staff have dedicated themselves and provided countless hours in helping to make the system work for their county. The data verification/clean-up process is ongoing and when completed will ensure full utilization of county data into the system.

We must also commend the counties hurt by Hurricane Katrina. Their willingness to work with us on this project while recovering from the storm has been amazing. These counties refused to allow the storm to keep them from meeting the system requirements and they assisted the team in successfully meeting the deadline. They should be thanked for their dedication to the implementation of this system and to the citizens of their counties.

The Jury Module of SEMS is also complete. Jury Module training was conducted in November and December. For counties that missed the scheduled training, we will offer one more opportunity to train on this important module. More details on the jury training make-up session will follow. The Campaign Finance Module will be the final component of the system and is scheduled for release in March.

Together we have made significant progress, but we are not finished yet. Many counties will continue working into spring to clean up and enter street file data in SEMS. This is a time-consuming part of the project, but it will ensure each county's ability to utilize the automated jurisdictional functionality of the system.

The next phase of the project is Quality Assurance. During this phase, the team will work one-on-one with the counties to discuss individual needs and issues.

The following efforts are part of this phase:

- The Saber Quality Assurance Team is visiting each county to review technical aspects of the system.
- The Mississippi Secretary of State's Office Quality Assurance Team is visiting each county to review functionality issues and provide on-site training assistance for outstanding issues.
- The Network Quality Assurance Team is currently being formulated. This team will visit each county to review your county's networking system and make recommendations to ensure the best possible response times on the system. Details on this visit will follow.

Finally, the Support Phase of the project is in place and will continue through December, 2010. Please use the SEMS Help Desk to resolve outstanding issues you are experiencing.

- SEMS Help Desk is at 1-877-888-SEMS (7367), or send an email to [semshelp@saberconsulting.com](mailto:semshelp@saberconsulting.com).
- Call Tracking – By calling the SEMS Help Desk, the Project Team can track your issues and provide additional support/training when necessary.
- Enhancements – The SEMS Help Desk is also tracking enhancements and suggestions to improve the system. All suggestions will be reviewed by the Focus Group on a periodic basis and items that are deemed to benefit a large number of users will be implemented in upcoming releases.

The SEMS team looks forward to working with each county as we continue this effort. Thank you for your continued support of the SEMS Project. If you have any questions please contact Madalan Lennep, SEMS Project Manager at [mlepp@sos.state.ms.us](mailto:mlepp@sos.state.ms.us) or 1-601-359-6620.

*"Hats off to the SEMS Focus Group and the User Acceptance Test Group for a job well done."*

*Secretary of State Eric Clark*

- ◆ Lucy Carpenter, Marshall County Circuit Clerk
- ◆ Barbara Dunn, Hinds County Circuit Clerk
- ◆ Sam Ely, Sunflower County Election Commissioner
- ◆ Earline Hart, Holmes County Circuit Clerk
- ◆ Angie McGinnis, Oktibbeha County Circuit Clerk
- ◆ Ann Watts, Lauderdale County Election Commissioner
- ◆ Lee Westbrook, Madison County Circuit Clerk
- ◆ Gayle Parker, Harrison County Circuit Clerk

## POLLING PLACE ACCESSIBILITY UPDATE

The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) required that all polling places be accessible to all disabled citizens in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by January 1, 2006.

The ACCESS grant program provides assistance for the required improvements through reimbursements. Each county which submitted an application for funds was notified in November of the amount that has been allocated for reimbursement of the expenses they incurred in making polling places accessible to disabled citizens.

The State of Mississippi received \$1,000,000 to distribute to the 66 counties that applied for assistance. The Secretary of State's Office developed a formula in

The year of 2005 was a record year for lobbying. To date more than 830 lobbyists have registered with our office. The 2005 annual reports were due on Monday, January 30th. All lobbyists and lobbyists' clients are required to file these reports. It is now time to register for the 2006 year. Please note that state law requires individuals to register with our office within five calendar days after becoming a lobbyist.

Our office is in the process of finalizing the 2006 Handbook. The 2006 forms have

Campaign finance deadlines for 2006 are fast approaching. The deadlines will be posted on our website showing when candidates must file for 2006. Keep in mind that Annual Reports are due January 31st. All candidates who have not filed a termination report must file an annual report. Judicial candidates running for election this year also have periodic reports that must be filed in addition to pre-election reports.

order to distribute the money in the fairest way possible. The amount allocated to each county was determined by a two step process.

In the first step, a portion of the grant funds were equally distributed to each county that submitted an application for assistance. In the second step, using figures gathered from the 2000 Census Bureau, the remaining portion of the grant funds was distributed based on each county's percentage of the state's total disabled voting age population.

In making polling place improvements, counties should consult the ADA Checklist for Polling Places, which can be found at [www.ada.gov/votingck.htm](http://www.ada.gov/votingck.htm). This guide, published by the United States De-

partment of Justice, highlights temporary improvements that can be made at polling places in order to make them HAVA compliant.

Temporary improvements can be used in place of permanent ones, as long as they are available on Election Day. These temporary improvements can be a useful cost-saving measure for implementing required polling place improvements. Once all of the necessary improvements have been made, counties will be eligible for the amount allocated through the ACCESS program.

If you have any questions, or would like additional information, please call the Elections Division at 1-800-829-6786. Thank you!

## LOBBYIST REPORTS

been updated with a couple of additions being made for each one. They have been uploaded to our website for easy convenience. All of the lobbying forms can be found on our website address at [www.sos.state.ms.us](http://www.sos.state.ms.us) under lobbying found in the elections section.

The reporting deadlines for 2006 have been set. The mid-session report is due Friday, February 24th. Currently, the end-of-session is due on Wednesday, April 12; however, this can change if the legislative session is extended. The 2006 annual

report will be due on Tuesday, January 30, 2007. Please keep in mind that fines will begin on the 10<sup>th</sup> day after the reporting deadline. An electronic filing system is being developed to be used for reports. We feel that this will enable reporting to be more user friendly. We will keep you informed as this system is implemented. As always, if our office can be of any assistance, do not hesitate to contact us at 1-800-829-6786.

## CAMPAIGN FINANCE

This year will be a year with opportunities abounding for campaign finance reporting. As the new Statewide Elections Management System (SEMS) is implemented, candidates will soon have the opportunity to file their reports electronically. This will provide many benefits for filers. There won't be any problems with lost forms or faxes that don't go through. When a report is filed electronically by a candidate, the information will go directly into

our database and be instantly accessible to the public. It will also give those who like to file at the last minute confirmation of when their report was filed. Also, if you are more comfortable with filing a paper report, that option will still be available. As this process is finalized, more details will be released. If you have any questions about any campaign finance issue, please call our office at 1-800-829-6786.

## VOTER EDUCATION PLANS

Mississippi has taken a national leadership role by implementing uniform electronic voting statewide in seventy-seven (77) of its' eighty-two (82) counties.

The Secretary of State's Office will be conducting an intensive voter education campaign in the coming months. The campaign will inform, and educate Mississippi voters about the new touch screen voting machines.

The goal of the voter education outreach campaign is to reach all voting Mississippians and ensure they are comfortable with and prepared to use the new touch screen voting machines by the June 2006 Primary Election and the November 2006 General Election.

The key to the success of the new voting machine is an aggressive voter education program designed to acquaint citizens with the new touch screen equipment before they arrive at the voting precinct.

The state level outreach program will facilitate statewide educational and training projects which will include regional and local voter education activities.

The immediate voter outreach plan will proceed until the November 7, 2006, General Election. Ongoing voter education and outreach support will continue through the November 2007 statewide election cycle.

The Secretary of State's Office Voter Outreach unit will consist of a statewide voter education coordinator and two regional coordinators in each congressional district. The coordinators will conduct voting machine demonstrations statewide.

Live demonstrations will give outreach coordinators the opportunity to interact face-to-face with voters. A special ballot was created for demonstration purposes. The ballot is called "*Mississippi Favorites*." The names of several famous Mississippians are listed on the ballot.

Another key component of the outreach program is county involvement. The Secretary of State's Office plans to enlist Election Commissioners in each county to conduct voter education and demonstrations in their respective county. This effort will increase the number of program supporters throughout the state and increases the number of individuals trained to educate voters throughout the state.

The Secretary of State's Office is very excited about the new voting machine outreach efforts. If you have any requests or know of any events that would benefit from voting machine demonstrations, please contact the Training and Education unit at 800-829-6786 for scheduling.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

The Secretary of State's Office is proud to release the 2004-2008 Mississippi Official and Statistical Register and the 2005 Report on Charitable Organizations.

The 2004-2008 Mississippi Official and Statistical Register is commonly known as the "Blue Book." The "Blue Book" is the standard reference book on state government. The volume is published every four years, following the municipal elections.

The new edition aims to make government more accessible to our citizens. The theme of this edition is Mississippi History. The complete "Blue Book" is available on our website at [www.sos.state.ms.us/ed\\_pubs/BlueBook/](http://www.sos.state.ms.us/ed_pubs/BlueBook/). A fully interactive edition with updates will be posted to the website in the spring. A CD-ROM edition will also be published.

Single copies of the "Blue Book" are available free of charge to individuals. Individuals wishing to pick up a copy may do so at the Secretary of State's 700 North Street building from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. To order a copy call 601-359-6344 or email [www.sos.state.ms.us/about\\_sos/staff\\_email\\_webform.asp?ID=360](http://www.sos.state.ms.us/about_sos/staff_email_webform.asp?ID=360).

Also, the eighth annual *Report on Charitable Organizations* in Mississippi is available.

The Report, which is published every October, details the financial records of all charities registered with the Secretary of State's Office as required by law. The report also offers guidelines to begin to measure a charity's effectiveness. The report contains the telephone numbers of

every charity that provided our office with a phone number.

The report is not intended as an endorsement or condemnation of any charity, but rather a source of information for potential donors. "Mississippians are the most generous people in the country," Secretary Clark said. "More than ever, we want to give our citizens the facts they need to give wisely."

The complete report is available on our website at [www.sos.state.ms.us/regenf/charities/charannrpt/](http://www.sos.state.ms.us/regenf/charities/charannrpt/). To order a copy of the report call 601-359-6344 or 800-256-3494. There is no charge for single copies to individuals.

## IMPORTANT DATES

### JANUARY

- 3<sup>rd</sup>** Legislature: Legislative session begins. (*Miss. Code Ann. 5-1-7*)
- 10<sup>th</sup>** Purging: County Election Commissioners meet to purge rolls. (*Miss. Code Ann. 23-15-153(1)(a)*)
- 31<sup>st</sup>** Campaign Finance: Annual reports due today no later than 5pm in the appropriate office. (*Miss. Code Ann. 23-15-807(b)(iii)*)

### MARCH

- 1<sup>st</sup>** Qualifying Deadline: Qualifying deadline for U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives running in the 2006 primary and general election. Primary candidates pay fees and file statement of intent with proper executive committee. Independent candidates file qualifying petitions with the Secretary of State. (*Miss. Code Ann. 23-15-299*)
- 4<sup>th</sup>** Municipal School Trustee: Election for this office in some counties. (*Miss. Code Ann. 37-7-215*)
- 8<sup>th</sup>** Purging/NVRA: Under NVRA, purging activities for change in residence must cease 90 days before the June 6 Federal Primary Election and resume after the June 27 primary runoff. HOWEVER, purging should continue for death, criminal conviction, mental incapacity, upon receipt of a voter cancellation card, and any other written confirmation from the voter that he or she has moved. (NVRA)
- 16<sup>th</sup>** Statement of Economic Interest: Deadline for candidates who qualified on March 1, to file their statement of economic interest reports with the Ethics Commission. These reports are due within 15 days of becoming a candidate.
- 18<sup>th</sup>** Municipal School Trustee-Added Territory: Runoff election, where required, for this office in some counties. (*Miss. Code Ann. 37-7-215*)

### APRIL

- 2<sup>nd</sup>** \*Legislative Session Ends\*: sine die. (*Miss. Const. 1890 §36*)
- 7<sup>th</sup>** Disabled Voters List: Circuit Clerks must deliver the list of permanently disabled voters who receive absentee ballots automatically for the June 6 primary to the Election Commission. The Election Commission is then charged with examining the roll for purposes of purging and maintenance. (*Miss. Code Ann. 23-15-629(3)*)
- 17<sup>th</sup>** State Executive Committee: Deadline for the state executive committee of each political party to furnish to each county executive committee the names of all state district candidates and a sample official ballot to be used in the June 6th Primary. (*Miss. Code Ann. 23-15-331*)
- 22<sup>nd</sup>** Permanently Disabled Voters List: Deadline for Election Commission to return permanently disabled voters list to Circuit Clerks' office for the June 6th Primary election. (*Miss. Code Ann. 23-15-629(3)*) [Saturday]
- Absentee Balloting: First day to vote absentee in the Circuit Clerk's office for the first primary election or to apply for an absentee ballot by mail. (*Miss. Code Ann. 23-15-715*) Absentee ballots should be available for voting in the primary election.
- 27<sup>th</sup>** Permanently Disabled Voters: Circuit Clerks mail absentee ballots to permanently disabled voters on file for the June 6th Primary election. (*Miss. Code Ann. 23-15-629(4)*)

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Welcome to *Eye on Elections*, a publication of the Secretary of State's Office. This quarterly newsletter focuses on Mississippi election issues. This newsletter is also available on our website at [www.sos.state.ms.us/elections/elections.asp](http://www.sos.state.ms.us/elections/elections.asp).

We intend to provide a newsletter that meets your needs and we encourage your comments. To make suggestions or for additional information, please call, write, fax, or email us. All inquires or suggestions should be directed to Tiffany Jackson, newsletter editor. We hope you find this newsletter useful. Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

ERIC CLARK  
Secretary of State



**IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS**

**ELECTIONS DIVISION STAFF**

Jay Eads, Assistant Secretary of State  
Linda Rigsby, Senior Attorney/Training & Education Director  
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U.S. Department of Justice: (202) 724-5897  
Military Voting Assistance: (800) 438-8683  
Democratic Party of Mississippi: (601) 969-2913  
Mississippi Republican Party: (601) 948-5191  
Mississippi Ethics Commission: (601) 359-1285  
Federal Elections Commission: (800) 424-9530  
Elections Assistance Commission: (866) 747-1471



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Secretary of State Eric Clark

