Capitol Report

News & Updates from Your State Capitol
By Arkansas Secretary of State Charlie Daniels

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www.sosweb.state.ar.us

501-682-1010

Arkansas Submits Help America Vote Act Implementation Plan

The federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 calls for substantial improvements in the voting process across our nation. Since taking office in January, Secretary of State Charlie Daniels and the HAVA planning committee responded to this mandate by successfully lobbying for election law reforms, submitting the HAVA Plan for Arkansas to the Federal Election Commission and collecting over $6 million in federal grants to make Arkansas compliant with the first phase of the HAVA mandates.

What does this mean to voters in Arkansas? Right now, it means Arkansas has the potential to be one of the first states in the United States to have a centralized uniform voter registration system and uniform compliant electronic voting equipment in each county. This should make voter registration and casting ballots simpler, quicker and more accurate. It also insures that the state is responsible for fair and accurate elections, with the county clerks and county election commissions working together with the Secretary of State's office to craft election reform specifically tailored for Arkansas.

To learn more about HAVA, please visit the following websites:

www.sosweb.state.ar.us
www.electionline.org
www.NASS.org

Funding

By making changes to our state's election laws and completing the state's implementation plan for HAVA, Arkansas is poised to receive up to $27 million in additional grants over a three year period to replace antiquated voting systems, construct a statewide voter registration list and educate election officials and voters in the new election procedures. "To be able to create one uniform election system for the whole state of Arkansas is truly an exciting opportunity - especially if it can be done with federal funds that will take the financial burden off of the counties," Daniels noted.

The State Plan

Arkansas's 22-page implementation plan targets six federally mandated areas of election reform by assessing the election procedures and equipment currently in place, defining what HAVA requires and outlining how the state will meet the requirements. How will the state pay for this reform? Grants will be allocated to Arkansas as the Secretary of State continues to implement the 13 sections of the plan. A complete copy of Arkansas's plan is available on the Secretary of State's website at **www.sosweb.state.ar.us.**

(See HAVA Cont. on page 2)

It has certainly been an exciting ten months in the Secretary of State's office! I'm pleased to present this issue of Capitol Report: an update on the many projects and policy issues that we face. Many of these developments focus on improving the services available to Arkansans.

In this issue you will learn about the strides made to implement the Help America Vote Act – the largest federally mandated election reform law in history. In the last Capitol Report, we outlined the basic HAVA mandates and their impact on Arkansas. HAVA will continue to make news in our state for months to come and as the chief election officer of the state I feel strongly about helping you understand the changes and improvements that are being made to our state's election process.

This edition also contains updates on the merger of our Corporations, Uniform Commercial Code, Notary Public, Franchise Tax and Home Inspectors Divisions under a new name: the Business and Commercial Services Division. This year the division collected over $8 million in franchise taxes, and the staff is working diligently to improve services to the business community.

(Cont. on page 2)

HAVA (Cont. from front page)

To meet the plan submission deadline, Arkansas's HAVA Planning Committee met every other week from April through July to create our state plan. The 30 members of the committee include local election officials, election coordinators, representatives from minority and disability groups, political parties and members of the general public. After months of hard work, the draft plan was presented at a public hearing in each of Arkansas's four congressional districts for public comment and questions. In a show of bipartisanship, the motion to adopt the Arkansas HAVA Plan was made by state Republican Party Chair Marty Ryall; seconded by Michael Cook, Executive Director of the state Democratic Party and unanimously passed by the committee. "The hard work of the planning committee, combined with the support of the state legislature resulted in an election reform plan that will guide the state of Arkansas for years to come," Daniels stated.

(Cont. from front page)

The start of the school year brings numerous educational opportunities for our office to provide programs, speakers and activities that help students learn about government and the Capitol Building. You can read about these programs on page three. Other features in this issue cover Capitol building and grounds projects, terrorism training for our Capitol Police, our summer intern program and Girls State and Boys State. Also, be sure to check the box on page five if you are receiving duplicate mailings or know someone who would like to receive this newsletter.

Please enjoy this issue of Capitol Report. I hope you will contact me with questions or comments anytime.

Business and Commercial Services Division Launched

To better reflect the wide variety of business services offered by the Secretary of State's office, Secretary Daniels announced in August 2003 the consolidation of the Corporations Department; Franchise Tax Filings; the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) Department; Notary Public Registration and Home Inspectors Registration under a new name: the Business and Commercial Services Division.

This division provides valuable services to the business community and general public by overseeing a multitude of business records registrations and collecting corporate franchise taxes. The collection of corporate franchise taxes, due June 1 of each year, is one of the main duties of the Business and Commercial Services Division. Companies pay franchise taxes based on the amount of outstanding stock of the corporation. Most companies pay the $50 minimum amount; larger corporations with large shares of stock can owe thousands of dollars in franchise tax payments. This office collected over $8 million in franchise tax payments this year. These tax dollars are placed back into the state's general fund, which provides money for public schools, higher education, health and human services and other governmental expenses.

In these challenging economic times, the Business and Commercial Services Division works diligently to collect this much-needed revenue. Tax-due reminders are sent out each January to all Arkansas corporations; if taxes are not paid by the June 1 deadline, another reminder is sent in November to businesses to pay in full (plus penalties) or risk having their corporate license revoked. Once a corporation's license is revoked, no changes can be made to their corporate registration including name changes, address changes or agent listings. No amendments can be made to revoked corporate files until taxes are paid.

To improve customer service, the Secretary of State's office introduced an online franchise tax filing system last year. This user-friendly version streamlines the process for both the corporation paying their taxes and the Business and Commercial Services Division. By filing taxes electronically, paperwork is reduced, errors are less likely and corporate files are updated more quickly.

(See BUSINESS Cont. page 5)

Secretary of State Charlie Daniels with Director of Business and Commercial Services Charolett Martin

Boys and Girls State: Hands-on Government

The Arkansas State Capitol welcomed delegates from Boys and Girls State on June 5th and 6th. These students are part of an educational program that teaches participants how local, county and state governments operate.

Elected Secretary of State Titus Johnson of Boys State is a senior at Old Main in North Little Rock. Girls State delegate Beth Bowen from Jonesboro was elected Secretary of State and is a senior at Jonesboro High School. As part of getting the participants involved, Johnson and Bowen, along with their appointed deputies, received a tour through the Capitol and an overview of various responsibilities of the Secretary of State's office by members of Secretary Daniels' staff. Both Johnson and Bowen were sworn in as Secretaries of State and presented with a plaque recognizing their achievement. Johnson and Bowen then presented certificates to the other elected officials such as the Boys and Girls State Governors, Lieutenant Governors, and Treasurers. "It has been a pleasure to see students take part in a program that educates them in how government really works," said Secretary Daniels.

Girls State Secretary of State Beth Bowen shown with Secretary Daniels

While the participants were visiting the Capitol, the Secretary of State's office provided seminars covering the history of the Capitol and the functions of government officials. Students that were 18, or would be 18 before the next election cycle, were given the opportunity to register to vote.

The Girls State and Boys State programs, sponsored by the American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary, are government units for high school juniors that allow participants to be involved in the operation of local, county and state government. Upon arrival, the participants are split into mock political parties and into various cities and counties. The citizens of each city and county nominate members of their individual parties to be candidates for the different city, county and state offices. About 200 Girls State delegates spent a day at the Capitol on Thursday, June 5th, and nearly 800 of the Boys State participants spent a few hours at the Capitol on Friday, June 6th.

Free Materials and Programs Offered

The beginning of a new school year gives rise to many new educational opportunities for Arkansas's students. Several types of educational programs and materials are available free of charge from the Secretary of State's office. Secretary Daniels believes strongly that the state Capitol serves as a "working classroom". Expanding the educational materials and programs offered by the Secretary of State's office is one way to help you learn more about Arkansas's beautiful state Capitol and state government.

The very popular educational packets contain information about the state flag, state symbols and state songs. You can visit our website, **www.sosweb.state.ar.us,** to download the educational packets or phone 682-7085 to order your own copies of these fun and educational facts.

Visitors to the Capitol can learn more about the building by taking a self-guided or guided tour of the Capitol, watching the "Building Forever" video presentation or exploring the historic Capitol grounds. Visitor information is available at the first floor Tour Desk and visitors are encouraged to book a guided tour by calling 682-5080. Quarterly exhibits on the first floor explore Arkansas history topics. The fall exhibit will feature the life and career of Governor Winthrop Rockefeller.

(See PROGRAMS Cont. on page 5)

Mark Your Calendars

Capitol Lighting Ceremony	December 6
Franchise Tax Revocation Letters Mailed	November 1
Statement of Financial Interest Forms Due	January 31

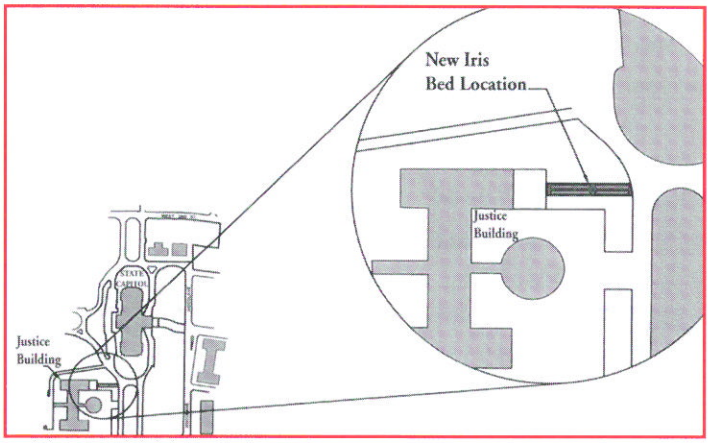
Your State Capitol

Flowers and Flags Improve Capitol Grounds

Working with the Arkansas Iris Society and the Department of Veteran Affairs, Arkansas Secretary of State Charlie Daniels approved the relocation of the south entrance iris bed and the addition of a flagpole to the Arkansas Medal of Honor Memorial.

The Arkansas Iris Society and Secretary Daniels agreed to relocate the iris bed to provide a better environment for the heirloom flowers. The new bed will be adjacent to the Justice Building by the existing rose garden. The new landscaped location provides a stable environment for the irises to thrive. The plants will be better protected from wind and other elements that affect their growth. Protective edging shielding the iris bulbs from damaging mulch will allow blooms in a scenic landscaped area. A stamped cobblestone walkway is planned to encourage visitors to walk among the flowers.

The new 27-foot Medal of Honor flagpole will fly both an American Flag and a Veterans Flag. A flag raising ceremony, sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs, will honor the memory of those Arkansans awarded the Medal of Honor and others who fought to defend our nation.



Nation's Military Honored on Fourth Floor

A new display paying tribute to our nation's military forces is complete and open for viewing on the 4th floor of the state Capitol.

Located on the northeast corner of the 4th floor, the display features the flags of the United States' five military branches – the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard – as well as the U.S. and Arkansas flags. The centerpiece of the display is a plaque honoring 8 Arkansans killed during the 1990 Operation Desert Storm campaign. New contemplation benches have been placed in the area for visitors. The benches and flag stands were designed and built by Secretary of State Building and Grounds Department personnel.

The sacrifices of our military forces are remembered throughout the state Capitol and grounds. The most recent monument constructed on the grounds honors Arkansans who received the Congressional Medal of Honor, our nation's highest award. Other monuments located on the east lawn remember Arkansans lost in Vietnam and those who fought in the Civil War. A memorial to Arkansans killed during the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 also is located on the 4th floor near the new display.

Employee Wins Award

Assistant Chief of Capitol Police, Theo Pierce, was named the 14th Annual Law Officer of the Year by the American Legion Department of Arkansas at their 85th State Convention July 18-20, 2003. Assistant Chief Pierce received the award for patrolling the Vietnam Memorial on the Arkansas State Capitol grounds during a June peace demonstration. Gary Heral, a member of the American Legion Department of Arkansas, stated that Assistant Chief Pierce received the award for being someone who sets an example for the youth of our nation. Congratulations to Assistant Chief Pierce for all his dedication and hard work.

Police Training Helps Protect Capitol

Since the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001, increased security and terrorism awareness training is crucial to public safety. To better protect Capitol visitors and employees, the Arkansas State Capitol Police are attending training sessions designed to create partnerships among federal, state, and local police forces combating terrorism in today's society.

The Capitol Police force has participated in terrorist training courses since 2001. Nineteen of the twenty-one officers have completed training sessions on Combating Terrorism, Recognition and Deference, Resources Training, First Response Training and Weapons of Mass Destruction. The force has a combined total of 214 hours of educational training to protect the State Capitol against terrorist threats. The classes, designed specifically for police officers, contain classified information not available to the general public. Class sponsors include the United States Federal Government, the Joint Terrorism Task Force, The Federal Bureau of Investigation, Homeland Security and the United States Attorney's Office.

Capitol Police Chief Darrell Hedden stated, "The training sessions that we have attended give us the knowledge to recognize terrorist-type activities and the resources to deal with a terrorist situation. We are trained to protect everyone who enters the Capitol, so by learning about terrorism and how to combat it, we are better able to serve and safely protect of all Capitol employees and visitors."

The Arkansas State Capitol Police have officers on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For further questions or information regarding the police force, please call 501-682-5173.

BUSINESS (Cont. from page 2)

The electronic service is available 24 hours a day on the Secretary of State's website: **www.sosweb.state.ar.us.** Accepted payment methods include Visa, MasterCard, Discover or an electronic check.

Other services offered by the newly-consolidated division include registering business names, corporations and homebuilders; recording trademarks, processing apostilles and filing notary public certifications. Located in the State Building Services Building (formerly the AEGON Building) across the street from the State Capitol, the Business and Commercial Services Division contains 26 employees that are ready to help you with your business needs. If you need assistance with any of these services, please contact the Business and Commercial Services Division at 501-682-3409.

Please Help Us Serve You Better

Would you like to receive this newsletter at a different address? Are you receiving duplicate copies? Please contact the Secretary of State's Office with you mailing change request via e-mail at **general_info@sosmail.state.ar.us** or telephone 501-682-3470. Thank you for your help.

PROGRAMS (Cont. from page 3)

Many exciting updated programs and educational materials are being developed including "Capitol Quest", an architectural scavenger hunt; "Making Your Mark", a joint tour where groups visit both the Old State House and the State Capitol to learn about voting rights milestones; a new voter education program in conjunction with the federal Help America Vote Act; and the "Times and Tables of Arkansas" containing statistical and historic information about our state.

In addition, the Secretary of State's office serves as the coordinating office for the Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial. Many educational items are available for classroom use including posters, lesson plans, Louisiana Purchase passports and a speaker's bureau. Please visit the Louisiana Purchase website, **www.lapurchase.org** to learn more about Arkansas's important role in the development and settlement of the Louisiana Purchase lands.

For more information about the programs and educational materials offered by the Secretary of State's office, please call 682-3472.

Summer Intern Program

Secretary of State Charlie Daniels is shown with summer interns who worked in various departments of the Secretary of State's office this summer. Shown front row (l to r): Julie Wolfe, Dion Perkins, Secretary Daniels, Casey Harris, Nicole Allison. Second row: Ryan Brown, Randy Martin, Nannette Akins, Grover Evans, Anthony Dickerson, Ryan Green. Third row: Erin Watson, Lindsay Oliver, Dan Oberste, Titus Johnson and Matt Bond. Not shown are B. J. Webster and Fred Schiller.

Do You Need A Speaker?

If you would like someone from the Secretary of State's office to speak to your organization, please call 501-682-1010. Several presentations are available including such diverse topics as the functions of the Secretary of State's office, current voter services, a history of the Capitol Building and the importance of Arkansas's role in the Louisiana Purchase.

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