Greater Omaha Chamber

2026 Nebraska Secretary of State Candidate Questionnaire

The Nebraska Secretary of State performs responsibilities that directly affect Nebraska's elections, business climate and the operation of state government. In addition to serving as the state's chief election officer, the office administers business registrations and commercial filings, maintains state rules and records, oversees several licensing functions and supports Nebraska's international relationships.

The Greater Omaha Chamber invites candidates for Nebraska Secretary of State to share their views on the following issues. **Please limit each response to approximately 150 words. Responses may be shared as submitted with Chamber members and the public.**

Candidate Name: *Scott L. Petersen*
Party: *Republican*
Occupation/Background: *Retired Omaha businessman and entrepreneur. Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting, University of Iowa. Former Chairman of the Douglas County Republican Party.*

1. Priorities for the Office

The Secretary of State oversees a wide range of responsibilities involving elections, business services, licensing, state records, rules and regulations and international relations. What would be your top priorities for the office during the next four years, and what changes, if any, would you seek to make in how the office serves Nebraskans and Nebraska businesses?

My priorities would be strengthening election administration, modernizing business services, and making the Secretary of State's office more efficient, transparent, and accountable to the people it serves.

Throughout my business career, I've learned that successful organizations depend on strong leadership, sound financial management, and excellent customer service. I would bring those same principles to state government.

I want to improve the experience of Nebraska businesses by simplifying filings, expanding online services, reducing unnecessary delays, and ensuring the office is responsive to the people who depend on it.

On elections, I would work closely with county election officials to maintain accurate voter registration lists, strengthen cybersecurity, improve transparency, and ensure consistent administration of Nebraska law.

I also believe government should measure its performance. Nebraskans deserve an office that establishes clear expectations, reports its progress, and continually looks for ways to improve.

2. Election Administration and Public Confidence

The Secretary of State serves as Nebraska's chief election officer and works with election officials in all 93 counties to administer state election law, voter registration and election systems. What principles should guide the Secretary of State in ensuring Nebraska elections are accurate, secure, accessible and administered consistently? How would you work to maintain public confidence in election results?

Every eligible Nebraskan should be able to cast a ballot, every legal vote should be counted accurately, and every voter should have confidence in the outcome.

Nebraska has dedicated county election officials and important safeguards already in place. However, election security is not a finished project. Technology changes, threats evolve, and public confidence must continually be earned.

As Secretary of State, I would prioritize accurate voter registration lists, strong cybersecurity protections, secure election systems, documented chain of custody procedures, and transparent post-election audits.

I also believe election officials should communicate more proactively about how elections are conducted, how ballots are secured, and how concerns are investigated and resolved.

Confidence cannot simply be declared by government. It must be earned through transparency, accountability, consistent application of the law, and a demonstrated commitment to protecting every eligible citizen's right to vote.

3. State and County Election Administration

Nebraska's elections are administered through a partnership between the Secretary of State and county election officials, creating a need for both statewide standards and effective local implementation. What steps would you take to improve coordination, training, technology and consistency among Nebraska's 93 county election offices while recognizing differences in their size and resources?

Nebraska's 93 counties have different populations, staffing levels, and financial resources. A one-size-fits-all administrative approach does not always work, but every voter deserves

the same standards of election integrity and professionalism. I would establish regular communication with county election officials to identify operational challenges, share best practices, and develop practical solutions.

My priorities would include standardized training, clear election procedures, improved cybersecurity coordination, consistent voter registration maintenance, and reliable technical support. I would also evaluate opportunities for shared resources, regional training, and technology improvements that could help smaller counties without imposing unnecessary financial burdens.

The Secretary of State should provide leadership, clear expectations, and dependable support while respecting the important responsibilities of locally elected county officials. The goal is consistent statewide standards with practical implementation that recognizes the needs and resources of individual counties.

4. Business Services and Modernization

The Secretary of State is a primary point of contact between Nebraska government and businesses forming, expanding or conducting transactions in the state. The office is currently transitioning to a new online business filing system intended to expand electronic filing, simplify corrections and provide businesses greater access to filing information. What would your priorities be for implementing and continuing to improve these services? What measures would you use to evaluate whether the office is providing efficient service to Nebraska businesses?

As a former business owner, I understand how frustrating it can be when government processes are unnecessarily complicated, expensive, or slow. Business owners should be spending their time growing their companies and creating jobs, not navigating government bureaucracy.

Nebraska is transitioning to a new online business filing system. My priority would be ensuring that transition is successful, reliable, secure, and genuinely easier for businesses to use.

I would seek feedback directly from business owners, attorneys, accountants, and other frequent users to identify problems and opportunities for improvement. We should measure success through processing times, system availability, filing accuracy, customer satisfaction, and the number of services available online.

I also want businesses to be able to track the status of their filings and receive clear communication when additional information is needed. Technology should make government more efficient, not simply move existing bureaucracy onto a computer screen.

5. Nebraska's Business Climate

Business registrations, corporate records, trade names, UCC filings and other commercial records administered by the Secretary of State are basic infrastructure for doing business in Nebraska. What role do you believe the Secretary of State should play in improving Nebraska's overall business climate? Are there administrative processes, fees, filing requirements or technologies you believe should be modernized or simplified?

Nebraska's business climate depends on more than tax rates and regulations. It also depends on how efficiently government serves the businesses operating here. The Secretary of State's office is often one of the first points of contact for someone starting a business. That experience should be straightforward, affordable, and predictable.

I would review filing procedures, processing times, and administrative requirements to identify opportunities to eliminate unnecessary steps, simplify forms, and expand online services. I would also examine filing fees and transaction costs to determine whether changes could reduce burdens on businesses while maintaining the resources necessary to operate the office responsibly.

My business background has taught me that time is money, particularly for small businesses. While the Secretary of State cannot independently change every regulatory requirement or statutory fee, the office can identify problems, recommend legislative improvements, and make the processes it administers more efficient.

6. Regulatory Transparency

The Secretary of State maintains the Nebraska Administrative Code and is responsible for filing, certifying and making state agency rules and regulations available to the public. What steps would you take to make Nebraska's regulatory system easier for businesses and the public to navigate? How should the office improve public access to current rules, proposed changes and other regulatory information?

Businesses should not need an attorney or a government relations specialist simply to determine which state regulations apply to them. The Nebraska Administrative Code should be accessible, searchable, current, and easy to navigate.

I would prioritize improving the public's ability to locate existing regulations, identify recent changes, and understand when proposed rules may affect their businesses. That could include better online search capabilities, clearer organization of regulatory information, and improved access to notices of proposed changes and public comment opportunities. I would also work with state agencies to improve the consistency and timeliness of regulatory filings and public information.

The Secretary of State's responsibility is to maintain and publish these records, not independently rewrite regulations adopted by other agencies. However, the office can help make government more transparent by ensuring the rules businesses must follow are readily available and understandable.

7. Initiative and Referendum Process

The Secretary of State has significant administrative responsibilities in Nebraska's initiative and referendum process, including receiving petitions and, with county election officials, determining the validity and sufficiency of petition signatures. What principles should guide the office's administration of ballot petitions? How would you promote a process that is consistent, timely, transparent and neutral regardless of the subject of a proposed measure?

Nebraska's initiative and referendum process is an important constitutional right that allows citizens to bring issues directly before voters. The Secretary of State's responsibility is to administer that process fairly, consistently, and according to Nebraska law, regardless of the subject of a proposed measure or the political interests involved.

I believe petition sponsors, circulators, election officials, and voters should have clear guidance about the requirements and deadlines established by law. I would work with county election officials to promote consistent signature verification procedures, appropriate training, timely processing, and transparent communication throughout the process.

When questions or disputes arise, decisions should be based on the law and documented procedures rather than political considerations. My responsibility would not be to determine which proposals deserve to succeed. It would be to ensure every petition receives the same fair and professional administration.

8. International Trade and Economic Development

The Secretary of State serves as Nebraska's chief protocol officer and has a statutory role in developing international relationships and facilitating contacts that can advance commerce, educational exchange and other relationships between Nebraska and foreign nations. How would you use this role to support Nebraska's international trade and economic development efforts? How should the office coordinate with the Governor,

Department of Economic Development, Department of Agriculture and local economic development organizations?

Nebraska produces products and services that compete around the world, particularly in agriculture, manufacturing, and technology. Expanding international relationships can create opportunities for Nebraska businesses and strengthen our state's economy.

As Secretary of State and Nebraska's chief protocol officer, I would work closely with the Governor, Department of Economic Development, Department of Agriculture, and local economic development organizations to support those efforts. My approach would be practical and business-focused.

I would help facilitate relationships with international officials, trade representatives, and business organizations while ensuring those efforts complement the state's broader economic development strategy. I would also seek opportunities to connect Nebraska businesses with appropriate international contacts and support educational and cultural exchanges that strengthen long-term relationships.

The Secretary of State should be a collaborative partner in promoting Nebraska, not create a competing economic development operation.

9. Customer Service and Government Efficiency

Businesses interact with the Secretary of State for corporate filings, UCC records, notary services, licensing and other functions. What standards should the office establish for processing times, online availability, customer service and the cost of accessing state services? How would you identify processes that could be simplified or moved online without sacrificing security or accuracy?

In business, customer service is not an afterthought. It is a measure of how well an organization performs. I believe the Secretary of State's office should establish clear service standards for processing times, responsiveness, system reliability, and access to public information.

My first step would be evaluating current performance and identifying where delays, unnecessary paperwork, or outdated processes create frustration for businesses and citizens. I would prioritize expanding secure online services, improving communication, and making it easier for users to complete transactions correctly the first time. We should also examine opportunities to reduce administrative costs and unnecessary fees where permitted by law.

Success should be measured through published performance indicators, including processing times, customer satisfaction, system availability, and service improvements. My

goal is an office that treats Nebraskans like valued customers and respects their time and tax dollars.

10. Accountability and Measures of Success

If elected, what specific outcomes would you use at the end of your term to determine whether the Secretary of State's office had become more effective? What performance measures should the public be able to use to evaluate the office's administration of elections, business services and its other responsibilities?

My promise is simple: restore confidence in the Secretary of State's office through transparency, accountability, and measurable results. I believe government should be evaluated by performance, not promises.

During my first year, I would establish performance benchmarks and begin regularly reporting progress in three areas. For business services, I would measure filing turnaround times, online service availability, processing accuracy, and customer satisfaction. For election administration, I would track county training participation, completion of required security assessments, voter registration maintenance activities, and timely publication of election information and audit results. For other responsibilities, I would evaluate public access to records, regulatory information, licensing services, and overall administrative efficiency. I would make those results available to the public so Nebraskans can judge our progress throughout my term.

At the end of four years, the office should be demonstrably more efficient, more accessible, and more accountable to the people it serves.