

PILLARS OF PUBLIC SERVICE

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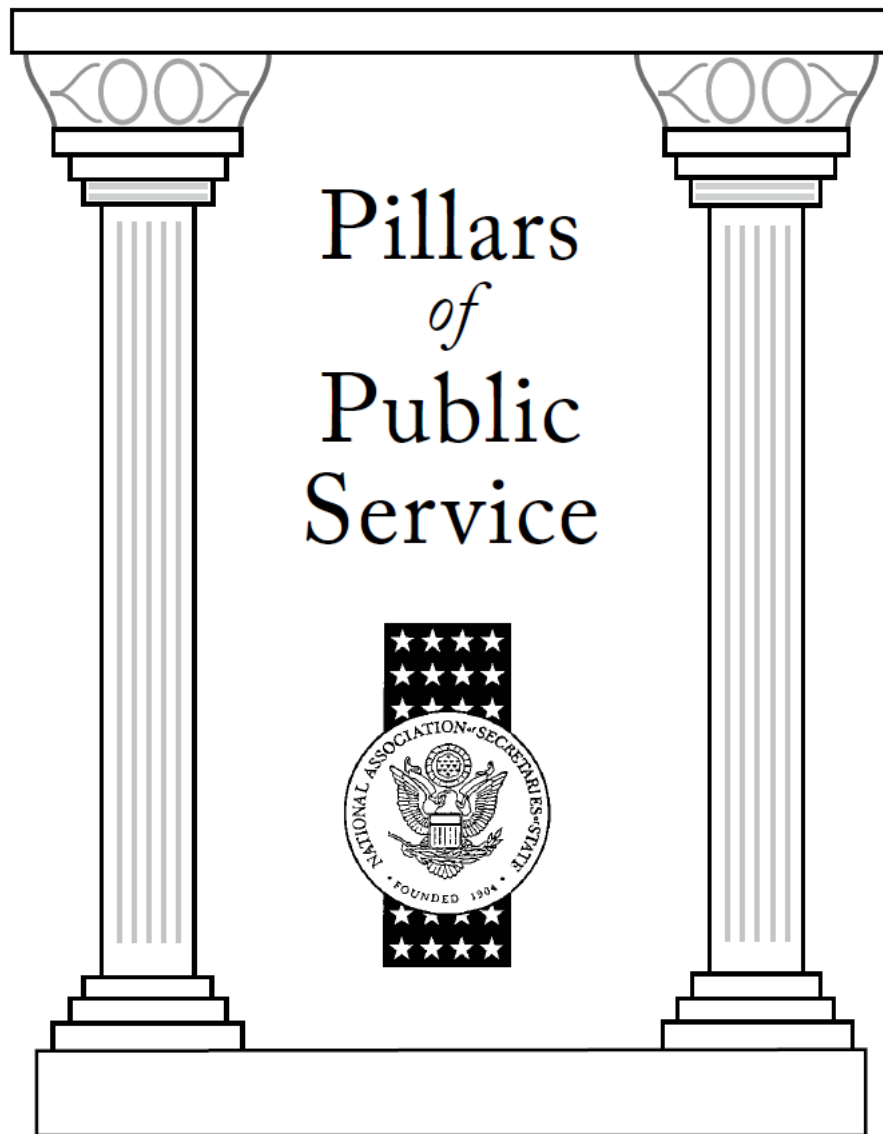
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One Hundred and Twenty Years of the
National Association of
Secretaries of State

1904 - 2024

Bill Gardner
Editor & Contributing Writer

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	ix
A HISTORY OF NASS	1
The Founding of the Association	3
History and Record	5
THE STATES	45
NASS CONFERENCES	103
NASS Conferences, Officers and Executive Committees	105
NASS PRESIDENTS	168
Past Presidents	170
BYLAWS AND CONSTITUTION	182
Original Constitution and Bylaws as Adopted August 16, 1939	184
Constitution and Bylaws of 1958	187
Amended Constitution and Bylaws as Amended July 10, 1985	189
Constitution of NASS as Amended August, 1992	194
Bylaws of NASS as Amended August, 1992	197
Constitution of NASS as Amended July, 2005	201
Bylaws of NASS as Amended July, 2005	203
Constitution of NASS as Amended February, 2008	208
Bylaws of NASS as Amended July 19, 2009	211
Constitution of NASS as Amended July 16, 2018	217
Bylaws of NASS as Amended July 16, 2018	220
Constitution of NASS as Amended July 12, 2023	226
Bylaws of NASS as Amended July 12, 2023	229
PHOTO GALLERY	235
Winter 1987	237
Winter 1989	238
Winter 1993	239
Winter 1994	239
Winter 1995	240
Winter 1998	241
Winter 1999	241
Foreign Election Assistance	242
Scenes from NASS	243
Thoughts and Reflections by Affiliates	245

(continued next page)

STATISTICS ABOUT SECRETARIES OF STATE 248

Salaries of Secretaries of State, 1945–2021	250
The Longest Serving Secretaries of State	252
Secretaries Who Became Governors 1904–2023	257
Secretaries Who Became U.S. Senators 1904–2023	258
States Providing NASS Presidents	259
States That Hosted a NASS Conference	261
NASS Dues and Staff	263
Functions of Secretaries of State, 1945–1946	265
Election and Registration Duties, 2021	266
Custodial, Publication and Legislative Duties, 2021	268
Methods of Selection of Secretaries of State, 2021	270

*Some sections of this book were updated in 2023-2024 to provide the most accurate information.

THAD EURE

A TRIBUTE

We, the members of the National Association of Secretaries of State, wish to express our deep appreciation, gratitude and thanks to the Honorable Thad Eure for his diligent, constant and noteworthy contributions in service and deed to his home state of North Carolina and to this country. No one has better earned the gratitude and esteem of our fellow Secretaries. The tremendous contributions that Thad Eure has made toward the improvement of public service are truly an inspiration for his colleagues, who applaud him. He serves as an example of the finest qualities of dedicated service. The members of the National Association of Secretaries of State acknowledge the dedication, helpfulness and concern of Thad Eure, who has set a new standard for government leadership and fostered the incentive for more noble living.

We, the members of the National Association of Secretaries of State, do hereby recognize the Honorable Thad Eure's tremendous service and dedication to our organization for fifty-two years. We acknowledge and express our deepest appreciation for Secretary Eure's extraordinary conduct and leadership as President and "Dean." Further, we embrace and congratulate Mr. Eure for his continuous involvement as a public servant for sixty-four years. Thad Eure has served his state, nation and NASS with honor and dignity, and has always reflected credit on himself, his family and his office.

1989

INTRODUCTION

When one ponders the scope of world events during the past 100 years (1904–2004), one can better understand the stage upon which our NASS predecessors built our association. Throughout the decades commonly referred to as the American Century, we saw our country emerge from severe tests of war and economic challenges to lead the world with our free democratic and economic institutions.

Through it all, the health of our nation's democracy (voting and elections) and its economy (corporate registration and professional regulation) were constant topics of discussion at the annual conferences. Both of these broad topics touch the functional purpose of our offices, and NASS members were always willing to share ideas and best practices to help nurture the health of our free society without regard to politics or partisanship.

So much has changed in these 100 years, as this book will demonstrate, but the original reason NASS was formed has not. We have a lot to learn from each other, and the sharing of information with one another helps us all move forward together. NASS, for all these years, has made that possible.

Since 1987, the Missouri State Archives has served as the official repository for NASS's records. This unique circumstance has led to the association twice requesting the Missouri Secretary of State—Roy Blunt in 1988 and then Bekki Cook in 1995—to have the State Archives staff write a history of NASS—the second version by Christyn Elley Edwards, served as an update and topically expanded history of the organization. Kenneth H. Winn, Missouri State Archivist, said in a recent letter upon the publication of this book, “Our personal identity arises from our private memories, while our identity as a people—or an organization—comes from our collective memory. It is an honor to offer NASS a part of that memory as part of its long service to the nation.”

This book was a collaborative effort. Without the help of countless state officials and the NASS staff, who helped gather old pictures and add historical information, this book would not have been as informative. Three former presidents—Allen Beermann, Mike Cooney and Ralph Munro—and corporate affiliates Allen Davies and Dana McKinnon, who sent along such helpful ideas, need to be singled out. Special recognition is due to former NASS President Dan Gwadosky, who proposed this publication during his presidency in 2002, and NASS President Mary Kiffmeyer, who continued to support the endeavor. I want to thank Assistant Secretary of State Karen Ladd for the extraordinary effort in compiling and keeping track of the voluminous information, which arrived by e-mail, snail mail, fax and telephone to become part of this book.

This Centennial publication honors the public service of all members of the National Association of Secretaries of State and preserves the rich tradition and values of our association as we begin our second 100 years.

Bill Gardner
New Hampshire Secretary of State
June 10, 2004

THE OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF STATE: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE (2019)

*by Leslie Reynolds, NASS Executive Director and
Maria Benson, NASS Director of Communications*

Introduction

The Office of the Secretary of State has never been more important than it is today. While the job description varies state by state, across the board the position revolves around a basic commitment to quality public service and effective, efficient government.

Each Secretary of State is responsible for a diverse portfolio of issues, including but not limited to: election administration and cybersecurity, business filings, archives, licensing, administrative rules and drafting legislative acts. Beyond those core responsibilities, there are Secretaries of State who also oversee securities regulation, head the department of motor vehicles, oversee the preparation of extraditions and warrants, direct the state libraries and/or museums, monitor charitable giving, commission notaries public and participate in international trade activities.

In addition to their numerous duties, the state structure of how NASS members come to the position varies. Not counting U.S. territories, thirty-eight NASS members are elected statewide office holders, ten members (including the District of Columbia) are appointed and three are chosen by their state legislatures. There are also three states that do not have a Secretary of State, but instead utilize the Lieutenant Governor position to accomplish similar duties, which are Alaska, Hawaii and Utah.

Key Duties and Responsibilities

CYBERSECURITY

Functioning as a crucial state executive position while also balancing national issues and responsibilities, modern Secretaries of State are much different from their predecessors commemorated in this book.

Due to rapidly evolving technology permeating each facet of state government, Secretaries of State must now understand, prepare and execute not only websites, applications, portals and other public-facing platforms, but also secure and protect them. Cybersecurity relates to all facets of member offices to include business services, election administration, records management and archiving.

Secretaries of State have taken the charge to fortify their systems and have utilized NASS, specifically the NASS Cybersecurity Committee, to share practices and learn about new developments in state and federal legislation, academic research, advocacy community and congressional committee activity, new and existing private sector tools and resources provided by federal agencies.

ELECTIONS

Forty members of NASS serve as their state's designated chief election official, overseeing the conduct of elections according to law. Ensuring the integrity of the voting process is central to this role, which includes cyber preparedness and contingency planning, as well as administrative and technical support for local election officials.

While elections remain a state and local responsibility, elections were designated as critical infrastructure by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in January 2017. NASS and its members opposed this designation. However, Secretaries of State and other election officials have worked to create a productive relationship with the federal government in order to further secure election systems from malicious actors both foreign and domestic. In particular, the Election Infrastructure Sub-sector Government Coordinating Council (EIS-GCC) was created to open communications channels and guide future collaborative election security endeavors. Secretaries of State were integral in the council's establishment and serve as key members, providing invaluable information on state election procedures and structures.

With increased awareness and interest in election matters, Secretaries of State are continuously briefing the public and the media about election administration and election cybersecurity issues. NASS anticipated this level of interest would continue well beyond the 2020 election and into the foreseeable future.

BUSINESS SERVICES

Business-related filings account for a large portion of the work Secretaries of State offices conduct. Most offices oversee the registration of corporations, process and/or commission notaries public, index and maintain UCC filings, handle professional licensing application, and register trademarks and trade names. Citizens are able to easily accomplish many of these applications and documents online. Two major trends have developed within business services: remote notarization and business identity theft awareness and prevention.

The issues of electronic and most recently remote notarization became a major focus of NASS members in 2016. NASS took on the charge of convening the appropriate parties to develop remote notarization standards that would enable remote notarizations to protect the credibility of the process, help prevent identity fraud and provide accountability to the public in order to advance secure electronic commerce. NASS members successfully approved the Revised National Electronic Notarization Standards to include remote notarization in February 2018.

As the officials who mainly oversee the fifty-state incorporation process in the U.S., Secretaries of State are also prioritizing business identity theft awareness and prevention. Members work together to combat the spread of business impersonation and other forms of identity-related fraud to ensure their states' businesses are protected.

The Future of NASS

The association marks its 120th anniversary in 2024, and it is important to reflect not only on our past accomplishments, but also our goals for the future.

The association has a strong history of speaking with one voice on important policy issues. The strength of our non-partisan organization is in our ability to speak in a collective voice with our bi-partisan membership. This has allowed NASS to be impactful on issues that affect Secretaries of State across the country. Moving forward, the association will continue this tradition so that we can continue to make a difference in vital matters.

Over the years, the association has also grown from one employee to six full-time employees. Although NASS remains much smaller than many of its state government association counterparts, the deliberate growth shows the strong commitment Secretaries of State have to their core responsibilities and overall mission.

We look forward to NASS continuing to be an influential association on important matters for many years to come.

Summary

The office of the Secretary of State requires a diverse understanding of all levels of government. They must be natural risk managers with the ability to navigate evolving issues in order to be successful. Secretaries of State have always been willing and able to meet the challenge. As state government matters continue to gain more national attention, the position of Secretary of State will only become more crucial.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES OF STATE (NASS)

Founded in 1904, NASS is the nation's oldest nonpartisan professional association for state government officials. Further information is available online at nass.org. The website also contains links to Secretary of State websites, NASS Committees, upcoming NASS events and much more information on the association's work. To contact the NASS office, please email nass@nass.org or call 202-624-3525.