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Secretary of State Candidate Jason Gibbs:
"Leadership, accountability and attention to detail matter"

Duxbury, Vt. -- Secretary of State candidate Jason Gibbs today issued the following statement:

Voters will select the candidate for Secretary of State they believe is most capable of providing positive and effective executive leadership that will produce real results.

Being an effective leader requires that we understand the significance of the examples we set, and the direction we provide, for others. It means having the determination to do what is right, the courage to accept responsibility for mistakes, and the ability to articulate solutions.

Last week, the Secretary of State struggled through three consecutive challenges:
Few Vermonters had been adequately notified of the new August 24th Primary Election. (See also: Rutland Herald, Capital Beat Column, July 11, 2010)

Ballot errors prevented early and absentee voting to begin on time in some communities. (See also: Burlington Free Press, Vt Buzz, "Early voting? Not so fast", July 12, 2010)

The insecurity of the statewide voter checklist was illustrated when it crashed and left Town Clerks and others unable to access important public information (See also: WCAX, "Vermont Voter Checklist Trouble, July 14th, 2010).

Everyone makes mistakes. But, with the right leadership, these issues could have been handled with the level of accountability Vermonters expect and deserve from their officials--and they could have been avoided all together. Nevertheless, in each case, the incumbent's focus was on deflecting responsibility for the problem instead of solving it.

Consider that there are steps the Secretary of State could take--at no cost to taxpayers--to more effectively notify Vermonters the primary moved to August 24th. For example:

Partner with the Vermont Association of Broadcasters to produce a Public Service Announcement;

Work with the State's web portal managers to include election information on the state's internet homepage and other state websites;

Ask other state departments like Vermont State Parks or the Department of Motor Vehicles to include information in material reaching their customers;

Deploy social media communication tools like Facebook to communicate directly with voters;

Engage service organizations like Rotary, Lions, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, the League of Women Voters and church groups, the American Legion, VFW and other civic organizations to reach voters in their communities;

Encourage newspaper editorial boards to publicize the information; and

Host an essay and poster contests for children.

Unfortunately, the office has not yet made any new effort to inform the electorate.

Consider too that both the printing company and the Secretary of State's office were aware of the ballot errors as early as July 2. When asked to comment on it 10 days later, the incumbent's response was that it was not her fault--even if as the Chief Election Officer it is her responsibility.

The Secretary went on to say on Vermont Public Radio that clerks should have been more accommodating and used the ballots anyway. Meanwhile, staff in the Office of Secretary of State were instructing Town Clerks not to use the ballots because they would differentiate one voter from another. Town Clerks tell me that sending mixed messages--or providing no clear leadership at all--is all too common.

For years, Vermont's Town Clerks have asked the Secretary to use existing funds to improve the security and quality of the statewide voter checklist. Moreover, despite a 4-year old audit (by then Auditor Randy Brock) that calls the integrity of the system into question, the Secretary of State has not made improvements that are necessary.

Leadership, personal responsibility, accountability and attention to detail matter--especially for an important executive office like Secretary of State. That is why they are important issues in this campaign."

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ABOUT JASON

Gibbs, a Duxbury Republican, is well known across Vermont. He served as a senior policy adviser and Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs to Governor Jim Douglas for six years before taking on the top job of Commissioner of the Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation.

In 19 months at the helm of FPR, Gibbs streamlined operations, significantly increased productivity and successfully rejuvenated the long-term viability of the much-loved 52 state parks--all while also reducing the department's taxpayer financed spending by nearly 30 percent through more innovative and entrepreneurial public management and stronger partnerships with the private sector.

"The Secretary of State is the guardian of the principles Vermonters hold dear: small, local, transparent, accountable and fiscally responsible government; personal independence and self-sufficiency; hard work and ingenuity; and the integrity of our democratic processes," Gibbs said. "This is a campaign about applying these principles to transform state government and achieve real results that strengthen our economy, reduce our reliance on taxpayers and prove beyond any doubt government's capacity to do more good with less money."

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Paid for by Gibbs for Secretary of State
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