



# KANSAS

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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*The following is a column by Governor Kathleen Sebelius:*

## **An exciting time to be a Kansan**

Over the past couple weeks thousands of Kansans have participated in the democratic process of selecting our presidential candidates. I was hopeful that 2008 would be a year for Kansans to have an opportunity to vote in a presidential primary, and included the funding in my budget proposals. But the legislature decided that the caucus system should continue this year.

It was exciting for me to participate in the presidential caucus in my senatorial district in Topeka. We were in the middle school both my sons attended, and I have never seen the cafeteria so crowded. The energy of the caucus was infectious. Across Kansas, in spite of bad weather, huge crowds packed school gymnasiums, churches, and community buildings. Crowds overflowed.

During this primary season, record-breaking turnout has occurred across the country, and Kansas was no different. Turnout statewide far exceeded both historical participation rates and the expectations of party organizers. More than 37,000 Democrats turned out February 5<sup>th</sup>, and approximately 20,000 Republicans participated in caucuses on February 9th.

Perhaps even more noteworthy than the record turnout was the diversity of turnout. For the first time in recent history, young people are motivated and participating.

My sons, ages 23 and 26, have always been involved in the political process since I first ran for office when they were two and five. They didn't have a lot of choice. It has been encouraging to see many of their friends – who have never taken the time to get engaged and involved - stepping up to make their voices heard and make a difference. I'm relieved and excited to see this movement, not only in Kansas but across the United States. I was concerned that we would lose a generation of young Americans, who voted in smaller and smaller numbers each cycle, and had not fully engaged in their role as citizens.

The right to vote, guaranteed by the Constitution, is not a responsibility to be taken lightly. I am proud of all the Kansas citizens who took time out of their busy lives to participate in helping to choose our next president. The nominating process is the first step in the election process, and hopefully the excitement and involvement will continue. Voting is not just the process by which we elect our next leader; free elections are the cornerstone of our American democracy.

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