

## Helping Business Online Touted

By JOSELYN KING

WHEELING — The West Virginia Secretary of State's Office does more than just oversee elections, two current Democratic candidates for the job tout.

The use of increased computer technology to submit state documents required of businesses would make business easier to transact in West Virginia, and the Secretary of State's Office has the authority to spearhead efforts to make e-commerce more common in the state, both said.

For an out-of-state company, the capability of e-government filings could make West Virginia a more attractive location for dealings. This is because a prospective business awaiting its licensing would not have to wait as long if its information is processed online.

"The Secretary of State's Office has the true ability to drive the state's economy," said current House Majority Leader Joe DeLong, D-Hancock.

It was a sentiment echoed by DeLong's opponent in the secretary of state race, Natalie Tennant, during a recent meeting of the Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce.

"Elections happen only twice a year, every two years," she said. "The rest of the time, the Secretary of State's Office is dealing with the state's businesses — helping them to get regulated and licensed."

A major function of the Secretary of State's Office is to serve as a state archive for information pertaining to corporations, limited liability companies, limited partnerships, limited liability

partnerships, voluntary associations and business trusts.

The office also registers and regulates the state's charities; serves as an archive for requirements and procedures of West Virginia state agencies and boards; and administers licenses for athletic agents, ministers, private investigators and security guards.

If elected secretary of state, DeLong said he would focus on three "new and vitally important areas" in the office — the expansion of e-government, corporate and nonprofit oversight and privacy protection.

Tennant said she sees the need for the Secretary of State's Office to continue to be "a progressive office," and she views making the office more accessible to the public as being important.