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Tennant seeking election to Secretary of State post

By Lauren Hough
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MARTINSBURG — Hoping to parlay the positive response to her last run for office into a new, successful campaign, Natalie Tennant again has her sights firmly set on the office of secretary of state.

“After coming so close, I knew I wanted to be out there again,” said Tennant, who previously ran for the office in 2004. Out of seven Democratic candidates vying for the nomination that year, the Marion County native came in second.

Campaigning early and often, the former broadcaster has already created and ran television commercials elsewhere in the state in conjunction with “Super Tuesday.” Even though Tennant, now of Kanawha County, is squaring off against two other Democrats, Billy Wayne Bailey Jr. and Joe DeLong, she says her advertising is already paying off when it comes to candidate recognition.

“I was the only game in town,” she said Monday during a visit to Martinsburg. “Everyone was talking about me.”

The cost of such efforts three months ahead of the primary election has been worth it to Tennant, who said she expects to be outspent again, but doesn’t feel that money is all that makes a good candidate.

“I think that I bring a unique perspective with the ideas I have,” Tennant said.

Having previously worked for both the state treasurer’s office and the secretary of state, Tennant hopes to further integrate “e-government” into the inner workings of West Virginia to aid both businesses and taxpayers.

“We need more e-government,” she said. “We need to look and see how we can work

together and make life easier when it comes to bringing business in.”

Improving voter confidence is also a priority of Tennant’s, as is getting more people involved in the political process altogether.

Her idea, dubbed the VOTE Program, is to use members from civic organizations such as the Kiwanis Club, the Lions Club and Rotary to serve as poll workers. The money received as payment for overseeing the voting process could then be put back in the organizations to help with their costs, Tennant proposed.

In addition, it would encourage a more broad and diverse pool of poll workers, she said.

Tennant, who described herself as a leader as a student, received both a bachelor’s degree in journalism and a master’s degree in corporate and organizational communication from West Virginia University, where she also served as the school’s first — and, to date, its only — female Mountaineer mascot in 1990.

She is married to state Sen. Erik Wells, D-Kanawha, with whom she has one daughter, Delaney. The couple also operates Wells Media Group, a small business focusing on media training and video production.

“I want to be a good secretary of state,” said Tennant, who announced her candidacy in June. “I want to continue to be a leader in West Virginia and help be a part of the solution.”