

BLACKBURN, YOUNCE CHOSEN FOR STATE ELECTION COMMISSION

Two experienced county election officials have joined the seven-member Tennessee State Election Commission.

A joint session of the Tennessee General Assembly on Wednesday elected Morristown resident Judy Blackburn and LaFollette resident Kent Younce to terms on the commission. Blackburn is the first woman in history to serve on the commission.

The commission is part of the state's Division of Elections, which, in turn, is part of the Department of State.

The commission is responsible for appointing local election commissioners in all of Tennessee's 95 counties, then monitoring the activities and performance of those individual county election commissions.

The state commission also reviews the qualifying petitions for candidates for statewide offices to make sure those petitions are legally correct and properly filed. And the state commission works very closely with the state Coordinator of Elections to make sure elections are conducted in a uniform fashion.

Blackburn and Younce will serve terms that expire May 1, 2011.

Both Blackburn and Younce have experience at the local level. Blackburn was first appointed as a Hamblen County election commissioner in April 2005. Younce was first appointed as a Campbell County election commissioner in April 2007. Younce has been serving as chairman of the Campbell County Election Commission.

"Tennesseans are fortunate that these two seasoned election officials are willing to serve on the State Election Commission," said Secretary of State Tre Hargett. "I know Judy Blackburn and Kent Younce are going to do everything they can to ensure that elections in this state are fair and impartial."

Mark Goins, the state's Coordinator of Elections, added: "I have known both Kent Younce and Judy Blackburn for a long time. They will make great state election commissioners."

The appointments are the result of a recent change in state law that altered the partisan makeup of the commission. Younce and Blackburn were recommended to the General Assembly by the House and Senate Republican caucuses.