

The Post and Courier

Time to end archaic agency

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The Post and Courier will not endorse either candidate for Secretary of State -- not because of the candidates, but to reiterate that this archaic position should be eliminated, and its narrow range of duties assumed by another state agency.

The streamlining idea isn't new with us. Former Secretary of State Jim Miles proposed terminating the office after serving in the job long enough to conclude that it was largely superfluous. And the Legislature came close to allowing state voters to consider a ballot question on that issue in late 1990s.

If the office were eliminated the savings might be slight, but the Legislature's endorsement would make a strong statement about its commitment to frugality. Thirteen years ago, Mr. Miles estimated the cost savings at \$300,000.

Currently, the Secretary of State makes \$92,007 a year, according to state records, and the office has five other employees making more than \$50,000 a year each.

The Secretary of State position dates from the colonial era, when the officeholder served as liaison to the crown. Currently, its main responsibilities are providing a repository for filings related to business incorporation and the regulation of certain charities.

"Sometimes we have got to stop talking about reducing the size of government and do something about it," Mr. Miles said in 1997.

That was true then, and it's true now.

If the Legislature is serious about streamlining, consolidation of services and cost savings, it will revive the proposal to terminate this relic. Because it is a constitutional office, eliminating it would require state voters' approval.

The Legislature should give voters the opportunity to make the next Secretary of State South Carolina's last.

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