
NEWS RELEASE

**Louisiana Department
of State**



**Tom Schedler
Secretary of State**

**P.O. Box 94125
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9125
www.sos.la.gov**



**Meg Casper
Press Secretary
225.362.5086
meg.casper@sos.la.gov**

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SECRETARY OF STATE'S OFFICE BRACES FOR STAFFING CUTS

BATON ROUGE, La. – Louisiana Secretary of State Tom Schedler says a \$930,000 mid-year budget cut will result in drastic reductions to staff and operating hours at 14 museums under his control. Downsizing at the Secretary of State's historical sites has been ongoing for many years, but Schedler says this latest blow is the largest and most unfortunate.

Secretary Schedler shared the plans to address the mid-year figure using five main sources as a result of meetings with the Division of Administration. More than \$428,000 of the mid-year reduction is realized through the postponement of a BESE election in northwest Louisiana until October. Another \$364,000 is achieved through reductions in operating costs, elimination of the Elections Outreach Division as well as a hiring freeze for parish Registrars of Voters. The remaining \$119,000 directly touches the Secretary of State's museum program and will impact the most employees due to the anticipation that the cut will be annualized next fiscal year. Annualization equates to a permanent reduction of \$1.7 million in funding, which is half of the Museum Division's total budget.

"This level of reduction in the last three months of the fiscal year is truly daunting," said Secretary Schedler. "Our strategy since I took office has been to work as an honest partner with the local communities where these assets reside and find solutions that might help fill the budget gap over time," said Schedler. "Many of our partners have stepped up in various ways, so it's disappointing that the state can't continue its support. It is especially sad given our rich history."

Schedler shared the budget numbers with his senior staff and alerted them that he will immediately seek Civil Service approval for anticipated layoffs of approximately 24 full time employees—mostly impacting museum staff—to begin as early as mid-April. The impact of the staff reductions include eliminating private elections and voter registration for schools/organizations as well as bringing the Old State Capitol in Baton Rouge and the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum in Shreveport down to operating only three days a week. The remaining 14 museums will open one day per week once the cuts are implemented. Additionally, as a result of the reduced hours of operation many part-time employee positions at the museums will be eliminated and all remaining part-time employees will work no more than 8 hours per week.

"My message to our staff and supporters today was simple. Anyone or any group that has a specific interest in assisting our museums or outreach efforts in any way should step forward now," stated Schedler. "My door is open for solutions and every offer will be carefully considered."

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Since fiscal year 2008-09, the Secretary of State's Office has seen state general fund dollars for museums cut from \$4.2 million, to \$3.4 million before the latest mid-year reduction. During that time, many of the museums' hours of operations were significantly reduced, some to as few as two days per week, while others actively recruited groups or agencies to help support their operations with private funds.

"When you outline all of the work we've done to avoid closing the doors of our museums it's easy to understand why this latest round of cuts has taken the wind out of our sails," said Schedler. "In 2013, we reverted the building housing the Garyville Timber Museum to the Garyville Museum Timber Association so they could develop the site into a tourist attraction. At the Mansfield Female College, we sold the Lyceum building back to the original donor family who worked with the DeSoto Policy Jury to convert it into a community center. The Cotton Museum in Lake Providence successfully passed a local millage to assist in their activities and the Delta Music Museum in Ferriday has partnered with the city to provide grass cutting services. At this point, I fear finding additional efficiencies is practically impossible," emphasized Schedler.

Below is a list of the museums and historical sites, and the anticipated state-funded staffing impact on each. For additional information about each site visit

<http://www.sos.la.gov/HistoricalResources/VisitMuseums/Pages/default.aspx>.

Louisiana's Old State Capitol (Baton Rouge) 9 full-time layoffs, 1 part-time reduction in hours

Louisiana State Exhibit Museum (Shreveport) 8 full-time layoffs, 3 part-time reduction in hours

Louisiana Military Museum (Ruston) 2 full-time layoffs

Chennault Aviation & Military Museum (Monroe) 1 full-time job appointment reduced to 8 hours/week. 1 part-time elimination

Delta Music Museum (Ferriday) 2 part-time eliminations and 1 part-time reduction in hours

Eddie G. Robinson Museum (Grambling) 1 full-time job appointment reduced to 8 hours/week, 1 part-time elimination

Germantown Colony Museum (Minden) 1 part-time reduction in hours

Military Hall of Fame (Abbeville) 1 part-time elimination, 1 part-time reduction in hours

Cotton Museum (Lake Providence) 1 part-time elimination, 1 part-time reduction in hours

Oil and Gas Museum (Oil City) 1 full-time layoff, 2 part-time eliminations

Mansfield Female College Museum (Mansfield) 1 full-time layoff

Water Works Museum (Shreveport) 1 part-time elimination, 1 part-time reduction in hours

Spring Street Historical Museum (Shreveport) 1 part-time reduction in hours

Tioga Heritage Park and Museum (Tioga) 1 part-time reduction in hours

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