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# NEWS RELEASE

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**Louisiana  
Department of State**



**Tom Schedler  
Secretary of State**

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**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES OF STATE  
HONORS 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF VOTING RIGHTS ACT**

**WASHINGTON, DC**—The National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) is joining with its members across the nation to commemorate today as the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Voting Rights Act, which was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on August 6, 1965.

In 2006, NASS posthumously honored President Johnson with the Freedom Award for supporting the passage of the Voting Rights Act, thereby enshrining protection of the right to political participation for minority voters at the polls. The association has also honored civil rights icons Rosa Parks, Daisy Bates and the founders of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Morris Dees and Joseph Levin, Jr.

The following is a statement by NASS President Tom Schedler, who serves as Louisiana Secretary of State:

“The passage of the Voting Rights Act marks an important milestone in our nation’s history, and today is an historic occasion for celebrating the great progress that states have made in furthering the goals of the law. Thanks to incredible advances in technology – a great equalizer for voters and election officials alike – getting registered to vote and casting a ballot are easier and more convenient than anyone could have ever imagined five decades ago.

Many states have been recognized for their consistently well-run and fairly-administered elections, often using technology to spur innovation and increase opportunities for participation. Twenty-six states plus the District of Columbia have modernized their voter registration process to offer – or approve the adoption of – online registration, while nearly 15 others have state-of-the-art mobile applications for checking or updating one's voter registration status, getting election reminders, finding one's polling place and more, using a smartphone. Meanwhile, at least 28 states allow jurisdictions to use electronic poll books, which can reduce line waiting times and provide live data for get-out-the-vote efforts.

Other states, including Louisiana, have adopted sound administrative practices which also expand voting opportunities for all citizens. This includes allowing pre-registration for 16 and 17 year olds, expanding early voting, opening vote centers, allowing people with criminal convictions the chance to regain their ability to vote, increasing access to absentee and mail balloting, creating new or improved resources for language minority voters and pursuing vigorous efforts to help enfranchise overseas and military voters.

While members of our organization have passionate and often differing opinions on whether the Voting Rights Act needs revamping, we will not shy away from discussing difficult questions about the future of voting and civil rights. NASS has always been committed to sharing ideas and building higher levels of joint consensus for policymaking. In our dealings with Congress and others in federal government, we will continue to seek forward-looking administrative frameworks that treat the states as fully-engaged partners in a collaborative enterprise.

For today, let us pay tribute to the Voting Rights Act by honoring the incredible courage and spirit of those who paved the way for equality in our democratic process, and by reminding eligible citizens in every state about the importance of voting."

## **About NASS**

Founded in 1904, NASS is the oldest, nonpartisan professional organization of public officials in the U.S. Membership is open to the 50 states and all U.S. territories. NASS serves as a medium for the exchange of information between states and fosters cooperation in the development of public policy.

NASS has two standing committees that deal with election issues:

The [NASS Elections Committee](#) is co-chaired by Colorado Secretary of State Wayne Williams and West Virginia Secretary of State Natalie Tennant. The committee is dedicated to educating and informing members about state election administration practices and laws, as well as tracking proposed federal legislation and the activities of other federal government entities.

The [NASS Voter Participation Committee](#) is co-chaired by Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill and Rhode Island Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea. The committee is devoted to identifying state strategies for increasing or enhancing practices on voter education and outreach, as well as serving as a clearinghouse for information on voter participation and civics outreach programs.

NASS also provides a non-partisan voting assistance website, [www.CanIVote.org](http://www.CanIVote.org).

- [www.sos.la.gov](http://www.sos.la.gov) -