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## NEWS RELEASE

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**Louisiana  
Department of State**



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Secretary of State**

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### **STATEMENT BY SECRETARY KYLE ARDOIN ON ADMINISTRATION OF LOUISIANA'S NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER ELECTIONS**

**BATON ROUGE, La.**— Last week, Governor Edwards declined to endorse the Emergency Election Plan I put forward, approved by both the House and Governmental Affairs and Senate and Governmental Affairs committees, and which both chambers of the Legislature are in the process of voting on. Because the Governor has indicated he will not change his position, the citizens of Louisiana will not have, for the November and December elections:

- An additional three days of early voting
- Extended polling hours for early voting
- Additional time for Registrars to verify and process absentee ballots that will allow more timely reporting of election results
- An adjusted absentee ballot application deadline that more closely aligns with United States Postal Service (USPS) delivery standards

That said, I understand the vital importance of protecting the right to vote in the midst of a pandemic. In light of my role as Louisiana's chief election official, I have identified the following steps that I will be able to take in the coming weeks (through a variety of statutory and administrative mechanisms) to exercise my powers in light of the Governor's decision to reject the plan on these issues:

- Direct all Registrars to ensure that early voting and Clerks to ensure Election Day locations adhere to CDC guidelines on mask-wearing by poll workers, social distancing, cleaning of machines, and making disposable masks available to those voters who fail to wear their own masks to polling places and want one, pursuant to La. R.S. 18:401.2.
  - I cannot make mask-wearing a pre-condition to voting at a polling place – although I encourage voters in the strongest possible terms to do so.
- I will declare a state of emergency which will allow the Clerk of Court and presiding officer of the parish governing authority to relocate polling places from senior centers and other facilities where operating polling places creates a public safety issue, and to notify voters of any polling place changes, pursuant to La. R.S. 18:401.2. In light of Hurricane Laura and COVID, I will be working closely with the parish authorities on these designations.

- Direct Registrars to work with nursing home operators in their parishes to designate a staff member as “temporary staff” of the Registrar to receive appropriate training and facilitate voting for nursing home residents where the facilities remain in lock-down, pursuant to La. R.S. 18:59(I)(2).
- Advise Registrars to consider offering a staffed curbside ballot drop-off point at their offices between the end of early voting and Election Day to permit voters to return their ballots directly without the need to rely on the USPS or others to deliver their ballots, pursuant to La. R.S. 18:18(A)(3) and La. R.S. 18:1308(B).
- Issue an administrative rule to extend the absentee ballot cure process I implemented for the July and August elections through the November and December elections, pursuant to La. R.S. 18:18(A)(3).

In addition, the Tangipahoa Parish Registrar of Voters has received an Attorney General’s opinion regarding the ability for voters with COVID to request to vote absentee by mail if certain requirements are met, under existing legislative authority (See attached A.G. Opinion 20-0104).

Over the next few weeks, in light of the failure of the proposed emergency election plan, I will be taking the steps necessary to implement all of the changes outlined above, and provide guidance for implementing the Attorney General’s opinion, to ensure that Louisianans have every opportunity to vote consistent with the existing law.

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