

LOUISIANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ROYCE DUPLESSIS
State Representative ~ District 93



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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Kyle Ardoin
Secretary of State
P.O. Box 94125
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9125

Re: Fall 2020 Emergency Election Plan

Dear Secretary Ardoin:

This letter is a follow-up from our recent conversations regarding the urgent need for our state to adopt an Emergency Election Plan for the upcoming November/ December elections.

In April we adopted the most recent Emergency Election Plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, our state's rate of COVID-19 infections still remains among the nation's highest. Therefore, at a minimum, the provisions that were adopted for the July/ August elections should remain in place. However, there is more than enough evidence to support expansion of the Emergency Election Plan.

The two most urgent priorities are extension of early voting, and expansion of mail-in voting. It was reported by your office that early in-person voter turnout for the July election exceeded 100,000 votes—a 30% increase compared to 2016, and ballots cast by mail more than quadrupled compared to 2016. Indeed, nearly 40% of the voters who cast a ballot during the July 11th election relied on early and absentee voting as a means to vote safely. Despite this increase, there have been zero reports of fraud.

Furthermore, a nonpartisan organization, Secure Democracy, recently conducted poll of 600 registered Louisiana voters. This poll revealed that 76% were in favor of giving all voters the option to vote-by-mail. Your original Emergency Election Plan earlier this year included such a provision, prior to legislative objection. ***Louisiana remains one of only seven (7) states in the country to require an excuse (beyond fear of COVID-19) in order to vote-by-mail.***

I am strongly urging that your office develop an Emergency Election Plan that includes the following provisions:

- **Vote-by-mail eligibility to all voters, as provided for in your original plan**
- **Contract with the USPS to create a tracking system to track all absentee ballots**
- **Vote-by-mail physical drop off locations**
- **Removal of witness requirement**
- **Simplified instructions/ larger font on absentee application and ballot**
- **Robust public information campaign informing voters about new voting options**
- **Extended deadlines to request and return absentee ballots**

Earlier today, President Donald Trump made a full-throated endorsement of voting-by-mail in the state of Florida, citing that state's election system being "safe and secure." You have publicly touted your office as ranking among the top five (5) states in the country for election security. This distinction is supported by that fact that Louisiana has successfully administered an absentee voting program for many years without widespread reports of fraud (nor convictions) in Louisiana. Therefore, if it is safe enough for Florida, it is surely safe enough for Louisiana.

Unlike in April, we still have the opportunity to be proactive in this effort. The legislature should be presented a plan with enough time to thoroughly debate and ultimately adopt. That is why I am urging your immediate action. Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter.

Sincerely,



Royce Duplessis
State Representative – District 93

Cc: Governor John Bel Edwards
House Speaker Clay Schexnayder
Representative Stephen Dwight
Senate President Page Cortez
Senator Sharon Hewitt