



NASS Idea Award 2022 Application:  
*Operation Geaux Vote*

Louisiana Secretary of State Kyle Ardoin

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In the midst of a global pandemic, Louisiana was not spared nature's wrath during either the 2020 or 2021 Atlantic Hurricane Season. Major hurricanes like Laura (Landfall: August 26, 2020), Delta (October 9, 2020), Zeta (October 28, 2020), and Ida (August 29, 2021) caused widespread devastation across Louisiana in the days and weeks leading up to two statewide elections. To ensure that Louisiana was prepared to successfully execute the 2020 Presidential election and 2021 statewide election, Secretary of State Kyle Ardoin formed *Operation Geaux Vote*, a task force made up of staff from the Department of State and outside partners, both governmental and non-governmental. The hard work of these individuals ensured that Louisiana's elections were successfully performed, with the 2020 Presidential election having the highest voter turnout in Louisiana since 1996.

## Executive Summary:

### History:

The first iteration of *Operation Geaux Vote* began after Hurricane Laura made landfall in Southwest Louisiana on August 26, 2020. The category four storm caused catastrophic damage less than ten weeks prior to the 2020 Presidential election. This was followed by Hurricane Delta (category four) 25 days prior to the election and Hurricane Zeta (category three) just six days prior to the election. Additionally, Louisiana was still suffering the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic which required additional supplies, social distancing, new early voting locations and the recruitment of younger poll commissioners. The second iteration began after Hurricane Ida's landfall on August 29, 2021 as a category four storm. Both iterations had the same goals and objectives. Additionally, the task force required extensive time and effort by staff from across divisions and departments, meeting three times per week for several months leading up to the election while having to meet strict statutory and department-imposed deadlines.

### *Operation Geaux Vote's* goal was:

- To craft a plan to relocate polling places that would be unavailable by November 3. This included consolidation of polling places under large tents in open areas, the use of [multiple mobile voting units](#) and the use of other available buildings with power and little or no damage.
- To ensure that voters were educated on storm-related changes with an aggressive voter outreach plan, including media interviews by Secretary Ardoin, statewide radio advertisements, large, strategically placed signs featuring the Department of State's 800 number (which voters could call for important election information) and website, flyers and posters with information about displaced voters' ability to vote via the absentee ballot program and polling place changes, which were delivered to local community and governmental partners and shelters and frequent social media posts featuring vital information. The communications team had to consider the long-term lack of internet and power in many of the hardest-hit areas when crafting an outreach plan.
- To establish a direct line of communication between various divisions within the Department of State, including the Executive Division, Elections Division, Information Technology Division, Legal Division, Communications Division, Purchasing Division, Accounting Division and Human Resources Division to ensure necessary supplies were procured, proper plans, rules and laws were followed, and plans devised by the task force were properly executed.
- To establish a direct line of communication between the Department of State and outside entities such as the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the United States Postal Service, local government partners, telecommunication companies and power companies (which was especially important in the days preceding and immediately following Hurricane Zeta's landfall to ensure that polling places received priority in power restoration and that generators would be delivered to locations that would still be without power).
- Plan for and execute a multi-parish tour in both 2020 and 2021, in which Secretary Ardoin, Commissioner of Elections Sherri Hadskey, along with other Department of State staff, viewed storm damage in-person and met with local officials to ensure their needs were being met ahead of both elections.

### Significance:

*Operation Geaux Vote* streamlined inner-agency and inner-governmental communication, allowed issues related to the execution of both the 2020 and 2021 elections to be discussed and solved in an effective manner and allowed for an open discussion of ideas between divisions to ensure success. Furthermore, the success of *Operation Geaux Vote* in 2020 served as a model for its re-activation in

2021. With Louisiana susceptible to natural disasters in the weeks preceding fall elections, *Operation Geaux Vote* has given our department a template to use for future disasters. We feel that other states can take the broad goals and operations of this task force to use in the event of pre-election natural disasters in their own jurisdictions.

#### Impacts and Results:

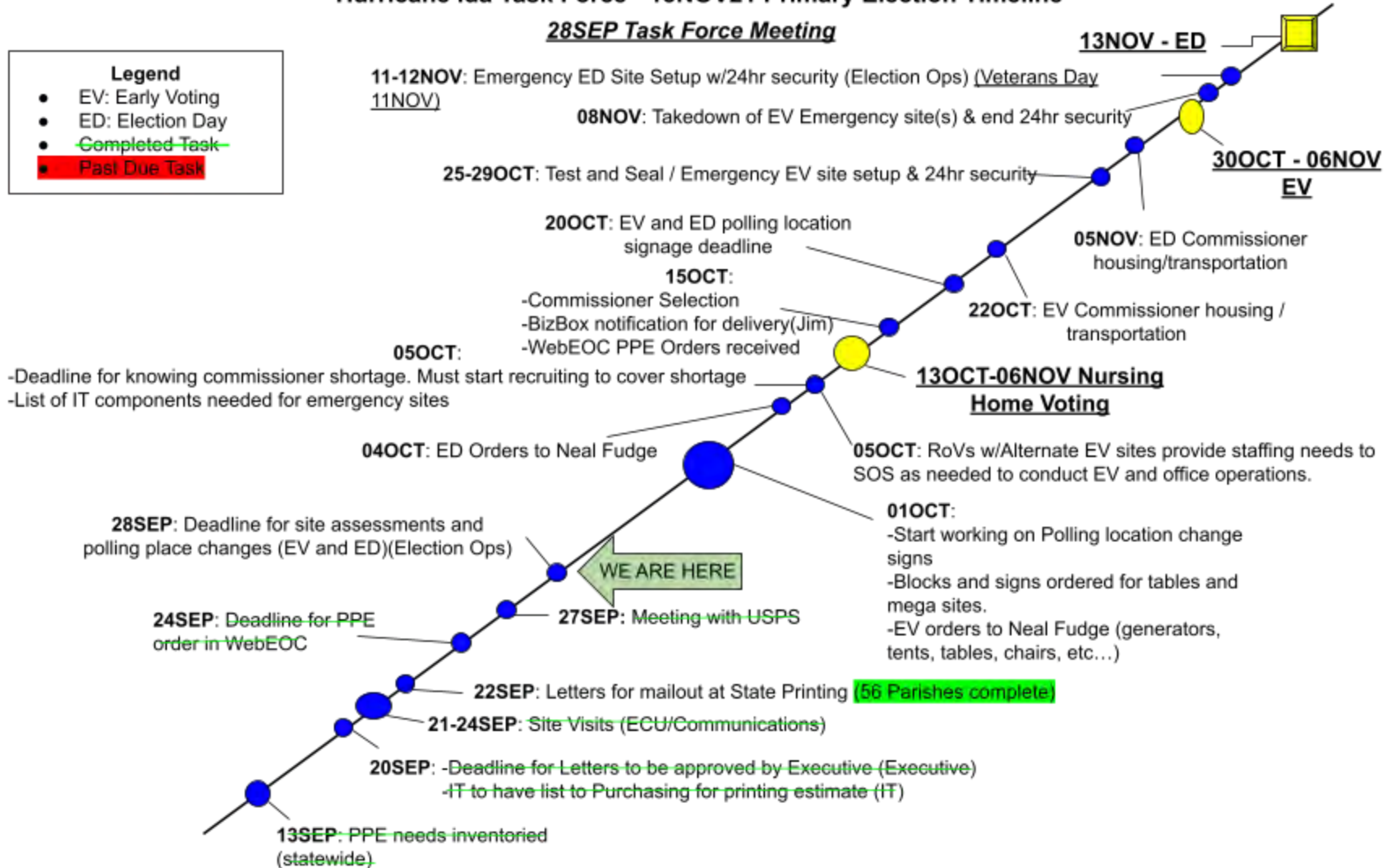
The successful conclusion of *Operation Geaux Vote* in 2020 saw the largest voter turnout in Louisiana since 1996 (70.1% of registered voters), with 93% of voters choosing to vote in-person. The execution of the election under difficult circumstances received bipartisan praise from elected officials across Louisiana. The 2021 activation of *Operation Geaux Vote* also saw typical turnout across the affected areas, with our staff's ability to use lessons learned in the 2020 task force in the successful operation of the 2021 election.

## Hurricane Ida Task Force - 13NOV21 Primary Election Timeline

### 28SEP Task Force Meeting

**Legend**

- EV: Early Voting
- ED: Election Day
- ~~Completed Task~~
- ~~Past Due Task~~



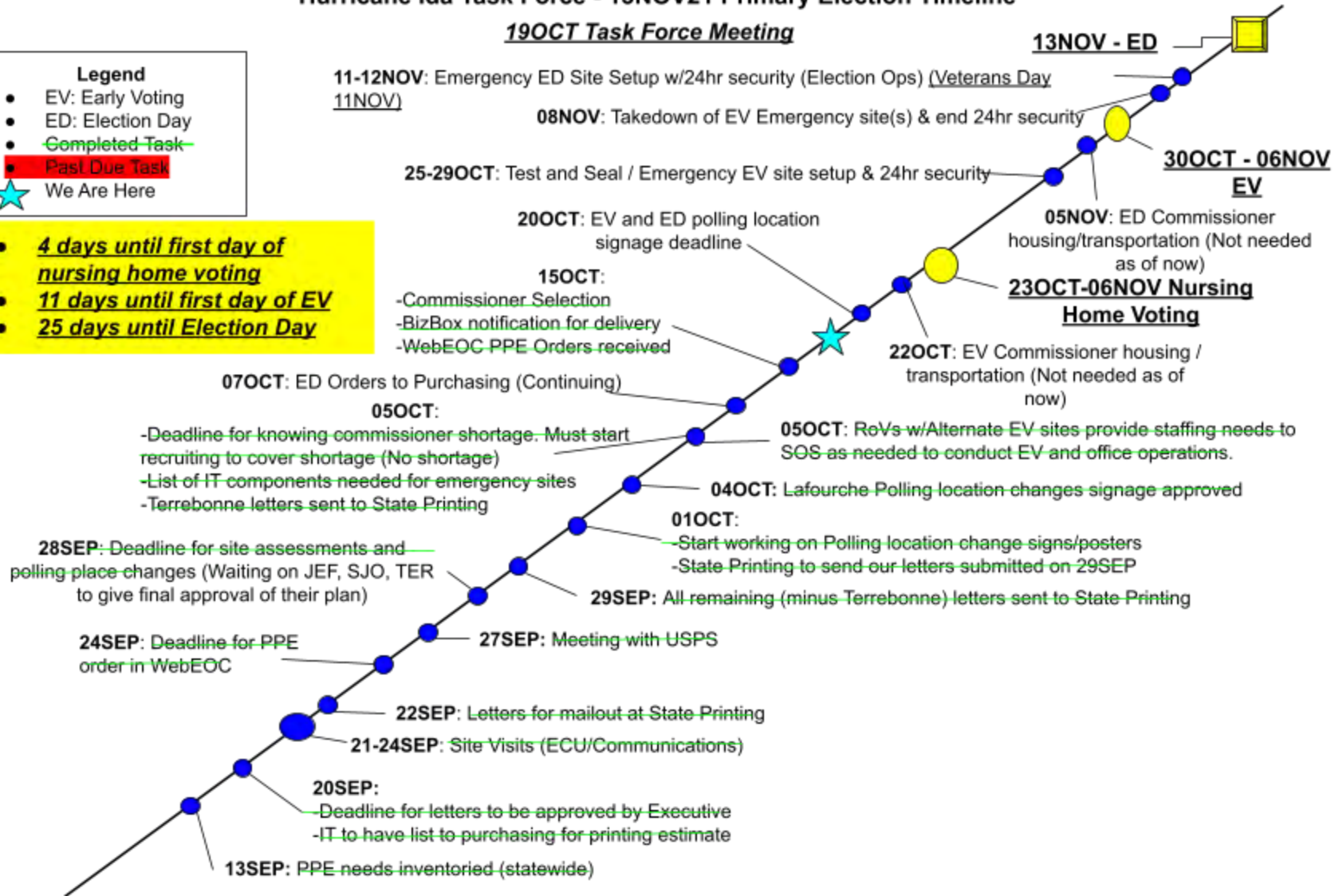
## Hurricane Ida Task Force - 13NOV21 Primary Election Timeline

### 19OCT Task Force Meeting

**Legend**

- EV: Early Voting
- ED: Election Day
- ~~Completed Task~~
- ~~Past Due Task~~
- ★ We Are Here

- **4 days until first day of nursing home voting**
- **11 days until first day of EV**
- **25 days until Election Day**



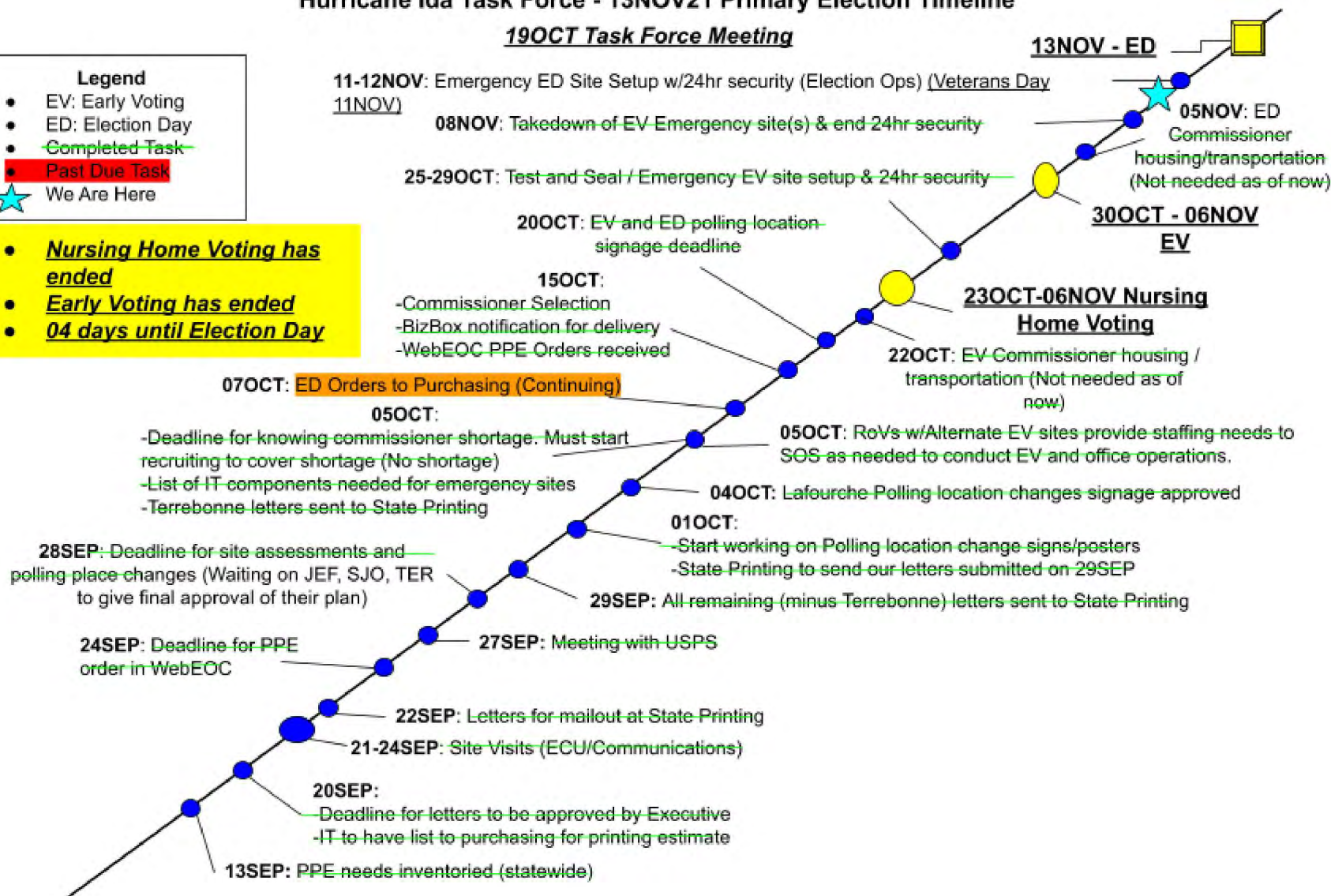
## Hurricane Ida Task Force - 13NOV21 Primary Election Timeline

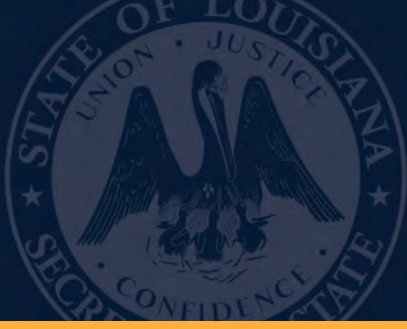
### 19OCT Task Force Meeting

**Legend**

- EV: Early Voting
- ED: Election Day
- ~~Completed Task~~
- **Past Due Task**
- ★ We Are Here

- **Nursing Home Voting has ended**
- **Early Voting has ended**
- **04 days until Election Day**





**KYLE ARDOIN**

S E C R E T A R Y   O F   S T A T E



## Have you been displaced by Hurricane Laura?

Do you have questions about how to #GeauxVote in the November 3 Presidential Election?

### There are 3 ways to vote in Louisiana:

- ✓ Absentee by mail ballot
- ✓ Early voting, in person in your parish
- ✓ Election Day voting, in person at your polling location

If you are a displaced voter, you can request an absentee by mail ballot on [voterportal.sos.la.gov](http://voterportal.sos.la.gov) if you have a valid Louisiana driver's license or special identification card. You will choose the "Temporarily Absent" option and provide a current mailing address to receive your ballot.

[www.GeauxVote.com](http://www.GeauxVote.com)

1.800.883.2805

# Displaced by Hurricane Laura?

## YOU ARE STILL ELIGIBLE TO REGISTER TO VOTE!



### WHERE DO I REGISTER?

- ▶ You can choose to register at your current, temporary residence or from the home you evacuated from (but only one).
- ▶ When registering, you must provide a mailing address.
- ▶ You can register online at [geauxvote.com](http://geauxvote.com), or download the registration application and return it by mail or in person to your parish Registrar of Voters Office.
- ▶ New registrants who have never voted in the parish must vote in person during either early voting or on Election Day.

**The deadline to register in person or by mail is October 5.  
The deadline to register online is October 13.**

**For more information call  
1.800.883.2805  
or visit [GeauxVote.com](http://GeauxVote.com)**



SECRETARY OF STATE KYLE ARDOIN



# Hurricane Ida Impact on Election

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# Challenges for conducting election on October 9th

- Lack of power, water and other utilities ,as well as destruction or inaccessibility of or inability to use courthouses and polling places in devastated parishes will affect legal deadlines as soon as Sept 8th
- Deadlines include:
  - 9/8 - In person voter registration deadline, La. R.S. 18:135(A)(1) (1 day away)
  - 9/9 - Nursing home application acceptance, La. R.S. 18:1333(D)(1) (this continues to be a moving target in the impacted areas as LDH reviews and takes action on these facilities) (2 days away)
  - 9/10 - Commissioner selection, La. R.S. 18:434(A)(1) (3 days away)
  - 9/18 - Nursing home voting begins, La. R.S. 18:1333(B); publish all polling locations in parish journal, La. R.S. 18:535(B) (waiting for responses from parish journals via email); online voter registration applications unable to be processed in ROV offices , La. R.S. 18:135 (A)(3) (11 days away)
  - 9/23 - Deadline for ROVs to assign voters in districts for the current 11/13 election, La. R.S. 18:58(B)(2) (16 days away)
  - 9/24 - Deadline for all early voting machines to be tested and sealed by PBES (availability issues, takes at least 1 week for entire state), La. R.S. 18:1309.1 (C) (17 days away)
  - 9/25 - Early voting begins, ends on 10/2, La. R.S. 18:1309 (A), (B), and (C) (18 days away)
  - 10/5 - Deadline for Clerk of Court to hold pre-election commissioner courses , La. R.S. 18:431(B)(1) and (5)(b) (should be happening currently until 10/5) (28 days away); Deadline for voters to request absentee by mail ballots, La. R.S. 18:1307(B)(2)

# LOGISTICAL Challenges for conducting election on October 9th

- Postal Service – Operations in 5 post offices are closed “until further notice”: Dulac, Barataria, Boutte, Tangipahoa, and Madisonville. We are in communication with USPS contacts, and are receiving contradictory information about services and operations.
- Drayage Contractors – we cannot guarantee the availability of trucks, gas and staff on such short notice to conduct the October 9 election.
- Technical partners - Communication utility providers would need to be up and stable for early voting to be conducted efficiently without long lines and wait times
  - Without it, we would be in manual mode for checking in voters, and that’s a major delay for high volume elections like the Orleans Mayoral
  - We can’t count on providers being ready for early voting at this point

# LOGISTICAL Challenges for conducting election on October 9th

- Power/Electricity – In Lower Jefferson parish, Lafourche Parish, Lower Plaquemines, St Charles, West St. Tammany, Terrebonne Parish, Washington Parish and possibly parts of St. Helena Parish, power companies estimate that power will not be fully restored until after early voting is scheduled to begin.
- COVID-19 Protocols – Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was lost in St. John and St. James parishes due to the extensive warehouse damage. If the election is held on the original date, an order must be placed and expedited quickly.
- Voter Registration – The “close of books” deadline is this week, ten days after Ida’s landfall. Any registration’s that were in the now-suspended mail system will be delayed in the deastated parishes. Online registration will not be possible for citizens in areas without internet connectivity.
- Infrastructure Damage – In St. James and St. John Parish warehouses are not usable for machine setup, testing, sealing and inspection process. A new location must be procured quickly.
  - The Chef Menteur warehouse and early voting site in Orleans Parish (one of the largest in the state) sustained significant damage

# LOGISTICAL Challenges for conducting election on October 9th: Polling locations

- Early voting - currently at least five parishes have significant damage and parish-wide curfews:
  - Tangipahoa (6-7), Jefferson (6-6), Terrebonne (9-6), Orleans (8-6) and Lafourche (7-7).
  - This would greatly impact our ability to hold early voting (early voting begins at 8:30 am and ends at 6 pm). Early voting workers begin setup and are involved in shutdown during these curfew times.
  - Furthermore, of the 38 early voting sites in 16 parishes, we are currently aware of nine sites with damage, with 17 more being assessed
- In 16 parishes, 280 of the 667 polling locations have been assessed (42%).
  - Of those 280, 88 have damage (31%).
  - Many polling locations remain to be assessed, including those in Orleans Parish.
- The parishes fully assessed with the most damaged polling locations are: St. James (67%), St. John (60%), St. Charles (58%), Terrebonne (44%) and Lafourche (31%).
- In Jefferson and Tangipahoa, assessment is still ongoing with 23% of assessed polling places in Jefferson and 100% in Tangipahoa seeing damage.
- Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Tammany and Washington assessments have not yet commenced.

# OPERATIONAL Challenges for conducting election on October 9th

- A cursory survey of clerks and registrars reveals that seven parishes have staff that are not back in-parish.
  - All staff in St. John facing extensive damage to their homes.
  - Two other parishes are unable to get in touch with their staff at this time.
  - A lack of staff would cause issues with timeliness of delivery of absentee ballots.
- Many parish officials are unable to contact their Parish Board of Election Supervisors, and many other PBES members are out of state or out of parish.
- Early voting begins on 9/25, less than three weeks away. See La. R.S. 18:1309(A), (B), and (C)
  - We would have only 18 days from today to establish, equip and procure alternate early voting sites, to test and seal the equipment by 9/24, and then to deliver the equipment and set up these alternate early voting sites.

# Challenges for conducting election on October 9<sup>th</sup> *some* parishes but delaying in other parishes:

- Constitutional Amendment results have to be hidden to the best of our ability to not impact the votes in the delayed parishes, La. R.S. 18:401.1(E)
  - This would be unprecedented and could come with unforeseen and unknowable consequences in regards to election integrity. Protecting the integrity of the election is a basis authorized by law for rescheduling an election, La. R.S. 18:401.1(A)
- Any attempt to upload or display partial results only is not currently available in the ERIN system. To do so would involve a months-long development and testing effort.

# Our Recommendation- November 13 and December 11

Delay the October 9 election to November 13, and consequently delay the current November 13 election to December 11.

## Pros:

- Consistency, simplicity and the ability to more properly prepare to work around challenges presented by Ida.
  - The ballots already sent out can be voted, or a replacement ballot can be sent to a new address where a resident evacuated
- Dec 11 gives us 4 weeks between elections and pushes everything up further away from Christmas than having it on Dec 18.

## Cons:

- Many parishes would have a December election.
  - Securing supplies, delivery trucks and staff could become more difficult as the holiday season becomes closer.



# November 13, 2021 VOTING LOCATIONS - Jefferson Parish

New Location	Precinct	Old Location
<b>JEAN LAFITTE AUDITORIUM</b> 4953 City Park St Lafitte	00/246 00/247 00/248, 00/L001	Lafitte Barataria Crown Point Fire St 42 Lafitte Barataria Crown Point Fire St 41 Jean Lafitte Town Hall
<b>GRAND ISLE FIRE STATION</b> 100 Chighizola Ln Grand Isle	00/GI001	Grand Isle Multiplex
<b>GRANVILLE T WOODS SCHOOL</b> 1037 31st St Kenner	00/K021	Lincoln Manor Gym
<b>KENNER SENIOR CITIZENS CENTER</b> 641 Compromise St Kenner	00/K026 00/K031	Arthur P Clay Resource Ctr
<b>FIRST PARISH COURT</b> 924 David Dr Metairie	00/061 00/067 00/068	Mike Miley Playground
<b>JEFFERSON SENIOR CENTER</b> 4518 Jefferson Hwy Jefferson	00/127 00/128 00/131	East Bank Fire Station #11
<b>DR JOHN OCHSNER DISCOVERY HEALTH SCIENCES ACADEMY</b> 1108 Shrewsbury Rd Jefferson	00/134 00/136 00/138	Deckbar Elementary School

New Location	Precinct	Old Location
<b>JOSEPH S YENNI BUILDING</b> 1221 Elmwood Pk Blvd Harahan	00/H001 00/H003 00/H004	Harahan Gym, Soniata Playground
<b>SCHNECKENBURGER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</b> 26 Earnest Ave Kenner	00/K004	Galatas Playground Gym
<b>KENNER DISCOVERY HEALTH SCIENCES ACADEMY</b> 3837 Loyola Dr Kenner	00/K007A 00/K007B	City of Kenner Fire Station
<b>AUDUBON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</b> 200 W Loyola Dr Kenner	00/K013A	Woodlake Playground
<b>TOM BENSON SCHOOL</b> 3315 Maine Ave Kenner	00/K018	Woodward Gym
<b>FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF KENNER</b> 1313 Clay St Kenner	00/K028 00/K029 00/K030	Kenner City Hall Coun Chambers Butch Duhe Gym

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