

House Joint Resolution 46: Revision of Election Laws

Overview of Saturday Elections

Nov. 30, 2007

Overview

In 1959, the Louisiana Legislature changed state law to require that gubernatorial primary elections be held on a Saturday, rather than a Tuesday. In 1975, lawmakers again changed state law, to require that both the primary and general elections be held on a Saturday. Only federal elections are still held on a Tuesday, as required under federal law.

Louisiana is the only state that holds both primary and general elections, other than federal elections, on a Saturday. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures:¹

- Both Delaware and Hawaii used to hold their state primaries on Saturdays, but only Hawaii continues to do so.
 - The Delaware Legislature passed legislation in 2004 to move state primary elections to a Tuesday.
- Three states held presidential nominating contests on a Saturday in 2004: Kansas, Michigan, and Wyoming.
 - In each of those states, the day of the nominating contests is not set in law but is instead selected by the political parties and is not always on a Saturday.

An NCSL election reform task force considered the idea of Saturday elections in 2001, but did not recommend a change in election days.

In Louisiana

Louisiana officials have outlined the following challenges that occur in Tuesday elections that may be offset by holding elections on Saturdays:²

- Lines at the polls may be longer at certain times of the day on Tuesdays, because more people have to vote before or after work.
- Recruiting election judges may be more difficult, because the potential judges may be unable to take time off from their other employment obligations.
- Schools and other public facilities used as polling places may need to adjust their schedules or classes to accommodate election activities.
- Parking could be a problem at polling places.

Louisiana officials say it is too difficult to determine whether voter turnout is affected by holding elections on a weekday or a Saturday, because turnout is often based on the types of races or ballot measures at issue or on the personalities of the candidates involved. Voter turnout statistics in Louisiana elections are on the back of this document.

¹E-mail from Jennie Bowser, NCSL, Nov. 28, 2007.

²Letter by the Louisiana Secretary of State's Office, 1991.

Voter Turnout -- Louisiana Gubernatorial Elections

The table below shows voter turnout for gubernatorial elections in Louisiana, starting in 1956, when all elections were held on Tuesdays. Beginning in 1959, primary elections were held on Saturdays, and since 1979, all elections have been held on Saturdays.

| Date | Election | Turnout | Notes |
|-------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1956 | First Democratic Primary | 77.5% | |
| | General | 16.3% | unopposed race |
| 1959 | First Democratic Primary | 74.6% | |
| | Second Democratic Primary | 79.9% | |
| | General | 44.9% | |
| 1963 | First Democratic Primary | 76.1% | |
| | Second Democratic Primary | 79.3% | |
| | General | 61.6% | |
| 1967 | First Democratic Primary | 75.1% | |
| | General | 25.2% | unopposed race |
| 1971 | First Democratic Primary | 70.4% | |
| | Second Democratic Primary | 69.8% | |
| | First Republican Primary | 29% | |
| | General | 67.1% | |
| 1975 | Open Primary | 66.1% | |
| | General | 23.62% | no runoff race |
| 1979 | Open Primary | 70.5% | |
| | General | 69.6% | |
| 1983 | Open Primary | 75.6% | |
| | General | 45.9% | no runoff race |
| 1987 | Open Primary | 71.1% | |
| | General | 44.8% | no runoff race |
| 1991 | Open Primary | 71.3% | |
| | General | 77.1% | |
| 1995 | Open Primary | 65.1% | |
| | General | 65.7% | |
| 1999 | Open Primary | 48.8% | |
| | General | 29.3% | no runoff race |
| 2003 | Open Primary | 50.4% | |
| | General | 50.9% | |
| 2007 | Open Primary | 46.6% | |
| | General | 26% | no runoff race |

Source: Louisiana Secretary of State's Office