



Early voting begins Tuesday

BY WILLIAM JOHNSON • WJOHNSON@DAILYWORLD.COM • OCTOBER 20, 2008

Early voting for the Nov. 4 election begins Tuesday at 8:30 a.m. in the St. Landry Parish Registrar of Voters office in the Courthouse and continues through the following Tuesday at 6 p.m.

Registrar of Voters John Moreau said the election, which includes a vote for the next president of the United States, is generating a great deal of interest.

As a result, Moreau said anyone wishing to vote early should expect delays of 30-minutes or more depending on the time of day.

While he expects voting on election day to go smoothly, he said early voting can be complicated as there are a dozen different local ballots and the voting machines in his office must be reconfigured for each voter.

"Early voting is one location that contains voting machines with all the ballot styles for the entire parish," Moreau said. "That coupled with no reason voting and high voter interest can create a delay in casting ballots."

Early voting is held in the registrar's office in Suite 114, St. Landry Parish Courthouse, 118 S. Court St., Opelousas, Monday through Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Moreau encouraged any voter who will not be in the parish on election day to take advantage of early voting, saying the state no longer requires voters to give a reason to vote early in person.

To vote early, all a person has to be is a registered voter and come by Moreau's office with a photo ID that contains their address and signature. A Louisiana driver's license is ideal but almost any official document that contains these items will do.

All parish residents will be able to vote in the three national elections.

In the contest for president, voters can choose from electors pledged to one of nine parties, ranging from Republican John McCain and Democrat Barack Obama to Socialist Workers Party candidate James Harris.

In the U.S. Senate race, incumbent Mary Landrieu, Democrat, is facing challenges from Republican John Kennedy, Libertarian Richard Fontanesi and independents "Jay" Patel and Robert Stewart.

In the U.S. Representative race, incumbent Charles W. Boustany Jr., Republican, is facing challenges from Democrat Donald "Don" Cravins Jr. and Constitution Party candidate Peter Vidrine.

All voters will also be able to vote for or against seven state Constitutional amendments.

Moreau said the various amendments can be confusing and urged voters to visit the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana online at www.la-par.org for more information before voting.

He said PAR has produced a neutral guide to the amendments that helps explain the potential impact of each amendment.

What other races you can vote in will depend on where you live.

On the ballot are three runoff elections.

In the Opelousas Alderman District D race, voters can choose between incumbent Geraldine G. Hawkins and challenger Reginald "Reggie" Tatum, the top vote-getters from a field of five candidates in the Oct. 4 election.

In Melville, the at-large runoff race is between "Ed" Triplett and Esther M. A. Johnson.

In the Justice of the Peace, District 18, contest, Clyde J. Fontenot is facing Hugh C. Guidry.

Also on the ballot is a new one-cent sales tax for the town of Sunset.

Moreau said a limited number of sample ballots are available from the Clerk of Courts office in room 34 of the courthouse or a sample ballot can be downloaded from the Secretary of State's office Web site at www.sos.louisiana.com.

If voters need physical assistance voting, they need to contact Moreau's office immediately and provide a doctor's certificate of need or an impaired mobility certificate from the Department of Motor Vehicles.

For more information on voting, contact the registrar's office at 948-0572.