



## Officials brace for historic turnout

By William Johnson • [wjohnson@dailyworld.com](mailto:wjohnson@dailyworld.com) • November 4, 2008

The polls open at 6 a.m. for today's election for president, a U.S. senator and congressman and a number of local run-off races and initiatives.

Election officials are expecting a possible record turnout.

"I have not seen this much interest in an election since the (David) Duke - (Edwin) Edwards gubernatorial campaign," said St. Landry Parish Registrar of Voter John Moreau.

Moreau is expecting a 68 percent voter turnout. "That may be a little conservative. We had a 38 percent turnout for the Oct. 4 election and there is significantly more interest for this election," Moreau said.

Despite the expected heavy turnout, voters should not encounter serious delays at the polls, which will remain open until 8 p.m.

Clerk of Courts Charles Jagneaux said the parish is rolling out additional voting machines to make sure the election comes off without a hitch.

"We will have at least two machines at every precinct, if not more, to avoid any slow down," Jagneaux said.

Jagneaux said his staff has spent the past week making sure everything is ready and additional voting machine technicians are being brought in to make sure the voting machines are in good working order. "We are well prepared," Jagneaux said.

The fact that almost 10 percent of the parish's registered voters chose to cast their ballots during early voting last week should also lessen the lines at the polls.

Moreau said the early voting turnout was impressive, with people waiting in lines for up to an hour or more to cast their ballots.

Moreau said it is definitely the presidential race between Democrat Barack Obama and Republican John McCain that is driving the interest. "Without question, that is the main draw but we are also seeing a healthy interest in the U.S. House and Senate races," Moreau said.

In the U.S. Senate race, incumbent Sen. 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.

Jagneaux said, while the presidential race is clearly historic, the House race has the potential to set records as well. Both Cravins and Vidrine are from St. Landry Parish.

"The last U.S. Congressman from St. Landry Parish was in 1953. There is a possibility one could be elected this time. That's pretty historic," Jagneaux said.

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

In addition to the national election, all parish residents will be able to vote for or against seven state Constitutional amendments.

As voters are only allowed three minutes to cast their ballot and the amendments are long, Moreau urged anyone interested in the amendments to familiarize themselves with the issues in advance.

Moreau recommended voters visit the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana online at [www.la-par.org](http://www.la-par.org) for more information. He said PAR has produced a neutral guide to the amendments that helps explain the potential impact of each amendment.

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

On the ballot are three run-off 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 District 18 Justice of the Peace 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 sample ballots can be downloaded from the Secretary of State's office Web site at [www.sos.louisiana.com](http://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.