

October 27, 2020

VIA HAND DELIVERY

Honorable Clay J. Schexnayder
Speaker of the House
Louisiana House of Representatives
Post Office Box 94062
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9062

RE: Veto of House Bill 51 of the 2020 Second Extraordinary Session

Dear Speaker Schexnayder:

Please be advised that I have vetoed House Bill 51 of the 2020 Second Extraordinary Session.

House Bill 51 prohibits state and local officials from using private funds for election related expenses during a declared state of emergency. Representative Blake Miguez stated in the House and Governmental Affairs committee that House Bill 51 was intended to “clarify existing law” about who is responsible for election related expenses. In late September, the Attorney General’s Office advised local election officials to not apply for a private grant because they believed it could be contrary to state law. Neither the bill’s author nor the Attorney General’s Office was able to point to the statutory conflict House Bill 51 is purportedly intended to resolve.

The private grants in question are intended for local election officials to ensure the safety of those voting in person during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Money from the grant could have been used for personal protective equipment, polling place sanitization, social distancing signs, etc. These funds are sorely needed by local election officials across the state, as evidenced by the fact that the Secretary of State encouraged them to apply for these funds.

House Bill 51 is an unnecessary political ploy that only serves to threaten the safety of polling places during a pandemic and increase the costs to taxpayers to administer safe elections.

Sincerely,

John Bel Edwards
Governor

cc: Honorable Patrick Page Cortez
Louisiana Senate President