

Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



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November 11, 2020

VIA HAND DELIVERY

Honorable Page Cortez
Louisiana Senate President
Louisiana State Senate
Post Office Box 94183
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

RE: Veto of Senate Bill 74 of the Second Extraordinary Session

Dear President Cortez:

Please be advised that I have vetoed Senate Bill 74 of the Second Extraordinary Session.

The intent of this bill is to make it an election offense for a person to submit an application to vote absentee by mail when the person knows that information on the application is false in some manner or another. Even a cursory review of the Louisiana Election Code reveals that this is already an election offense. La. R.S. 18:1461.3(A)(3) provides that "No person shall knowingly, willfully, or intentionally... [s]upply a false answer or statement to an election official or in any document required by the Title, or execute an affidavit knowing it to contain false or incorrect information." The potential punishment for violation of this provision is contained in La. R.S. 18:1461.3(B), which states "Whoever violates any provision of Subsection A of this Section shall be fined not more than two thousand dollars or be imprisoned, with or without hard labor, for not more than two years, or both." Further, La. R.S. 18:1307, the statute that provides for making application to vote absentee by mail, requires the applicant to provide the reason for which the person is eligible to vote by absentee ballot and provide any supporting documentation required by law. In fact, each category of Application for Absentee by Mail Ballot available on the Secretary of State's website contains the statement "I CERTIFY that the statements made herein by me are true and correct and I may be subject a fine of not more than \$2,000 or imprisonment for not more than 2 years, or both, for knowingly making false statements."

There is no question that voting absentee by mail has been anticipated for numerous circumstances and provided for by the Louisiana Election Code for decades. In no way is this a new concept and safeguards surrounding potential fraud and election offenses were anticipated by previous legislatures and are already in place. For these reasons, this bill should not become law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Bel Edwards".

John Bel Edwards
Governor

cc: Honorable Clay Schexnayder
Speaker of the House of Representatives