



National Task Force Urges States to Plan for Election Emergencies

National Association of Secretaries of State Report Offers Research and Guidance on State Laws, Outreach, Training and Other Contingency Planning Issues

For Immediate Release

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WASHINGTON, DC - As the 2014 election cycle kicks into full swing, states and localities must be prepared for natural disasters and emergencies that can disrupt voting.

The National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) Task Force on Emergency Preparedness for Elections today presented state election officials from across the nation with a series of nonpartisan findings designed to bolster the efficient administration of elections during emergency situations.

The report, entitled, "State Laws & Practices for the Emergency Management of Elections," is the result of a nine-month effort to gather and share information on election emergency planning practices and related state laws.

"Hurricane Sandy, which struck Connecticut and other East Coast states just days before the 2012 presidential election, heightened awareness about the importance of crafting emergency response plans that ensure minimal disruption to the voting process," said task force co-chair Denise Merrill, who serves as Connecticut Secretary of State.

"Task force members learned how state experiences and lessons learned have shaped game plans for effective election administration in the aftermath of a disaster, particularly when it comes to factors such as polling place locations, long lines, balloting procedures, voting deadlines and voter outreach."

The task force report examines state efforts to develop laws and advance planning models that address election authority and continuity, contingency issues, emergency outreach and voting options for displaced citizens, including:

- Laws that authorize the suspension, delay or postponement of elections in an emergency situation
- State guidelines for managing polling place changes, as well as polling place power/Internet outages, as well as equipment and poll worker shortages

- Procedures for securing voting machines and election materials in emergency situations where there are power outages and evacuations
- Alternative voting procedures designed to enfranchise disaster victims and other displaced individuals during emergency situations, including emergency responders who leave home to assist with relief efforts
- Communication and coordination efforts with local, state and federal officials

"One of the most surprising findings of the task force may be the degree to which states told us they can use their existing absentee, mail and early voting processes to facilitate voting when unforeseen emergencies arise," noted task force co-chair Tom Schedler, Louisiana Secretary of State.

"We hope that election officials can learn from each other and use the report to help with their proactive emergency and contingency planning efforts."

The NASS Task Force on Emergency Planning for Elections includes Secretaries of State and independent chief election officials from 23 states and the District of Columbia, as follows:

- Tom Schedler, Co-Chair & Member - Louisiana Secretary of State
- Denise Merrill, Co-Chair & Member - Connecticut Secretary of State
- Mark Martin, Member - Arkansas Secretary of State
- Debra Bowen, Member - California Secretary of State
- Scott Gessler, Member - Colorado Secretary of State
- Elaine Manlove, Member - Delaware State Election Commission Commissioner
- Clifford Tatum, Member - DC Board of Elections Executive Director
- Ken Detzner, Member - Florida Secretary of State
- Brian Kemp, Member - Georgia Secretary of State
- Becky Glazier, Member - Illinois State Board of Elections Assistant to the Executive Director
- Alison Lundergan Grimes, Member - Kentucky Secretary of State
- Linda Lamone, Member - Maryland State Board of Elections Administrator
- Ruth Johnson, Member - Michigan Secretary of State
- Mark Ritchie, Member - Minnesota Secretary of State

- Delbert Hosemann, Jr. - Member - Mississippi Secretary of State
- Ross Miller, Member - Nevada Secretary of State
- Robert Giles, Member - New Jersey Division of Elections Director
- Robert Brehn, Member - New York State Board of Elections Co-Director
- Todd Valentine, Member - New York State Board of Elections Co-Director
- Gary Bartlett, Member - former North Carolina State Board of Elections Executive Director
- Kate Brown, Member - Oregon Secretary of State
- Marci Andino, Member - South Carolina State Election Commission Executive Director
- Donald Palmer, Member - Virginia State Board of Elections Secretary
- Natalie Tennant, Member - West Virginia Secretary of State
- Kevin Kennedy, Member - Wisconsin Government Accountability Board Director and General Counsel

The task force, convened in March 2013, was formed to identify laws and practices that enhance the ability of state election officials to prepare for, and respond to, emergency situations. For more information, please visit the NASS Task Force on Emergency Planning for Elections [web page](#).

The [Presidential Commission on Election Administration](#), tasked with researching issues related to contingency planning for natural disasters and other emergencies that may disrupt elections, has recommended consideration of the NASS task force report and recommendations for jurisdictions conducting such work.

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