

Office of the Governor  
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS  
GOVERNOR



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November 13, 2018

The Honorable R. Kyle Ardoin  
Secretary of State  
P.O. Box 94125  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Secretary Ardoin:

I am in receipt of your letter of November 9, 2018 regarding Mr. Robert Myer of New Roads. I appreciate your efforts, as the state's chief election officer, "to ensure fair and secure elections," but I have very serious concerns about your lack of knowledge regarding voting rights in the state. While your letter suggests you conducted an "initial investigation," it is clear that either you did not review Mr. Myer's conviction or you are not aware of the voting laws in our state. While neither of these is acceptable from the state's chief election officer, please allow this to correct the record where you suggest that Mr. Myer "illegally cast his ballot." Your quick jump to this conclusion was taken as fact by one media outlet when the facts prove otherwise. That, in itself, is a disservice to the public.

La. R.S. 18:102 prohibits those under an order of imprisonment from voting. As you should be aware, "under an order of imprisonment" is defined for purposes of the Election Code in La. R.S. 18:2 to mean a sentence of confinement. It does not include those individuals whose sentencing has been deferred pursuant to La. C.Cr.P.Art. 893. These individuals, such as Mr. Myer, are not sentenced to confinement, but rather are allowed to complete conditions of probation. Successful completion of these conditions authorizes the court to dismiss the charges, which serves as an acquittal of the charges against the individual. If your "initial investigation" had included a review of Mr. Myer's conviction, you would have known that he was sentenced under La. C.Cr.P.Art. 893 and successfully completed the conditions of his probations in July 2018 and hopefully you would not have carelessly released Mr. Myer's name as an individual who "illegally cast his ballot". In short, the reason Mr. Myer's name was never reported to your office was because he, like thousands of other individuals sentenced with the benefit of La. C.Cr.P.Art. 893, did not lose his right to vote as a result of his conviction.

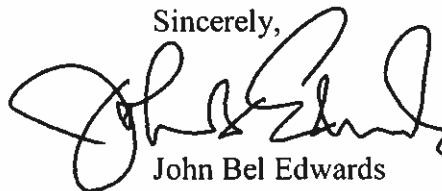
As the chief election officer of the state, that you would toss around something as sacred as an individual's right to vote like a political football in your ongoing campaign for office is extremely troubling. Elections should be non-partisan and free from grandstanding, but that does not appear to be the approach you are taking. Louisianans should have confidence in you and

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your office to oversee a process free of politics. It is your responsibility to demonstrate that ability to them.

In the future, I would recommend that your office fully review allegations of illegal voting carefully before releasing letters to the media that suggest any wrongdoing by Louisianans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Bel Edwards". The signature is stylized with large, sweeping loops and a prominent initial "J".

John Bel Edwards  
Governor

Cc: Honorable Richard J. Ward, Jr., District Attorney, 18<sup>th</sup> Judicial Court