



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

March 18, 2020

FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF STATE
10:00AM O'CLOCK

The Honorable Ruth R. Hughs
Secretary of State
State Capitol Room 1E.8
Austin, Texas 78701

MAR 18 2020

Secretary of State

Dear Secretary Hughs:

Pursuant to his powers as Governor of the State of Texas, Greg Abbott has issued the following:

A proclamation suspending Sections 41.0052(a) and (b) of the Texas Election Code and Section 49.103 of the Texas Water Code to the extent necessary to allow political subdivisions that would otherwise hold elections on May 2, 2020, to move their general and special elections for 2020 only to the next uniform election date, occurring on November 3, 2020, without otherwise adjusting the term of office, and suspending Sections 31.093 and 42.0621(c) of the Texas Election Code to the extent necessary to require all county election officers, if requested by an affected political subdivision, to enter into a contract to furnish election services with any political subdivision who postponed their election to November 3, 2020, under the authority of this proclamation.

The original of this proclamation is attached to this letter of transmittal.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Davidson
Executive Clerk to the Governor
GSD/gsd

Attachment

PROCLAMATION

BY THE

Governor of the State of Texas

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME:

WHEREAS, Section 41.001(a)(2) of the Texas Election Code provides that a general or special election in this state shall be held on a uniform election date, and the next uniform election date is occurring on May 2, 2020; and

WHEREAS, Section 49.103 of the Texas Water Code provides that certain districts governed by this provision are required to hold director elections in May of each even-numbered year; and

WHEREAS, Section 41.0052 of the Texas Election Code prescribes a procedure for a political subdivision to change a general election date, but the time for making such a change has expired; and

WHEREAS, Section 31.093 of the Texas Election Code requires a county elections administrator to enter into a contract to furnish election services upon request of a political subdivision; and

WHEREAS, Section 42.0621(c) of the Texas Election Code does not require a political subdivision to enter into a contract with a county or hold a joint election with a county on the November uniform election date; and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, the Governor of Texas certified that the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) poses an imminent threat of disaster and, under the authority vested in the Governor by Section 418.014 of the Texas Government Code, declared a state of disaster for all counties in Texas; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 418.016 of the Texas Government Code, the Governor has the express authority to suspend the provisions of any regulatory statute prescribing the procedures for conduct of state business or the orders or rules of a state agency if strict compliance with the provisions, orders, or rules would in any way prevent, hinder, or delay necessary action in coping with a disaster.

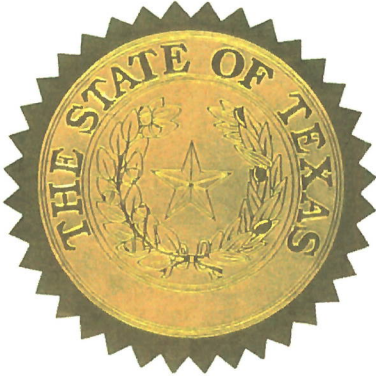
NOW, THEREFORE, I, GREG ABBOTT, Governor of Texas, under the authority vested in me by the Constitution and Laws of the State of Texas, do hereby suspend Sections 41.0052(a) and (b) of the Texas Election Code and Section 49.103 of the Texas Water Code to the extent necessary to allow political subdivisions that would otherwise hold elections on May 2, 2020, to move their general and special elections for 2020 only to the next uniform election date, occurring on November 3, 2020, without otherwise adjusting the term of office. I further suspend Sections 31.093 and 42.0621(c) of the Texas Election Code to the extent necessary to require all county election officers, if requested by an affected political subdivision, to enter into a contract to furnish election services with any political subdivision who postponed their election to November 3, 2020, under the authority of this proclamation.

The authority ordering the election under Section 3.004 of the Texas Election Code is the authority authorized to make the decision to postpone its election in accordance with this proclamation.

Current office holders will hold over to the extent authorized by Article XVI, Section 17 of the Texas Constitution.

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IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I
have hereto signed my name and
have officially caused the Seal of
State to be affixed at my office in the
City of Austin, Texas, this the 18th
day of March, 2020.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Abbott".

GREG ABBOTT
Governor of Texas

ATTESTED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruth R. Hughs".

RUTH R. HUGHS
Secretary of State

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The State of Texas

Elections Division
P.O. Box 12060
Austin, Texas 78711-2060
www.sos.texas.gov



Phone: 512-463-5650
Fax: 512-475-2811
Dial 7-1-1 For Relay Services
(800) 252-VOTE (8683)

Ruth R. Hughes
Secretary of State

ELECTION ADVISORY

N0. 2020-12

TO: Election Officials

FROM: Keith Ingram, Director of Elections

DATE: March 18, 2020

RE: Actions for May 2, 2020 Uniform Election Date

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Keith Ingram", is placed next to the "FROM:" line.

The purpose of this advisory is to provide guidance to local political subdivisions regarding their options for any general or special elections that have been ordered for the May 2, 2020 uniform election date. Pursuant to Section 418.016 of the Texas Government Code, the Governor has issued a proclamation suspending certain provisions of the Texas Election Code and the Texas Water Code to allow all local political subdivisions that are utilizing the May 2, 2020 uniform election date to postpone their election to the November 3, 2020 uniform election date. Pursuant to Texas Election Code 31.003 and 31.004, our office has issued the following guidelines for entities that choose to exercise this authority and postpone their election to the November uniform election date.

Effect of Postponement of Election

- **Candidate Filings:** By postponing their election date, the political subdivision is preserving all candidate filings and ballot order actions that have already been taken. The postponement does **not** have the effect of reopening candidate filings.
 - **Deadlines related to Candidate Filings, Declarations of Ineligibility, Withdrawals or Death:** The deadlines that apply to the November 3, 2020 election would apply to all candidates who are currently on the ballot for the May 2, 2020 election.
- **Ballot By Mail Requests:** All applications for a ballot by mail (ABBM) that were filed for the May 2, 2020 election that are marked annual would apply for the November 3, 2020 election. All single use ABBMs that were submitted for reasons of age or disability would still be valid for the November 3, 2020 election. If a single use ABBM was submitted and indicated the reason for voting by mail was due to absence from the county, this ABBM would not be valid as the applicable election date has changed. However, we would recommend that the political subdivision send a letter to these voters along with a new ABBM in case the circumstances

surrounding their absence from the county are still valid or the voter is otherwise eligible to vote by mail.

- **Ballots by Mail:** If a political subdivision has already sent out mail ballots, those mail ballots that are returned would still be valid for the November 3, 2020 postponed election date.
- **Election Records:** All records, including candidate filings, applications to vote by mail, ballot proofs, and printed ballots shall be retained and preserved.
 - **Printed Ballots:** If your ballots have already been printed up, you may be able to reuse them for November. However, if you must change your ballot to reflect any corrections or changes that occur between now and November, you would treat the original ballots as you would in a traditional ballot correction and those ballots should be destroyed in accordance with Section 52.0064 of the Texas Election Code.
- **Requirement to use County Election Precincts in November 2020:** Per Section 42.002 of the Texas Election Code, county election precincts are required for all elections occurring in November 2020. You will need to work with your county election officer to determine whether you need to make any modifications to your ballot in light of this requirement.
- **Requirement for County Election Officer to contract with Local Political Subdivisions:** All county election officers are required to contract with local political subdivisions that postponed their May 2, 2020 election and that request a contract for election services or a joint election agreement with their county election officer pursuant to the Governor's suspension of certain Texas Election Code provisions.
- **Office Hours:** The relevant dates for maintaining office hours for election purposes will be based on the November uniform election date rather than the May election date. Under Section 31.122 of the Texas Election Code, those office hours will need to be maintained for at least three hours each day, during regular office hours, on regular business days between September 14, 2020 and December 13, 2020. However, these entities should post contact information for individuals to contact their office about election-related issues during the timeframe that those offices may be closed over the coming months.
- **Holdovers in Public Office:** Under Art. XVI, Sec. 17 of the Texas Constitution, the individuals who currently hold public offices that are scheduled to be on the ballot on the May uniform election date will continue to exercise the duties of those offices until the new officers take their oaths of office, following the November uniform election date.
- **Campaign Finance Filings:** Please contact the Texas Ethics Commission for further guidance on how these modified timelines will affect any campaign finance reporting requirements. Their office can be reached at (512) 463-5800.
- **Candidates on the ballot in both May and November:** For candidates that may be running for two offices (one normally occurring in May and one normally occurring in November), these candidates will not be removed from the ballot as they are separate elections that are normally not occurring on the same date.

Required Action by Governing Body to Move Election Date

In order to utilize this move, the governing body of the political subdivisions holding the elections must **order** the postponement of their election to the November 3, 2020 uniform election date. The order for this official action should contain the following items:

1. A reference to the proclamation that authorizes the entity to postpone their election date, and the fact that the political subdivision is exercising this authority.
2. Confirmation that the candidate filings for the election will remain valid for the election held on the November date and that the filing period will not be re-opened for the November election date.
3. Confirmation that all ABBMs for voters that are voting by mail due to being over the age of 65 or due to disability will still be valid for the postponed election, and that ABBMs for voters who submitted ABBMs based on expected absence from the county would not be valid for the postponed election.
4. The major relevant dates for the November election, including the voter registration deadline (October 5, 2020), the deadline to submit an ABBM (October 23, 2020), and the dates for early voting (October 19, 2020 – October 30, 2020).

Necessary Revisions to Order of Election

In addition, the entity will need to meet by August 17, 2020 to make any necessary revisions to the entity's original order of election. Those revisions may include:

1. The change to the date of the election;
2. Any change in location of the main early voting location;
3. Any changes to early voting dates and hours, including weekend early voting;
4. Any changes to the identity of the early voting clerk and their contact information; or
5. Any changes to branch early voting locations.

If you are holding a bond election, you may need to make additional revisions to your order of election for that bond election. If this is the case, we recommend reaching out to your bond counsel for additional guidance.

Securing Election Records

All election records should be stored and secured during the postponement period. This may require your entity to use preservation methods that are similar to the methods you would use during the preservation period after the election has occurred. This includes:

- Storing returned ballots by mail in locked, sealed ballot boxes.
- Securely storing any unused ballots.
- Securely retaining any relevant election records, including candidate applications and ABBMs.

Voting System Equipment

If you are leasing voting system equipment from the county or directly from the vendor, then you may need to contact your vendor or your county regarding any necessary modifications to those lease agreements or to modify your procedures and timelines for receiving that equipment.

Open Meeting Requirements

The Governor has suspended and modified certain open meeting requirements pursuant to his disaster declaration. These changes include allowing the entity to establish procedures for telephonic or videoconferenced meetings of governmental bodies that are accessible to the public.

These procedures must include a process for members of the public to participate and address the governmental body in those meetings, notice to the public on the means of participating remotely, and access to the public for recordings of those meetings.

For more information, please review the applicable [documentation](#) from the Governor's Office or contact the Office of the Attorney General.

Update Official Websites and Notify Media

Any entities that are exercising this authority to postpone their election date must post notice on the entity's website and should alert any local media organizations regarding this change to their election date.

The entity must also provide notice to their county election officer regarding this change, as the county is required to post the entity's notice of election on the county's website no later than the 60th day before the date of the election under Election Code 4.008. If that election date will be changing due to the entity's decision to postpone the election then the entity must provide a revised notice to the county for posting on the county's website.

If you have any questions regarding this advisory, please contact the Elections Division at 1-800-252-2216.

KI:CA:CP