FLOOD
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Last month, the state voided a contract solicitation that yielded five bids to run the flood recovery program. IEM initially was selected with a contract of $250 million but later was disqualified after the State Licensing Board of Contractors ruled that IEM and two other companies did not have the proper licenses.

The decision came under scrutiny; The Advocate reported, because the attorney who advised the licensing board has a son who worked for the employers of the third-place bidders. That company, SLS, did have the proper licenses.

State officials said restarting the solicitation was necessary because of the widespread confusion over what licenses were required and because the bids came in higher than officials had estimated.


Graves has attacked Edwards in recent weeks, saying the state was left unprepared to administer the federal allocation because a contractor had not been selected.

The $1.6 billion congressional appropriation to Louisiana’s flood victims was made available to the state Monday. The state is still surveying victims for eligibility, and those interested in participating in the program can complete a survey at restoresla.gov. Edwards’ team has been adamant that the state’s timeline for recovery has been unaffected by the contractor selection process.

Robert Bruno, an attorney for IEM, said their team is ready to hit the ground running.

“We were ready to start work a month ago,” Bruno said. “We’re ready to roll, and we understand the staffing needs. We understand every aspect of the procedure. We really feel like our main goal is to get people back in their homes.”

IEM filed suit last month after the contract award was revoked, challenging the licensing board’s decision.

Bruno said he expects that lawsuit will be dropped.

Tim Barfield, a manager with PDRM, the company that filed the complaint about IEM’s licensing in the first round, declined comment.

IEM was founded in Baton Rouge but later relocated. After Hurricane Sandy, IEM helped manage a $1 billion recovery housing program in New York, where it disbursed $100 million for reconstruction and repairs in the first two months. The company also worked as a subcontractor for Louisiana’s Road Home Program after Hurricane Katrina.