State joins in counting voters still not on rolls

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Louisiana will join the rest of the nation Tuesday in offering special paper ballots to voters who in the past may have been turned away.

The so-called provisional voting is a result of the ballot-counting fiasco in Florida after the 2000 presidential election. The federal law applies only to federal elections.

Voters whose names are not on the voting rolls, show up at the wrong precinct or recently registered by mail for the first time will at least be able to vote for federal candidates under the Help America Vote Act.

Louisiana elections officials, who first used the system in the March 9 presidential preference primary, aren't expecting any snafus Tuesday, they said.

The state handled only 273 provisional ballots in the presidential primary.

"We had a pretty good trial run last time," said Fred Sliman, a spokesman for the East Baton Rouge Parish Clerk of Court office. "It's kind of complex, but the commissioners had a good handle on it."

"We're looking for as smooth a day as possible," Sliman said.

Election officials are stressing that all voters bring a picture ID to the voting polls.

Election officials are urging the special voters to have patience.

"We're just trying to encourage voters to bring their photo ID" to ease problems at the polls, said Merieta Spencer Norton, general counsel for the Department of State.

Here's how the process affects the three groups of affected voters:

Things to know before voting

- Polls open Tuesday, 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Bring a picture ID.
- Be patient, lines could be long.
- For help finding your polling place, call (800) 823-3805.
- See what's on your ballot: http://www.sec.state.la.us (click on "Sample Ballots")
- To report suspected voting fraud, call (800) 722-5305.

Voters not on the rolls

Voters who show up at their voter precinct and are not on the voter lists will be checked through the state rolls. Louisiana is one of only 15 states in the nation to have its voter rolls in an electronic database.

Voters whose names still cannot be found will be asked to sign an affidavit stating that they are a voter. Then they will be given a provisional ballot. Provisional ballots contain federal elections only, including the president, U.S. Senate and U.S. House races.

Election officials will determine over the following three days whether the person is qualified and thus whether to count those votes. All voters must cast ballots in their home parish.