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Elections in Colombia:

2014 Presidential Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Latin America and the Caribbean

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Disclosure:
These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Colombian election authorities, to the best of our knowledge as of May 23, 2014. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is Election Day?

Colombians will cast their ballots on Sunday, May 25, 2014. Polls will be open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Citizens abroad can cast their votes from Monday, May 19, 2014 to Sunday, May 25, 2014.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

Citizens will be electing the President and Vice President for four-year terms, with the winners slated to take office on August 7, 2014.

Who is eligible to vote?

All Colombian citizens 18 years of age or older who have registered their national identification document may vote in this election. Likewise, Colombian citizens residing abroad that have obtained or registered their Colombian national identification document can vote in their respective Colombian consulate abroad.

How many candidates are registered for the May 25 elections?

There are five presidential candidates (P) and five running mates for Vice President (VP). The candidates and their running mates are listed below:

- Clara López (P), Aida Avella (VP)
- Martha Lucia Ramirez (P), Camilo Alberto Gómez (VP)
- Juan Manuel Santos Calderón (P), German Vargas Lleras (VP)
- Enrique Peñalosa (P), Isabel Segovia Ospina (VP)
- Jorge Iván Zuluaga (P), Carlos Holmes Trujillo (VP)

Who are the candidates running for President?

Clara López, Alternative Democratic Pole Party, endorsed by the Patriotic Union Party: López is the President of the Alternative Democratic Pole Party. In 2011, she was appointed Acting Mayor of Bogotá by President Santos, where she gained high levels of approval. Her education background as an economist from Harvard University, lawyer from the University of the Andes and doctorate in Tax and Finance Law from the University of Salamanca prepared her to hold several prestigious positions in the public sector and academia. She has served as Secretary of the Government of Bogotá, Secretary of Economy for the Presidency and General Auditor. Also, she was elected to the House of Representatives in 1984, ran for Mayor in 1988 and for a seat in the House of Representatives in 2006. Her campaign platform focuses on building a more equitable economic model, redesigning the health system,

renegotiating free trade treaties, peace building and national reconciliation, and improving the roads, public education system and the agriculture industry.

Martha Lucia Ramirez, Conservative Party of Colombia: Ramirez was the first woman to be appointed Minister of Defense. Other positions she has held include Minister of Foreign Trade and Ambassador to France. She joined the U Party and was elected Senator in 2006, however, in 2009 she left the Senate to participate as a presidential candidate in the 2010 Conservative Party Primaries. In the private sector, she has consulted for several financial investment companies. The key issues in her campaign platform include the creation of an anti-corruption combat program, instituting term limits for parliamentarians, restructuring the banking system and promoting traditional family values.

Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, National Unity Party, endorsed by the Liberal and Radical Change Parties: Santos is the current President of Colombia, running for his second term. His political career began in 1991 as Minister of Foreign Trade, signing the first free trade treaty with Mexico and Venezuela. As Minister of Defense under the previous government of Alvaro Uribe, Santos led the government's effort to battle guerillas. His tenure as defense chief was mired by controversies over the methods employed by the armed forces, particularly the "false positives" scandal (selective assassinations of civilians presented as guerrilla members by the armed forces). In 2010, Santos was elected President with over ten million votes, the highest vote tally in Colombian history. During his tenure he has been criticized for his approaches to improving the agricultural and the health sectors of the country. He reinstated peace negotiations with the major rebel group FARC, a move that has drawn international support as well as criticism from his opponents. The main flagship of his reelection campaign is the continuation of the peace negotiations with the FARC group, reducing inequality, poverty and unemployment and improving the education system.

Enrique Peñalosa, Green Alliance Party: Peñalosa began his political life as a Liberal militant. In 1990, he was elected to congress with no political support, but only served for a year due to the closure of the Colombian Congress on corruption allegations. He ran for Mayor of Bogota twice before winning in 1997, transforming the city with the development of mega-infrastructure projects including the construction of a library system; mass transportation system; park system; and a land bank to provide low income housing. In 2011, he joined the Green Party and ran again for Mayor of Bogota, but was defeated by the Alternative Democratic Pole Candidate. In 2013, the Green Party and the Progressive Party united to create the Green Alliance Party. Peñalosa is the only male candidate with a female running mate. His campaign platform includes improving the education and health systems, combating corruption, improving the current economic model to build a more egalitarian society, supporting the peace process and bolstering citizen security.

Oscar Iván Zuluaga, Democratic Center Party: Zuluaga is a former businessman who began his political career at the local level in the early 1990's. He was elected to the Senate in 2002 and reelected in 2006. During the term of former President Uribe, he was designated Senior Presidential Advisor and, a year later, was appointed Minister of Finance. As a stronger supporter of Uribe, he joined his mentor in the newly created Democratic Center Party, where Zuluaga won the primaries as its presidential candidate

for the 2014 elections. Zuluaga is currently Santos' main challenger. The main issues in his campaign platform are restoring security and enhancing justice mechanisms, strengthening regional development by promoting productive industries that generate employment and improving access to quality education and the health system.

How many registered voters are there?

There are 32,795,158 registered voters, with 17,129,768 women and 15,845,390 men. The out-of-country voter registry includes 559,952 Colombians, who will be able to vote abroad in 63 countries.

The voter registry does not include citizens who have been convicted of a crime (those awaiting trial can still vote); Colombians who have rejected their Colombian citizenship; active members of the security forces; and deceased citizens.

What is the structure of the government?

Colombia is a unitary, constitutional republic. The government is divided into three branches: the executive branch, the legislative branch and the judicial branch. The President is the head of state, followed by the Vice President and the Council of Ministers. The President is elected by popular vote for a four-year term and is limited to a maximum of two terms. At the provincial level, executive power is exercised by departmental governors, municipal mayors and local administrators of smaller administrative districts.

What is the gender balance within the candidate list?

There are two women running for President and two female vice presidential candidates.

What is the election management body? What are its powers?

The National Electoral Council (CNE) is responsible for the general oversight and conduct of elections. The CNE is comprised of nine members, elected to four-year terms, who are nominated by each of the political parties and elected by the national congress, representing the different political forces in a proportional manner. Within the CNE's purview are the National Tribunal and Sectional Tribunals, tasked with monitoring and verifying the source, amount and destination of campaign contributions and expenses, among other things.

The National Civil Registry is responsible for organizing the electoral process and updating the voter roll, allowing for adequately planning, organization, implementation and control of the electoral process.

How many polling places are set up on Election Day?

The National Civil Registry will set up 88,657 polling stations throughout the country. In addition, a special polling center called *Puesto Censo*¹ will be set up in Bogotá and in the capital city of each Department.

In 63 countries overseas, the polling stations will be located at Colombian embassies and consulates.

What are poll jurors and how are they selected?

Poll jurors are Colombian citizens between 18 and 60 who represent civil society and help administer the vote. They are electronically and randomly selected by national identification numbers by the National Civil Registry. Jurors can be citizens from the public or private sector, educational institutions, political parties or movements. According to Article 105 of the Electoral Code, serving as a poll juror is compulsory.

Where are vote counting and tabulation held?

Vote counting and tabulation take place in each polling station by poll jurors.

There are three ways in which election results are counted. The first is the quick count conducted by the poll jurors at the closing of the polls. The poll jurors deliver preliminary results to the media and the general public. The quick count does not have legal standing.

The second system is counting by the Scrutinizing Commissions, made up of judges, public notaries and registrars. These commissions must be present at the polls by 3:30 p.m. on Election Day and begin their work as soon as they receive electoral tally sheets at the polling station.

The third system is the digitization of E-14 forms. These forms are signed by poll jurors and published on the registry website so all candidates, members of campaign teams and citizens can be immediately informed during the counting process and track the results at each polling station.

¹ A *Puesto Censo* is a polling station where citizens whose national identity documents were expedited between January 1, 1988 and January 7, 2003 and have never registered to vote can cast their ballot. New voters who cast their ballots in these *Puesto Censos* will automatically be registered to vote and will be able to cast their ballots at those particular centers in future elections.

When will official results be announced?

According to the provisions of the Electoral Code, official results are announced after the Scrutinizing Commissions and the National Electoral Council complete the vote counting process.

Is there a second round of elections?

A second round, or runoff vote, will take place if none of the candidates obtains the majority of votes (50 percent plus one). In the event that no candidate wins an outright majority of votes, the second round of voting will take place on June 15, 2014 between the two candidates who received the most votes in the first round.

Who can observe during Election Day?

Political parties and movements may designate “election witnesses” to monitor the electoral process on their behalf. There will also be election observers who represent electoral organizations from other countries or independent national organizations.

How many electoral offenses exist and what are they?

According to Law 559 of 2008 in the Colombian Penal Code, there are 11 electoral offenses, which criminalize behaviors that threaten the free exercise of democratic participation. The 11 offenses are:

- Disturbance of the democratic contest
- Voter Intimidation
- Voter fraud
- National identification fraud
- Voter corruption
- Fraudulent voting
- Favoring fraudulent voting
- Delays in the service of documents related with election results
- Alteration of election results
- Concealment
- Retention and unlawful possession of national identification documents
- Denial of registration

Resources

- Constitution of Colombia ([Spanish](#))
- Electoral Code ([Spanish](#))
- National Electoral Council, CNE ([Spanish](#))
- National Civil Registry ([Spanish](#))
- Visible Congress <http://www.congresovisible.org/>