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Elections in the Kyrgyz Republic

2017 Presidential Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Europe and Eurasia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Disclosure:
These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Kyrgyz elections authorities as of October 13, 2017 to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

What is the current political background and context?

On October 15, the Kyrgyz Republic will hold presidential elections. The election will take place in the context of legal changes introduced by the 2016 constitutional referendum and the 2017 amendments to the Constitutional Law on presidential and parliamentary elections.

This will be a historic vote; the first “regular” transition of power from a sitting president who has completed a constitutionally defined term of office to an elected successor. Of 93 candidates who originally registered to compete in the election, 13 were ultimately formally approved based on verification of their nomination signatures. The campaign period officially began on September 10 and will conclude 24 hours prior to Election Day on October 15. At present, there are 10 candidates still registered, including one woman candidate and three former prime ministers. Candidates will appear on the ballot as follows:

1. Ernis Zarlykov
2. Toktayim Umetaliyeva
3. Temir Sariyev
4. Ulukbek Kochkorov
5. Taalatbek Masadykov
6. Omurbek Babanov
7. Arstanbek Abdyldayev
8. Azimbek Beknazarov*
9. Sooronbai Jeenbekov
10. Adakhan Madumarov
11. Arslanbek Maliyev
12. Against all

*Azimbek Beknazarov, who appears as the 8th candidate on the ballot, withdrew his candidacy on October 13, 2017, leaving 10 candidates to run on Election Day. Given that Beknazarov withdrew less than five days before the election, his name will remain on the ballot, but votes for him will not count, other than as a part of the total number of votes cast.

Kamchibek Tashiyev, who was to have appeared as the 11th candidate on the ballot, withdrew his candidacy on September 25, 2017. Based on a submitted application of his own volition on October 7, 2017, a Central Election Commission resolution annulled the registration of presidential candidate Bakyt Torobaev, who would have appeared as the 13th candidate on the ballot.

As per the constitution, a sitting president can only serve one, six-year term of office, meaning incumbent President Almaz Atambayev cannot seek re-election. This change to the constitution was put in place after the extraordinary events of 2010 that led to the ouster of former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, ostensibly to limit the possibility of abuse of power. In addition, Kyrgyzstan has had a parliamentary form of government since 2011, and changes have been made to the constitution that weaken the office of president in favor of the Parliament and prime minister. Though these measures

were taken openly in acknowledgment of the past proclivity for strong, authoritarian presidential rule in Kyrgyzstan, some have viewed it as a maneuver by the incumbent to limit the possibility of a future president diverging from the path set out during his six-year term, while retaining influence through his party's strong position in the *Jogorku Kenesh* (Parliament).

The president of Kyrgyzstan will nevertheless play a key role in influencing the country's political orientation and domestic and foreign policy. As head of state, the president is instrumental in setting economic policy and determining priorities in trade, defense, and foreign relations, supported by his ministers and in consultation with the prime minister and *Jogorku Kenesh*.

Who can be elected as president?

Any citizen between the age of 35 and 70, who has resided in the country for more than 15 years in total and speaks the state language (Kyrgyz), can stand in the presidential election. Candidates may be nominated by political parties or run independently.

What is the term of the office of president and what is the president's role?

The president is elected for a six-year term by direct universal suffrage on the basis of an absolute majority. A candidate that gets more than one-half of the votes cast in the first round is considered elected. There are no turnout requirements for the validity of an election. If no candidate receives the required majority, a run-off takes place between the two candidates with the most votes. The law does not specify a date for the second round but stipulates that it should be held not earlier than two weeks after the announcement of the first-round results.

The president shall be the head of state and the symbol of unity of the people and state power.

The president shall call the elections to the *Jogorku Kenesh* and make decision on calling early elections to the *Jogorku Kenesh* pursuant to the procedures in the present constitution. The president shall call elections to local *keneshes* in accordance with procedure, and in cases provided in the law shall dismiss local *keneshes*. The president signs and promulgates laws and can return laws with his objections to the *Jogorku Kenesh*.

The president, at the proposal of the Council on Selection of Judges, shall submit to the *Jogorku Kenesh* candidates for election as judges of the Supreme Court and submit to the *Jogorku Kenesh* the judges to be dismissed from the membership in the Supreme Court. The president also appoints local court judges and dismisses local court judges at the proposal of the Council of Judges in cases envisaged in the constitutional law.

What are the nomination and registration procedures for presidential candidates?

Kyrgyzstan is preparing for the election of the fifth president of the country. Twelve candidates are currently registered to participate in the race, although initially, 59 applicants submitted paperwork to be included as candidates. This figure was reduced to 13 (and later 10 after following the withdrawal of three candidates) as a result of nomination signature verification and results of the Kyrgyz language exam, which all prospective candidates were required to pass to be permitted to run for office. In addition, some candidates withdrew their candidacies for various reasons, resulting in 13 shortlisted candidates. On September 10, approved candidates were allowed to begin their election campaigns.

On the eve of the start of the campaign, several presidential candidates signed a memorandum pledging to conduct an “honest election campaign.”

How are political parties involved in the presidential election?

Candidates may be nominated by political parties or can stand independently. Political parties nominated five of the 13 qualifying candidates, with the rest being independent candidates. Of those five candidates, three now remain.

Who is eligible to vote?

A person may vote in the election provided he/she is:

- A citizen of the Kyrgyz Republic;
- 18 years of age or older;
- Has provided necessary information for biometric registration (and is thereby included in the voter registration database); and
- Has been included in the approved list of voters for their local precinct in accordance with their voter registration information, or otherwise at a requested special electoral address where they will reside on Election Day.

How is the voter register compiled, how many registered voters are there?

The list of voters is compiled by the State Registration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on the basis of personal and biometric data contained in the Unified State Register of Population. Citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic can check themselves in the voters list on the portal <http://www.shailoo.srs.kg> or contact the call center of the State Registration Service at number 119 (the call is free). Only those who have passed biometric data will be allowed to vote on Election Day. Voters can request a special, one-time electoral address allowing them to vote outside of their registered address on Election Day if they will not be present in their home district.

Of Kyrgyzstan's population of 6,083,000, nearly half are of voting age. Biometric data was submitted by 3,055,442 people, and 30,100 people will participate in the elections for the first time.

How many polling stations will there be for this election?

There have been 2,375 precincts established in the Kyrgyz Republic ahead of the election, 33 of which are additional precincts set up specifically in the capital of Bishkek.

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

Out-of-country voting is to be conducted at some 37 polling stations established at embassies and consulates outside of the Kyrgyz Republic.

What system is used to determine the results of the election?

Electronic ballot scanners will be used to receive paper ballots on Election Day, and preliminary results will be sent electronically to the Central Election Commission. A hand-count verification will determine final results.

Before the vote count commences at precinct election commissions (PECs), the chairman of the PEC will announce the preliminary results of voting on the electronic ballot scanners, about which a separate act is drawn up, which is attached to the protocol on the results of voting and read out to all present members of the PEC, representatives of political party candidates, observers, and representatives of the media.

Voting results are established based on the results of a manual vote count.

What is the structure and role of the election management body?

Elections are administered by the Central Election Commission (CEC), 54 territorial election commissions (TECs), and some 2,300 precinct election commissions (PECs).

The CEC is a permanent body consisting of 12 members, with the president, the parliamentary majority, and the parliamentary opposition each nominating four members. Its current composition was elected by the Parliament in June 2016 for a five-year term.

The CEC is responsible for the administration of elections, including appointing TECs, registering candidates, establishing polling stations, campaign finance oversight, and reviewing complaints against decisions of lower-level commissions.

Preparations for the upcoming election are ongoing with the CEC leading several donor-funded projects aimed at increasing the efficiency of the election administration, improving accessibility of polling stations for persons with disabilities, training of lower-level commissions and the use of new voting technologies.

In addition, the CEC plans activities to raise public confidence in the electoral process, including information on voting procedures, voter education against vote-buying and raising awareness of persons with disabilities and young voters.

The TECs and PECs were formed throughout 2016 and 2017 for two-year terms. The TECs are formed by the CEC with no less than 11 members, and the PECs are formed by the TECs with no less than seven members. Each TEC and PEC should be comprised of half of members nominated by political parties and half nominated by local self-government bodies. Each political party can nominate only one member per commission.

What is the process for electoral dispute adjudication?

Precinct election commissions consider most election-related complaints, whose decisions can be appealed to the courts or higher-level election commissions. Central Election Commission decisions as well as election-related decisions and actions of other government bodies can be appealed in court. Complaints can be filed by all electoral stakeholders, but election results can only be appealed by candidates personally or the observers they nominated.

How will observers be involved in this election?

The Electoral Law provides for candidates' and citizen observers as well as for international observation of all stages of the electoral process. To avoid conflicts of interest, the law prohibits certain persons, such as members of Parliament, central and local government officials, members of the election administration, judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement agents, to enroll as observers.

As of late September, 315 international observers from 50 countries, representing 37 international organizations were registered with the Central Election Commission. Over 300 additional observers from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development are expected to monitor the presidential election. The list can be checked on the Central Election Commission's [official website](#).