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Elections in Liberia

2017 Presidential Run-Off Election

Frequently Asked Questions

Africa

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Disclosure:
These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Liberian elections authorities as of December 19, 2017, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is the presidential run-off election?

The presidential run-off election will be held on Tuesday, December 26, 2017.

Why is a presidential run-off election necessary?

On October 10, 2017 more than 1.64 million Liberians cast their ballots for a new president from among 20 candidates (17 political party candidates and three independent candidates). Per Article 83(b) of the Constitution of Liberia, a candidate must receive an absolute majority of the votes cast to be elected president. As no candidate received an absolute majority in the October 10 vote, a run-off between the two candidates who received the greatest numbers of votes in the first round has been scheduled for December 26, 2017, per the constitution. Whichever candidate earns the most votes in the run-off is elected president (this is also referred to as a first-past-the-post system).

What is an absolute majority?

An absolute majority is achieved when more than half of the total valid votes cast for a single candidate exceeds 50 percent. Because 1,641,922 votes were cast in Liberia's presidential election on October 10, 2017, a candidate had to receive 820,962 votes (50% +1) in order to win an absolute majority.

Which candidates will participate in the run-off vote?

George Manneh Weah, of the Coalition for Democratic Change, and Joseph Nyuma Boakai, of the ruling Unity Party, will contest for their parties in the run-off election. In the first round, Weah received 596,037 votes (38.4%) and Boakai received 446,716 votes (28.8%). The next highest number of votes were cast for Charles Brumskine (9.6%) of the Liberty Party and Prince Johnson (8.2%) of the Movement for Democracy and Reconstruction.

Why was the presidential run-off election delayed?

When the National Elections Commissions (NEC) announced the final results on October 19, 2017, it also announced November 7, 2017 as the run-off date. However, on October 23, 2017, Charles Brumskine, of the Liberty Party, filed a formal complaint with the NEC alleging irregularities in the presidential election. As required by Article 83(c) the Constitution of Liberia, the National Elections Commission (NEC) investigated the allegations and dismissed the complaint upon determining that it lacked merit. The Liberty Party appealed the NEC's decision to the Supreme Court of Liberia, as allowed by the Liberian constitution. Subsequently, the Supreme Court ruled on December 7, 2017 that there was insufficient evidence to require a full re-run of the elections, and that the run-off between Weah and Boakai should proceed. On December 12, 2017, the NEC declared the run-off would be held on Tuesday, December 26, 2017. The winner will be inaugurated on Monday, January 15, 2018.

What if the new president cannot be declared before Inauguration Day?

In the event the new president cannot be inaugurated by January 15, 2018, the speaker of the House of Representatives is sworn in as president until the president or vice president is capable of assuming their elected functions. However, because the speaker of the House of Representatives resigned in

September 2016, the pro tempore of the Senate, currently Armah Jalla of the National Patriotic Party, would serve as president until the election results are validated.

What challenges has the National Elections Commission faced in organizing these elections?

Although the National Elections Commission has, and continues to receive, international support since organizing the 2005 presidential and general elections, it has assumed progressively larger roles in the 2011 and 2017 general elections. However, certain challenges remain beyond its control, including funding shortfalls, formidable logistical challenges associated with reaching remote populations with civic and voter education messages, delivering and retrieving polling materials, and undertaking a national voter registration process.

Who can vote in the country?

Liberia's constitution and Elections Law state that every citizen 18 years or older who has not been judicially declared to be incompetent, or of unsound mind; has not been disenfranchised as a result of conviction of an infamous crime; and is registered as a voter and presents a valid registration card issued by the National Elections Commission, may vote in the voting precinct/polling place where they are registered.

How many registered voters are there?

There are 2,183,683 registered voters in Liberia; 75.19 percent of those registered voted in the first round.

What is a voting precinct? What is a polling place?

Sometimes also referred to as a "polling center," a voting precinct is the official location where voters mark and cast ballots during an election and can have a maximum of 3,000 registered voters. A polling precinct can have multiple polling places depending on the number of voters registered in that precinct. For the 2017 election, there are 2,080 voting precincts. In Liberia, one polling place can have a maximum of 500 registered voters assigned to it. A polling place is a physical structure inside a voting precinct where voters mark their ballots. Polling places are structured to prevent others from seeing how a voter's ballot is marked.

How many polling places are set up on Election Day?

There will be 5,390 polling places throughout Liberia on Election Day.

Will there be out-of-country voting?

Liberia's legal electoral framework does not have provisions for out-of-country voting.

How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots?

Section 5.8 of Liberia's Elections Law provides that "a voter who is unlettered or incapacitated" may request the assistance of a person of his/her choice to mark his/her ballot in secret, provided the person assisting is also a registered voter. Tactile ballot guides will also be in use for run-off elections.

What technology will be used?

Ballot papers will be manually marked. The transmission of results from each of the country's 19 electoral magistrates will be done electronically to the National Elections Commission's Data Center in Monrovia for final tabulation, verification and public transmission. Voter registration was conducted in early 2017 using Optical Mark Recognition forms.

Who is managing security on Election Day?

Immigration and Fire Services officers will support more than 5,000 members of Liberia's National Police (LNP) in providing security on Election Day. Given the withdrawal of most of the United Nations Mission in Liberia security forces, the LNP has received intensive training on possible scenarios in which electoral violence may occur, and what appropriate measures would need to be taken.

Who will observe during the presidential run-off election? How can they get accreditation?

Section 4.10 of the 1986 New Elections Law, as amended by the 2004 Elections Law (Section 13), safeguards the right to observe the electoral process. Domestic and international organizations can apply for accreditation to the National Elections Commission. While domestic organizations must be accredited by Liberia's Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, regional intergovernmental organizations, representatives of states and foreign missions, and international nongovernmental organizations can apply directly. Among the accredited international observers are the Carter Center, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, and the European Union.

When will official results be announced?

The NEC intends to announce the final results on December 30, 2017, but they will be announced no later than January 9, 2018.

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

Per Section 6 of Liberia's Elections Law, any political party or candidate who has justifiable reasons to believe that the elections were not in keeping with the Elections Law may file a complaint with the National Elections Commission (NEC) within seven days after the announcement of the results. Upon receipt of the complaint, the NEC must cite the parties, conduct an impartial investigation, and render a determination within 30 days with a provision of appeal to the NEC's Board of Commissioners. Any contestant affected by the NEC's decision may appeal to the Supreme Court of Liberia within seven days after the decision is rendered.

Resources

- [National Elections Commission](#)