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Elections in the Dominican Republic

2016 General Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Americas

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Disclosure:

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Dominican Republic’s election authorities as of May 13, 2016, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When are elections held in the Dominican Republic?

Elections are held every four years, per the latest revision of the constitution in 2010. On May 15, 2016, the Dominican Republic will conduct general elections for national and local authorities.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

For these elections, Dominicans will head to the polls to elect national and local authorities on the same day for the first time since 1994. Voters will be electing the next President and Vice President; 32 Senators and 190 members of the Chamber of Deputies (178 for proportional representation, seven for overseas representation and five at the national level); 20 Representatives to the Central American Parliament; 158 Mayors and Vice Mayors; and 1,164 local council members (*regidores*).

What is the Dominican Republic's electoral system?

The Dominican Republic has a multi-party system and a representative democracy:

- The President is elected by absolute majority vote through a two-round system, if necessary, to serve a four-year term.
- In the Senate (*Senado*) 32 members are elected by plurality vote in single-member constituencies to serve four-year terms.
- In the Chamber of Deputies (*Camara de Diputados*), 178 members are elected through an open-list proportional representation system – one for every 50,000 inhabitants – to serve four-year terms. The seats are apportioned to 30 multimember districts (29 provinces and the federal district) in proportion to population. No district may have less than two Deputies. Seven Deputies are elected to represent Dominicans residing overseas, and five Deputies are elected at the national level to represent small political parties that may not have reached the threshold of votes necessary for representation.

Who is running in these elections?

There are 26 registered parties, one provincial movement and seven municipal movements participating in the upcoming elections. Eight political parties have nominated presidential and vice presidential candidates, including the following five parties who are leading the polls:

- Alliance for Democracy (*Alianza por la Democracia* [APD])
 - Candidate: Minou Tavarez
- Country Alliance (*Alianza Pais* [ALPAIS])

- Candidate: Guillermo Moreno
- National Progressive Front (*Fuerza Nacional Progresista* [FNP])
 - Candidate: Pelegrin Castillo
- Dominican Liberation Party (*Partido de la Liberación Dominicana* [PLD])
 - Candidate: Danilo Medina
- Modern Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Moderno* [PRM])
 - Candidate: Luis Abinader

Who is eligible to vote in these elections?

All registered Dominican citizens, by birth or naturalization, 18 years of age or older on the day of the election, are eligible to vote with a voting credential issued by the Central Electoral Board. There are approximately 6.7 million voters in the voter registry.

According to the Dominican constitution, members of the armed forces and national police cannot vote. Individuals who have lost their citizenship or have had those privileges suspended are also banned from voting.

How many polling stations will be set up on Election Day?

The Central Electoral Board is setting up an estimated 15,339 polling stations in about 4,158 voting precincts throughout the national territory.

When will the newly-elected government take office?

According to the law, the newly-elected government will take office on August 16, 2016.

What innovations are being introduced for the 2016 general elections?

During the upcoming elections, the Central Electoral Board (JCE) will be introducing the use of fingerprint verification machines at the polling stations. The use of this technology will allow the use of voters' fingerprints to validate information on identity and electoral cards. The use of this technology will facilitate and speed up the process for the JCE to develop lists of voters who have exercised their right to vote in each polling station.

How will votes be counted?

The vote count starts at 6:00 p.m. once the polls have officially closed on Election Day. The Central Electoral Board is introducing electronic scanning of ballots as another innovative feature for this process. The ballots will be counted and scanned separately for each type of election, starting with the presidential election. The ballots will first be separated in sets of 25-30, and then run through the scanning equipment that will count and record the votes, this process will be followed until all the ballots for that particular election have been counted.

Election officials will verify that no ballots have been left without scanning; they will also review and verify whether any ballots were sent for verification through the system before closing the counting process for that particular level. Once the counting process is completed, the results tally will be printed. The votes will also be counted manually and a tally sheet will be completed by the election officials. This manual tally sheet will be transmitted electronically through a scanning and transmission system. These steps will be repeated for each election.

How are electoral authorities guaranteeing equal access for persons with disabilities?

Since the last election in 2012, the Central Electoral Board (JCE) has made progress in improving access to the electoral process for voters with disabilities. The JCE now has a standardized module for poll workers on disability rights. The JCE reached agreements with the Ministry of Public Works to improve physical accessibility to polling stations and other electoral infrastructure, which will facilitate the participation of voters with physical disabilities. Also, administrative provisions have been put in place to allow ground floor voting for people with disabilities. The JCE will be conducting a pilot program to allow voting at home targeting persons with disabilities. In addition, as in previous elections, the tactile ballot guide will be used to allow blind and low vision voters to exercise their right to vote more independently. Yet, voters will continue to be allowed to be assisted by a person of their choice, as stated in the law.

Can Dominicans who reside abroad vote in the elections?

Dominicans who reside overseas can vote to elect the President and Vice President, and for the seven Deputies who represent Dominicans overseas. In this election, there are approximately 384,000 registered voters overseas. The Central Electoral Board (JCE) has set up approximately 728 polling stations in 223 voting centers throughout the world. The largest concentrations of voters are found in the United States, Puerto Rico, Spain, the lower Caribbean, followed by Italy and Panama, among others.

In the areas or countries with high concentrations of voters, elections are held in local schools, community centers or associations. In areas with lower concentrations, the JCE coordinates with the local Dominican consulate or embassy.

Polling stations are being set up for the first time for Dominican voters in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay.

Is electoral observation allowed?

Yes. There are several organizations that conduct electoral process observation. *Participacion Ciudadana*, a key local organization, is a civic, non-partisan movement that runs a well-organized nationwide observation mission. The organization's objective is to promote coordination within local organizations and to encourage participation of citizens to achieve political reform, both institutional and democratic, that will result in social development.

The Organization of American States will be deploying an international observation mission led by former Colombian President Andres Pastrana. In addition, the Union of South American Nations is also deploying an observation mission.

Resources

- [Central Electoral Board](#) (Spanish)
- [Dominican Republic Constitution](#) (Spanish)
- [Electoral Law](#) (Spanish)