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Elections in Liberia

2017 General Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Africa

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

When is Election Day?.....	1
Why are the October 10 elections in Liberia so important?.....	1
What is the election management body? What are its powers?	1
What challenges has the National Elections Commission faced in organizing these elections?.....	1
Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?	1
Who can vote in the country?.....	2
How many registered voters are there?	2
What is the structure of the government?	2
Are there reserved seats for women?	2
What is a polling precinct? What is a polling booth?	2
How many polling places are set up on Election Day?	2
Will there be out-of-country voting?	2
How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots?.....	3
What technology will be used?.....	3
Who is managing security on Election Day?	3
Who can observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?	3
When will official results be announced?	3
How will election disputes be adjudicated?	3
Resources	4

Disclosure:

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Liberian elections authorities as of October 3, 2017, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is Election Day?

Election Day in Liberia is October 10, 2017.

Why are the October 10 elections in Liberia so important?

The October 2017 presidential and general elections represent the first peaceful political transfer between democratically elected governments since 1944, including a potential change in the ruling party. In not seeking a third term, which would have first required a constitutional amendment, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is also ensuring that the return of democracy to Liberia is not temporary.

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

Liberia's National Elections Commission (NEC) was established in February 2004 and consists of seven commissioners, including a chair and co-chair. With the prior consent of the Senate, the president appoints each commissioner for a seven-year term. The NEC is mandated to formulate, administer and enforce guidelines controlling the conduct of all elections to public offices and referenda. Among its primary responsibilities are: establishing electoral constituencies according to population figures; maintaining a register of all qualified voters; conducting civic and voter education; proposing to the National Legislature for enactment any provisions related to Liberia's Elections Law, and; accrediting and registering political parties and independent candidates who meet the minimum requirements.

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 elections. However, certain challenges remain beyond its control, including 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 are citizens voting for on Election Day?

Liberian citizens will elect a new president and vice president using the two-round system; if no single candidate wins 50 percent plus one vote of all valid votes cast, then a run-off between the top two candidates will be held two weeks after the final results are announced. Twenty candidates will vie for the presidency; 17 candidates represent political parties and three are independent. Also, all members of the House of Representatives are up for election through first-past-the-post voting in single member constituencies. More than 980 candidates are competing for the 73 seats.

Who can vote in the country?

Liberia's constitution and Election Law state that every citizen 18 years or older who has not been judicially declared to be incompetent, or of unsound mind, or/and who has not been disenfranchised as a result of conviction of an infamous crime; and who 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 s/he is registered.

How many registered voters are there?

There are 2,183,683 registered voters in Liberia; the voter roll was updated between February and April 2017.

What is the structure of the government?

Liberia's government consists of a head of state (currently President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf), a vice president (currently Joseph Boakai) and a bicameral National Legislature consisting of a Senate (30 seats) and a House of Representatives (73 seats). Each of Liberia's 15 counties has two elected senators. Members of the House of Representatives are elected for a six-year term by the registered voters of each county's legislative constituencies.

Are there reserved seats for women?

Liberia's constitution does not have provisions to reserve seats for women in either the Senate or House of Representatives. However, the National Elections Commission has directed the political parties to make all efforts to nominate at least 30 percent women candidates in their lists.

What is a polling precinct? What is a polling booth?

Sometimes also referred to as a "polling station," a polling precinct is the official location where voters mark and cast ballots during an election. A polling precinct can have multiple polling booths depending on the number of voters registered in that precinct. For the 2017 election, there are 2,080 polling precincts. In Liberia, one polling booth can have a maximum of 500 registered voters assigned to it. A polling booth is a physical structure inside a polling precinct where voters mark their ballots. Polling booths 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 [sic]" 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 the October 2017 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 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 can observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?

The right to observe the electoral process is safeguarded by Section 4.10 of the 1986 New Elections Law, as amended by the 2004 Electoral Law, Section 13. 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?

Final election results will be announced no later than October 25, 2017.

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. 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](#)