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Elections in Senegal

2017 Parliamentary Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Africa

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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July 24, 2017

Frequently Asked Questions

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Disclosure:

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Senegalese elections authorities as of July 24, 2017, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is Election Day?

Elections will take place on July 30, 2017.

Who is eligible to vote?

There is universal suffrage in Senegal; all Senegalese nationals 18 and above have the right to vote in the elections.

How is the Senegalese government structured?

The government in Senegal operates under the framework of a semi-presidential, democratic republic. In a semi-presidential system, a president exists alongside a prime minister and a cabinet, with the latter two being responsible to the legislature. This system establishes the president of Senegal as the head of state and the prime minister of Senegal as the head of government.

The president elected as the head of state, in turn, appoints a prime minister. The Council of Ministers, or cabinet, is appointed by the prime minister in consultation with the president. The government has an executive, legislative, and judicial branch. The legislature, known as the National Assembly, has 150-seats with members elected every five years. The judiciary has three parts – the Constitutional Court, the Court of Appeal, and the Council of State – members of which are named by the president.

In 2016, the regulations regarding the presidency were altered due to a constitutional referendum. Following the vote on the constitutional referendum on March 20, 2016, with 63 percent voting in favor of the referendum, presidential terms were shortened from seven to five years. The changes will take effect in the elections of 2019.

As for local government in Senegal, it is structured around the 14 regions. Each region is administered by a governor who is assisted by two deputy governors, one dealing with administration and the other with development. Within the regions there are 113 municipal communes, led by a mayor and directly elected municipal council, and 370 rural communities, led by a directly elected rural council and a president elected from among the council members.

What parties are running in the parliamentary election?

The official list contains 47 parties, or coalitions, that will present candidates for the deputy positions. This list is a new record; for comparison, during the 2012 legislative elections only 24 lists were in competition.

The official list is as follows:

1. Party of the Truth for the Development (PVD) (Party)	16. Patriotic Convergence for Justice and Equity / Naay Leer (Party)	33. Alliance for Reform and Development (ARD) (Party)
2. Manko Taxawu Sénégaal (Coalition)	17. Party for the Action Citizen (PAC) (Party)	34. Nu Bi Begg Assembly (Coalition)
3. Defar Senegal (Independent Entity)	18. Liberal Patriotic Convergence (Party)	35. Saxal liggeey (Coalition)
4. Democratic Senegalese Rally (RDS) (Party)	19. Sunu naatangué Reew / Rally for Dignity and Prosperity (Party)	36. Mbollo Wade (Coalition)
5. Union for the Federalism and Democracy (Party)	20. Leeral (Coalition)	37. Dare the Future (Coalition)
6. Movement for the Renaissance of Freedom and Development (MRLD) (Independent Entity)	21. Senegal Ca Kanam (Coalition)	38. Winning / Wattu Senegal (Coalition)
7. Manko Yéésal Senegal (Coalition)	22. Citizen Convention Neneen (CCN) (Party)	39. Alternative Pole Third Way / Senegal Dey Dem (Coalition)
8. Movement for the Republican Renaissance (M2R) (Party)	23. Sukali Senegaal (Coalition)	40. Benno Bokk Yaakaar (Coalition)
9. Movement for Ethics and Emerging Values (REVE) (Party)	24. Republican Patriotic Front (RPF) (Party)	41. Peace Party / Jamm (PDP/JAM) (Party)
10. Citizens for Ethics and Transparency / Jerin Sama Reew (Party)	25. Senegal-Vein Environment (Party)	42. Ndawi Askan (Coalition)
11. Manko Wattu Senegal (Coalition)	26. The Third Political Way / Euttou Askan Wi (Coalition)	43. Defar Senegal / Support Group and Renewal of Popular Action (Party)
12. Party of the Unit and Rally (PUR) (Party)	27. Joyyanti (Coalition)	44. Patriotic Convergence / Kaddu Askan Wi (Coalition)
13. Soppali (Coalition)	28. Sunu Party for Solidarity and Development of Senegal (Party)	45. Framework for Reflection on Integral Development (CREDI) (Party)
14. Union citizen / Bunt Bi (Party)	29. Fal Askan Wi (Coalition)	46. Initiatives for a Development Policy (Party)
15. Democratic Federation of the Ecologists of Senegal (FEDES) (Party)	30. Convergence of Initiatives for Senegal (CIS) (Party)	47. National Front / Baatu Askan Wi "Bi Nu Begg Assembly" (Party)
	31. Alternative Visions for Senegal (VISA) (Party)	
	32. Dental Senegal / Patriotic Actions (DS/AP) (Party)	

How are these elections structured?

The National Autonomous Electoral Commission (CENA) monitors Senegal's elections. Although the body is nominally independent, members are appointed by the president on the advice of other public figures. It is also financially dependent on the government. The Ministry of the Interior organizes the elections.

Senegal's Parliament became unicameral, following the elimination of the Senate, for the second time, in 2012. The current parliament thus consists of the National Assembly, with 150 members elected by universal suffrage for a five-year term. For the first time in the history of this institution, an absolute parity between men and women was instituted during the July 1, 2012 legislative elections. The parity has been successful in implementation, in terms of providing 50 percent women candidates on party lists.

Candidates for legislative elections must be at least 25 years old. Provision LO.147 of the Electoral Code states that the largest departments (administrative units below the region) elect seven members while those with the lowest representation elect at least one member.

Elections in the National Assembly are divided into two portions, one group being 90 seats and the other 60 seats. Ninety members are elected through the majority system in the country's 45 electoral constituencies. The other 60 seats are elected through proportional representation. For this voting system, a national quota is determined by dividing the number of valid ballots cast by the number of seats to be filled. Based on the total number of valid ballots cast, candidates are elected from the relevant lists in proportion to the number of quotas filled. The largest remainder principle is applied, which requires the numbers of votes for each party to be divided by a quota representing the number of votes required for a seat (i.e., typically the total number of votes cast divided by the number of seats). Parties with the largest remainders are each allocated one additional seat until all the seats have been allocated, giving the method its name.

What laws exist to ensure women's representation in Parliament?

In Senegal, a parity law ensures party lists include 50 percent women, which has resulted in 40 percent of Parliament being women. The absolute parity between men and women in lists was instituted during the July 1, 2012, legislative elections. While the parity law does not reserve seats for women, the law increases the chances for women to be elected to Parliament.

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

Government institutions directly involved in the organization of electoral activities include the Ministry of Interior and the National Autonomous Electoral Committee (*Commission Electorale Nationale Autonome* [CENA]).

The Ministry of Interior is the foundation of election management in the country. This was inherited from the French administrative tradition, as Senegal is a former French colony. The Ministry of Interior carries out the following functions:

- The establishment and revision of voters' lists;
- Conception and maintenance of all elections documents and archives;
- Organization and follow-up of the distribution of voters' cards;
- Supervision of the printing of ballot papers;
- Support to the security services in ensuring safe electoral operations;
- Training of the institutional administrations in charge of various aspects of the electoral process, such as the judiciary;
- Voter education;
- Use of new IT; and
- Analysis of elections.

To increase parties' confidence in the management of elections by the Ministry of Interior and by civil servants, Senegal enlisted the CENA to assist in the elections process. The CENA's role is to:

- Supervise and control the establishment of the voters' rolls;
- Supervise and control the purchase, printing and distribution of voters' cards;
- Avail the voters' lists to parties;
- Supervise voting operations and all election-related activities;
- Supervise the collection, tallying and centralization of results; and
- Make recommendations to improve the electoral process.

The CENA is composed of 12 neutral and independent members appointed by presidential decree after consultations with various institutions. They have a six-year term and one-third of the membership is renewed every three years. The CENA has representatives at the regional and departmental levels, and has members in every polling station on voting days.

How many registered voters are there?

Nearly 5.5 million voters are registered in the country. However, in recent years, Senegal has experienced low voter turnout. For example, in the March 20, 2016 referendum vote, voter turnout was only 38 percent.

What is a polling station?

A polling station is a designated area where voters can cast their ballots. In each polling station, one or more polling booths is installed. The polling booths ensure the secrecy of the vote while allowing the electoral operations not to be concealed from the public. Flasks or vaporizers of indelible ink must be placed in each polling station and the stamp of the electoral district of the office.

In accordance with the Electoral Code, a voter who arrives at the polling station must first check his or her name on the electoral register. Then he or she must take each of the 47 ballots before going to the polling booth to choose one. A voter will devote at least four minutes to fulfilling his duty as a citizen, and a polling station has an average of 600 members.

Each of the 47 candidates should have a representative on site; as such, it would not be surprising to find more than 50 individuals in each office.

Will the candidates be represented at the polling stations?

Article LO.138 of the Electoral Code states that each political party, coalition, and independent organization with a candidate has the right to observe election preparations from the registration of candidates to the proclamation of results. However, to observe, the first name, surname, profession, date and place of birth of the representative or his deputy need to be given to the minister of elections, the president of the National Census Commission and the president of the Constitutional Council 15 days before the start of the voting. Delegates can enter polling stations freely where they have jurisdiction, proceed with the identification of voters, and require registration of all observations and disputes, which will then be recorded. If a representative is expelled, he or she is immediately replaced by an alternate member representing the same candidate.

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

Senegalese citizens living abroad have the right to vote if at least 200 of them register with diplomatic missions in the foreign country.

Are there laws in place protecting equal access for persons with disabilities?

Article L.80 of the Electoral Code states that a voter living with a permanent or temporary disability who is unable to insert his ballot in the envelope or to slip it into the ballot box is entitled, at his/her request, to be assisted by a voter of his choice or by a member of the polling station.

How long is the campaign period?

The campaign for the parliamentary elections officially started on Sunday, July 9, 2017 and ends on Friday, July 28.

What technology will be used?

According to Article L.53 of the Electoral Code, the current administration is responsible for the printing and establishment of voter cards at the expense of the state. The National Autonomous Electoral Commission uses a biometric registration system to collect registration data, and equips all permanent and mobile registration sites with computers and other necessary equipment for fingerprint and photograph capture. In addition to personal data, a digital facial image, signature, and four fingerprints are collected from all applicants. The data is then transferred to a central site in the capital city Dakar for eligibility checks. Once the data is approved, it is transferred to a central production system where an automated system quality assures and produces up to 80,000 cards daily. However, technology is not used for voter identification at polling stations and electronic voting.

Who will observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?

According to Section 4 (Article L.26) of the Electoral Code, any organization or body interested in the electoral process may apply to observe the election both within and outside the country. Applications for accreditation must include the following:

- A request specifying the area of coverage, addressed to the minister in charge of elections or to the minister of foreign affairs;
- An original or certified copy of the official act of recognition; and
- The complete list of names of people to be accredited with their personal information.

During the 2012 presidential election, there were over 5,000 national observers and 1,450 international observers across the country.

Both national and international observers may observe national elections in Senegal. National election observers include organizations such as local charitable organizations, locally established democracy and good governance organizations, and local media houses. The following civil society organizations conduct electoral observation activities in Senegal: the Cultural Association for Self-Promotion of Education and Social Activities, the Episcopal Justice and Peace Commission, the Platform of Non-State

Activists, the African Rally for Human Rights, the Senegalese Network of Citizen Observers, the Civil Society Organization for Elections, and the Goree Institute.

International election observers include international bodies or organizations, embassies or foreign missions, international charitable organizations, internationally established democracy and good governance organizations, as well as foreign media houses. The following international observers conducted electoral observation activities in 2012: the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic and Monetary Union of West African States, the Pan African Institute of Electoral Assistance, the Embassy of the United States, and the European Union.

Where will the voting, counting, and compiling of results take place?

Article 83 of the Electoral Code states that votes are counted in polling stations by poll workers. Poll workers may be representatives of the National Autonomous Electoral Commission, political parties and coalitions of political parties, and local citizens with proper authorization. Generally, the votes are counted in the presence of both national and international election observers. Following the counting of votes, results are announced in each polling station and each representative receives a certified copy of the results in presence of national and international election observers. Once all the results are gathered from each polling station, the results are sent to the Departmental Committee for the Counting of Votes. After an unofficial proclamation of results by the Departmental Committee, results are conveyed to the National Committee through sealed envelopes. The National Committee, presided over by the president of the Court of Appeal of Dakar, announces the provisional results, which are broadcast in real time.

Since the 2012 presidential election, election results that are sent to the Departmental Committee for the Counting of Votes are immediately published online.

When will the official results be announced?

Article L.86 of the Electoral Code specifies that the vote count and proclamation of results at the department level occurs no later than 12:00 p.m. on the Tuesday following the vote. The voting count and proclamation of provisional results at the level of the National Autonomous Electoral Commission takes place no later than 12:00 a.m. on the Friday following the vote and is followed by litigation over provisional balloting before the Constitutional Council within 72 hours. The proclamation of final results subsequently occurs five days later or five days after a petition is filed, if any. In the 2012 presidential election, final results were established within eight days.

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

From the registration of candidates to the proclamation of official election results, institutions involved in the delivery of results can be called on to adjudicate all electoral litigations within deadlines clearly communicated in the Electoral Code. Any candidate or list of candidates may challenge electoral results by issuing a claim to the Constitutional Court or the president of the Court of Appeal in Dakar. While the Court of Appeal is primarily responsible for the resolution of disputes stemming from parliamentary and local elections, the Constitutional Court handles disputes resulting from presidential elections.

What other elections are coming up?

The next presidential election is scheduled for 2019, but the date has not yet been confirmed.

Resources

- [Electoral Code of Senegal](#) (French)
- [Freedom House: Senegal Country Report](#)
- [IFES Elections Guide: Senegal](#)
- [Senegal National Identity and Voter's Card System](#) (French)
- [Senegal Party List](#) (French)
- [World Bank: Senegal Country Report](#)