



## FACT SHEET: THE RESULTS OF VENEZUELA'S LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

On September 26, 2010, Venezuela held its fifteenth election in the last 12 years – a vote to determine the composition of the 165-seat unicameral legislature, the National Assembly.

President Hugo Chávez's young political party, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), emerged as the strongest political party in the country, winning at least 60% of the seats. Additionally, this electoral process and its results highlight other important aspects of Venezuela's democracy:

- ✓ The historic turnout of 66.45 percent and the peaceful way in which the electoral process took place ratified the **consolidation of Venezuela's system of participatory democracy**, as well as the effectiveness and transparency of the country's electoral system.
- ✓ **The opposition has hopefully returned to the democratic game**, after the 2002 coup attempt, the 2003 oil sabotage, and the 2005 boycott of legislative elections.
- ✓ **The diverse parties that make up the political opposition's coalition have the chance to make their proposals part of the democratic debate** and to build their forces for the 2012 presidential race.
- ✓ **Venezuela has grown into a strong, vibrant and socialist-oriented democracy.**

### RESULTS & TURNOUT

Early on Monday, September 27, Venezuela's National Electoral Council (CNE) announced the results of the legislative elections.

**On the 165 races that were conclusively decided, the PSUV – won 98 seats (60 percent), or a majority of the National Assembly.** A multitude of different opposition parties grouped together in a coalition claimed 65, while two seats were claimed by the small political party PPT.

### The 9/26 Election By The Numbers

- ✓ **165 Seats in the National Assembly**
- ✓ **186 Political Parties**
- ✓ **17.7 Million Registered Voters**
- ✓ **66.45% Turnout**
- ✓ **98 Seats for PSUV Party**
- ✓ **65 Seats for Opposition Coalition**
- ✓ **2 Seats for PPT Party**

The PSUV's majority was distributed across Venezuela – in **18 of the country's 24 states.**

**President Chávez's party also won more seats than his former party (MVR) did in the 2000 legislative election.** On the contrary, the opposition as a whole lost 20 seats compared to their take in the 2000 election.

Most impressively, **66.45 percent of Venezuela's 17.7 million registered voters – over 11 million voters – cast ballots in the election.** The turnout was the highest in the country's history for a legislative election, and clearly demonstrated **a consolidation of Venezuela's system of participatory democracy. It also highlights the effectiveness, transparency and consolidation of the country's electoral system.**

After the election, the very different parties that currently integrate the political opposition have the chance to make their proposals part of the democratic debate and to build their forces for the 2012 presidential race. **Additionally, they have the opportunity to become a loyal opposition working within Venezuela's constitutional system.**

### THE ELECTION

The September 26 elections, as all electoral processes in Venezuela since 2000, were organized by the CNE, an independent branch of the Venezuelan government.

**All 165 seats in the National Assembly were up for election. Of those seats, 52 were chosen based on affiliation with a political party (party-line votes) and on the principle of proportional representation,** while 110 were nominal, or single votes. The three remaining seats were for representatives of Venezuela's indigenous communities.

Venezuela's 23 states and Capital District of Caracas all have three seats in the National Assembly, with additional seats determined by the population of those areas. (For example, Miranda, a populous state, has 12 seats, while Amazonas only has three.)



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Venezuelans also elected 12 representatives to the Latin American Parliament, a regional legislative organization.

**For the election, there were 57 national and 129 regional political parties that fielded candidates.**

**The participation of the opposition in this election was also important because it ratified the consolidation of Venezuela's democratic system.** Opposition parties returned to the democratic game after siding with a coup in 2002, a sabotage of the country's oil industry in 2003, and an attempt to de-legitimize Venezuela's political system by opting, at the last minute and against national and international opinion, to boycott the 2005 legislative elections.

### SUFFRAGE

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Any Venezuelan over the age of 18 had the right to vote. **For the September 26 elections, 17.7 million Venezuelans were duly registered to cast ballots within Venezuela, while 57,000 were registered to vote in embassies or consulates abroad.**

**There were 25,903 Venezuelans registered to vote in the U.S. This number represents 0.14 percent of the total electorate.**

The 2006 presidential election saw turnout reach **75 percent**, while the 2000 legislative elections saw **56 percent turnout**.

### VOTING PROCESS

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Since 2003, Venezuela has undertaken a dramatic process of improvements to the country's electoral system, including updating and modernizing the voter registry and voting infrastructure.

Voting in Venezuela is now fully automated and electronic. **Voters cast their ballots via electronic voting machines that print paper receipts confirming the selections made by the voter. Those receipts are then placed in ballot boxes, and 53 percent of the machines are audited by manually comparing their results against those receipts placed in the ballot boxes.**

For the September 26 legislative elections, **36,773 voting machines** were distributed to 12,562 polling sites throughout Venezuela's 24 states and on mobile stations

that reached hard-to-access or faraway areas. **Over 146,000 Venezuelans served as poll workers on the day of the elections.**

### ELECTORAL OBSERVATION

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Close to **2,500 people** representing four national civic organizations were designated as national election observers for the September 26 elections. Additionally, the CNE authorized registered political organizations to bring up to 30 guests to serve as international observers during the legislative elections.

**On September 19, the CNE welcomed 150 international observers and 60 political guests to Venezuela**, all of whom were subsequently walked through how voting would occur on September 26.

During a post-election de-briefing with the CNE, Oscar Massenteufel, the director of the Council of Electoral Experts of Latin America, stated: "In general, it seemed to us that the whole process developed in absolute normality and in accordance with the principles that govern elections at the global level. We feel that Venezuela's democracy has been strengthened by the overwhelming participation of the Venezuelan people."<sup>1</sup>

### THE LONG TERM

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A recent study of the Venezuelan think tank *Centro Gumilla*, run by the dean of the Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, found that at least 60 percent of the Venezuelan population strongly values the social content of democracy and prioritizes citizen participation.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the opposition would do well to understand that the process of democratic and socio-economic change in Venezuela since 1998 has taken root.

Not only are Venezuelans voting more than ever, but their government is also more effectively addressing the social inequalities that shortchanged the country's true potential as a democracy for too long. Let's only consider how poverty fell from 49 percent in 1998 to 24 percent in 2009, and unemployment has dropped to 6.6 percent.

Hence, this legislative election and how much Venezuelans value the gains the country has made in fighting its social ills prove that while there are certainly still challenges to be addressed, Venezuela is a strong, vibrant and socialist-oriented democracy.



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**Press and Communications Office**

**September 28, 2010**

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<sup>1</sup> "CNE recibió informes de acompañantes internacionales," CNE website.  
September 28, 2010.

[http://www.cne.gob.ve/web/sala\\_prensa/noticia\\_detallada.php?id=1870](http://www.cne.gob.ve/web/sala_prensa/noticia_detallada.php?id=1870)

<sup>2</sup> Centro Gumilla, <http://www.gumilla.org/>