

BAHAMAS

Date of Elections: 10 June 1982

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in the House of Assembly on the normal expiry of the Parliament's term of office. Previous general elections were held on 19 July 1977.

Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of the Bahamas consists of the House of Assembly and the Senate.

The House of Assembly is composed of 43 members elected for 5 years. This total was raised from 38 prior to the 1982 elections*.

The Senate is composed of 16 members appointed by the Governor-General—9 on the advice of the Prime Minister, 4 on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, and 3 on the advice of the Prime Minister after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition.

Electoral System

Any citizen of the Bahamas who is at least 18 years old and not subject to any legal incapacity and who has resided in a particular constituency for a minimum of three months is entitled to vote in that same constituency. Disqualified from registration as electors are the insane, persons serving any sentence of imprisonment and persons under sentence of death.

Electoral registers are revised annually. Voting is not compulsory.

Citizens of the Bahamas at least 21 years of age who have ordinarily resided in the Bahamas for a period of not less than one year immediately before the date of their nomination are qualified to be elected as members of the House of Assembly. Candidates for appointment to the Senate must be citizens who are at least 30 years old and who have ordinarily resided in the Bahamas for a period of not less than one year immediately before the date of appointment.

Ineligible, for both the House and the Senate, are undischarged bankrupts, the insane, persons owing allegiance to a foreign State, persons under sentence of death or imprisonment, and those convicted of a felony or of electoral fraud. The parliamentary mandate is incompatible with the office of judge, substantive public officer or temporary public officer for a period exceeding three months; with being a member of any of the armed forces of the Crown other than in a time of war or emergency, or a member of the reserve of any such forces; and with employment on the personal staff of the Governor-General or in the Ministry of Tourism.

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 9.

Candidates for the House must be nominated by a total of four electors and make a deposit of B\$ 400, which is forfeited if the candidate is not elected and does not obtain more than one-sixth of the total votes polled in his constituency.

For election purposes, the Bahamas are divided into 43 constituencies. One member of the House of Assembly is elected in each by simple majority vote.

House of Assembly seats which become vacant between general elections are filled through by-elections. Vacant Senate seats are filled by appointment made according to how the seat was originally filled.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

In the 1982 elections, the parties in contention for the 43 seats of the newly-enlarged House of Assembly were the ruling Progressive Liberal Party (PLP), led by Prime Minister Lynden Pindling; the right-wing Free National Movement (FNM), led by Mr. Kendal Isaacs; and the smaller Vanguard Nationalist and Socialist Party, Workers Party and the Commonwealth Democratic Party. Principal campaign issues included the country's high unemployment level (20-25%), a rising crime rate and allegations of corruption in public life.

Polling day was marked by a high voter turnout of over 90%. PLP obtained 32 seats, FNM capturing the 11 others. PLP thus gained its fifth successive general election victory and Prime Minister Pindling continued in office.

Statistics

1. *Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the House of Assembly*

Number of registered electors	84,158
Voters	76,098 (90.4%)
Political Group	Number of Seats
Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) 55.10	32 (+ 2)
Free National Movement (FNM) 42.35	11 (+ 9)
Others	<u>- (- 6)</u>
	43*

* Five seats added since last elections.

2. *Distribution of Members of the House of Assembly according to Sex*

Men	42
Women	1
	43