

## COLOMBIA

**Date of Elections:** February 26, 1978

### Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament on the normal expiry of their term of office.

### Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of Colombia, the Congress, consists of a Senate and a House of Representatives.

The Senate is composed of two Senators for each of the country's 22 departments and one more for each 200,000 inhabitants or for each fraction of more than 100,000 inhabitants that the department has above the first 200,000.

The House of Representatives is composed of two Representatives for each department and one more for each 100,000 inhabitants or for each fraction of more than 50,000 inhabitants that the department has above the first 100,000.

The February 1978 elections were for 112 Senators and 199 Representatives, all elected for 4 years.

### Electoral System

All Colombian citizens at least 18 years of age who are registered as electors in their municipality and have not been deprived of their civil or political rights have the right to vote. Members of the armed forces on active duty and of the police force are debarred from participating in the poll. Voting is not compulsory.

All electors who are at least 25 years of age and have never been condemned for a non-political offence involving corporal punishment are eligible for the House of Representatives.

To run for the Senate, a candidate must, in addition to the last condition mentioned above, be at least 30 years of age, Colombian by birth and have held certain high offices (President or Vice-President of the Republic, member of Congress, Cabinet Minister, head of a diplomatic mission, Governor of a department, judge of a higher court, Councillor of State, Attorney General of the nation, Comptroller General of the Republic, university professor for at least five years) or have undertaken a liberal profession with a university degree.

Representatives and Senators are elected in each constituency on the basis of a closed-list proportional representation system. A total of 22 constituencies

consist of a single department; other less-densely populated regions are grouped together to form four more constituencies.

An alternate is elected alongside each Representative or Senator to replace either of the latter in the event of their resignation or death between general elections.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The 1978 parliamentary elections were combined with those for municipal, council and provincial legislative seats, as well as a presidential primary of the ruling Liberal Party.

On polling day, which was generally calm, the Liberals won clear majorities in both Chambers, while the Conservative Party solidified its overall secondary position and a left-wing coalition of the National Opposition Union (UNO), the National Popular Alliance (ANAPO) and the Independent Liberal Movement (MIL) captured the few remaining seats. The balloting was marked, however, by a massive abstention rate of some 70%. Inflation and unemployment had figured among the key campaign issues.

It should be noted that, for these particular elections, Liberals and Conservatives abandoned their long-standing coalition pact and fielded separate candidates. Two Liberal factions moreover presented competing lists of candidates in all constituencies, the leader of the winning faction to be designated as the presidential candidate.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in Congress

Number of registered electors . . . . .	12,300,000 (approx.)
Voters . . . . .	4,000,000 (approx.)

Political Group	Number of Seats in the House of Representatives	Number of Seats in the Senate
Liberal Party . . . . .	.109	62
Conservative Party . . . . .	86	49
UNO-ANAPO-MIL . . . . .	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>
	199	112