

COSTA RICA

Date of Elections: 7 February 1982

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament on the normal expiry of its members' term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Costa Rica, the Legislative Assembly, consists of 57 Deputies who are elected for a 4-year term and are not immediately re-eligible.

Electoral System

Every citizen of Costa Rica who has reached the age of 18 and who is a registered elector within his constituency is entitled to vote. Persons who cannot vote are those under judicial interdiction and those whose political rights have been suspended. Naturalized citizens can only vote 12 months after acquiring such status.

While electoral registers are drawn up at the national level, electors are listed under the district to which they belong and in which they may exercise their right to vote. The Civil Register prepares the lists two months and 15 days before an election, on the basis of revisions which have been made continuously. Voting is made compulsory by the Constitution.

Every member of the electorate who is Costa Rican by birth or who has resided in the country for at least 10 years after naturalization is eligible for election to the Legislative Assembly provided he is at least 21 years old, can read and write and is in possession of his civil rights. The President of the Republic (or his close relatives), Ministers, certain high magistrates and high officials in the provincial government or autonomous institutions cannot be elected to Parliament while in office or for six months after leaving these positions. Public contractors are likewise barred.

The number of Deputies elected from the country's seven provinces is determined by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in proportion to the population of each.

In accordance with the Electoral Code, elections are conducted in conformity with the quotient and sub-quotient party-list system of proportional representation, under which electors vote for party lists without being permitted to combine different lists. The quotient is the number obtained by dividing the total of valid votes cast in a particular province by the number of seats to be filled in the same; the sub-quotient is the total of valid votes cast for a party which, while not attaining the quotient, obtains or exceeds 50% of it.

Successful parties are those which have attained the required quotient. Seats remaining unfilled on the basis of the quotient system are distributed among parties in the order of their residual votes; for this distribution, those parties which did not attain the sub-quotient are also taken into account, their votes being treated as residual votes.

Should a parliamentary vacancy arise between general elections, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal assigns the seats to the «next-in-line» candidate on the party list to which the former member belonged.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

In the elections for the Legislative Assembly - held the same day as those for President of the Republic -the social democratic National Liberation Party (*Partido de Liberation Nacional-PLfi*) obtained 33 seats and thus convincingly regained the dominant parliamentary position which it had lost four years earlier to the christian democratic Opposition Union (*Unidad Opositora-PUO*), later known as the Unity coalition (*Coalition Unidad*); this coalition was made up of the Democratic Renewal Party, the Calderonist Republican Party, the Christian Democratic Party and the Popular Union.

Principal issues during the election campaign related to the economy, with the PLN presidential candidate, Mr. Luis Alberto Monge Alvarez, promising to redress the country's economic crisis (foreign debt, inflation, unemployment, etc.) and running on a "return to the land" platform which aimed at promoting agricultural production and halting the rural exodus; he also envisaged the introduction of an austerity programme. Mr. Rafael Angel Calderon Fournier was the Unity coalition candidate.

On polling day, the PLN won 57.3% of the presidential vote to 32.7% for the outgoing Unity coalition. Remaining votes went to the conservative National Movement (3.7%), the left-wing People United (3.2%) and the Alajuela Democratic Party (DAP), which contested the legislative seats only. A total of 16 parties had fielded candidates for the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Monge was due to take office on 8 May 1982, the same day as his 15-man Cabinet that was announced on 28 February.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Legislative Assembly

Number of registered electors	1,200,000 (approx.)
Voters	77% (approx.)

Political Group	Number of Seats
National Liberation Party (PLN)	33 (+8)
Unity coalition	18 (-9)
People United (PU)	4 (+1)
National Movement	1 (+1)*
Alajuela Democratic Party (DAP)	1 (+1)*

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* In the 1978 elections, the remaining two seats were won by the Popular Front and the Cartago Agricultural Union.