

## **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

**Date of Elections:** May 16, 1974

### **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 the Dominican Republic, the Congress, comprises the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.

The Chamber of Deputies consists of 74 members elected for 4 years by the people of the provinces and the National District in the proportion of one for every 50,000 inhabitants or fraction thereof greater than 25,000; in no case, however, are there less than 2 Deputies from a province.

The Senate consists of 27 members elected for 4 years in the proportion of one for each province and one for the National District.

### **Electoral System**

All citizens, of either sex, who are over 18 years of age or those who are or have been married have the right to vote, with the exception of members of the armed forces or the police. This right is lost pursuant to an irrevocable conviction for treason, espionage or conspiracy against the Republic, or for taking up arms or lending aid or participating in any attack against it; it is suspended in cases of irrevocable sentence to criminal punishment (until rehabilitation), legally declared judicial interdiction (while it is in effect) and acceptance, while in Dominican territory, of an office or employment from a foreign Government without prior authorization from the executive power.

While the electoral register is regularly revised every 10 years, the Central Electoral Board may order a revision any time. Voting is compulsory for all citizens.

To be eligible for either Chamber, a citizen must have attained 25 years of age, have full enjoyment of his civil and political rights and be a native of the territorial district that elects him, or have resided therein at least 5 consecutive years. The parliamentary mandate is incompatible with any other public office.

Candidates must be nominated by a political party recognized by the Central Electoral Board; they are chosen by a convention of their party,

which then submits these names to the competent electoral board. Independent candidates may only stand if they are backed by a political group which has an organization and a programme similar to that of a political party.

Deputies are elected in the provinces and the National District on the basis of a closed party-list system, with proportional distribution of seats according to the d'Hondt method. Senators, on the other hand, are elected from single-member constituencies via simple majority of vote.

Substitutes chosen at the same time as elected parliamentarians fill the seats of the latter which become vacant between general elections.

### **General political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections**

The legislative elections were scheduled for the same day as those for President of the Republic.

On March 29, 1974, outgoing President Joaquin Balaguer announced that he would seek a third (4-year) term. President Balaguer, candidate of the Reformist Party (PR) and the National Youth Movement (MNJ) — both of which he himself founded —, was initially opposed by Admiral Lajara Burgos of the Popular Democratic Party (PDP); Silvestre Antonio Guzman of the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD); Francisco Augusto Lara of the Democratic Integration Movement; Jaime Manuel Fernandez of the National Conciliation Movement; and ex-President Juan Bosch of his own Dominican Liberation Party.

In the course of a troubled three-month campaign, most candidates withdrew amidst widespread accusations of planned vote fraud and intimidation of Opposition groups and their supporters by the armed forces and the police. The "Santiago Agreement", an Opposition coalition of extreme right and left-wing groups, comprising, *inter alia*, the PRD, carried out its threat to boycott unless the Central Electoral Board reversed its ruling allowing citizens to vote at any of the nation's 5,000 polling booths. It had presented a reformist programme to counter the Government's economic policy that had, in 1972 and 1973, significantly increased the country's gross national product and improved its balance of payments.

In the face of a high rate of abstention, President Balaguer was overwhelmingly re-elected. An electoral commission subsequently rejected an Opposition request for an annulment of the reported results.