

## PANAMA

**Date of Elections:** 6 August 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 unicameral Parliament of Panama, the National Assembly of Community Representatives (*corregidores*), comprises 505 members elected for 6 years.

### **Electoral System**

All Panamanian citizens at least 18 years of age and in full possession of their civil and political rights are entitled to vote.

Electoral registers are compiled on the municipal level. Voting is compulsory.

Under the terms of the February 1978 electoral laws\*, candidates for the National Assembly must be 18 years of age or more, Panamanian citizens by birth or for a minimum of 10 years, residents of their municipality for the preceding 12 months and in full possession of civil and political rights. Ineligible are persons convicted of crime against public property or guilty of electoral offences.

Municipal Representatives may not be appointed to public offices remunerated by the same municipality. The parliamentary mandate is moreover deemed incompatible with a number of public posts on the federal level.

The 505 Representatives, and their substitutes, are elected in a like number of municipalities by simple majority vote.

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

In the 1978 Assembly elections, some 1,927 independent candidates vied for the 505 seats, political parties having been abolished in February 1969.

The election date was announced on 5 January 1978. Polling day was marked by a high turnout, estimated at 80%. Pro-Government candidates were reported to have won a clear majority.

\* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments XII (1977-1978)*, p. 16.

The newly-chosen Assembly began its six-year term on 11 October, when it also elected a President and Vice-President of the Republic. General Omar Torrijos relinquished his post of Chief of Government but remained Commander of the National Guard.

## Statistics

### 1. *Results of the Elections*

Number of registered electors. . . . . 800,000 (approx.)