

PARAGUAY

Date of Elections: February 12, 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 Paraguay, the Congress, consists of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. The Senate has 30 members, the Chamber of Deputies 60. The term of office of all members of Parliament is 5 years.

Electoral System

All Paraguayan citizens at least 18 years of age have the right to vote. This right is lost or suspended by reason of loss or suspension of citizenship, the latter including physical or mental incapacity declared by a court, the serving of a judicial sentence with a punishment depriving the convicted person of his freedom, and being in military service.

In order to be able to vote, electors must be inscribed on the electoral register. Voting is compulsory except for those over 60 years of age or prevented by certain circumstances (absence, sickness, etc.).

In order to be eligible for election as Senator or Deputy, a person must be a natural-born Paraguayan. Furthermore, in order to be eligible as a Senator, he must be at least 40 years of age and, in order to be eligible as Deputy, at least 25. Members of the clergy and persons on active military service may not be elected to Congress. Neither may persons who are employed by an enterprise that operates a public service or has obtained a concession from the Government, nor attorneys, representatives or advisors to such enterprises.

Members of Congress are elected by a party-list system established for the entire country. Each recognized political party must present a list of candidates with as many names on it as seats are available. Any vote must be expressed for the list of a given party.

Two-thirds of the seats, in either Chamber, belong to the party which obtains the highest number of valid votes, whereas one-third of the seats are distributed proportionately among the other parties. This latter distribution is carried out as follows: the total of the votes obtained by the minority parties

is divided by the number of seats remaining to be filled (that is, by 10 for the Senate and 20 for the Chamber of Deputies); the number of votes obtained by each of the said parties is then divided by the resulting quotient; the result of this division indicates the number of seats available to each party. The seats which still remain to be filled after this computation go to the party which has received the highest number of votes.

The seats available to any party are allocated to the candidates of that party in the order in which such candidates appear on the list of the said party.

If, during the legislative term, a vacancy occurs, such vacancy is automatically filled by alternate Senators or Deputies who have also been chosen at general elections.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Competing against the ruling *Colorado* Party in the 1978 legislative elections — held simultaneously with those for President of the Republic — were the Liberal Radical Party and the Liberal Party, which had formally united in 1977 into the Unified Liberal Party (PLU). Certain factions of both these parties had nevertheless remained outside the PLU and were legally recognized by the Government.

According to official reports, the *Colorado* Party obtained 89 % of the votes cast and some 180,000 electors abstained from casting ballots as President Stroessner was elected for a sixth term. Two-thirds of the Congress seats were thus allotted to the victorious party. The new Congress was to commence its sessions in April 1978, while General Stroessner — who has been in office longer than any other Head of State in Latin America — was due to assume his new five-year term in August.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors. 1,175,351

Political Group	Number of Seats in the	
	Chamber of Deputies	Senate
<i>Colorado</i> Party	40	20
Liberal Radical Party	20	10
Liberal Party	<hr/>	<hr/>
	60	30