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Election Results Show Frente Amplia Strength

by LADB Staff

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Leftist Tabare Vazquez, nationalist Jorge Larranaga (center-right), and governing-party member Guillermo Stirling (center-right) won the presidential candidacies of their parties during June 27 primary elections in Uruguay. Vazquez was the only candidate for the Encuentro Progresista-Frente Amplio (EP-FA), which is heavily favored to win this autumn's general election.

Larranaga beat ex-President Luis Alberto Lacalle (1990-1995) for the nomination of the Partido Nacional (Blanco) by a ratio of nearly 2 to 1. Stirling, ex-interior minister for the current government and member of the Partido Colorado, took solid support from the two major factions in his party and received over 90% of his party's vote. The EP-FA's receipt of the most votes of any party confirmed analysts' claims that the left-leaning party is likely to win the Oct. 31 general vote. Stirling has the support of President Jorge Batlle, but less than 15% of the voters who came out to the primary polls were from the Partido Colorado.

Corte Electoral gives primary results

The Corte Electoral released figures that 1,129,322 Uruguayans voted in the election, 45.7% of 2.46 million eligible voters. The EP-FA received 43.1% of those, while the Partido Nacional got 41.19% and the Partido Colorado 14.96%. In a press conference, the Corte Electoral released the following figures:

TOTAL VOTES COUNTED:

1,105,554 plus 23,134 "observed" votes (45.7% of eligible voters)

PARTIDO COLORADO: 156,072 (14.96%) Stirling: 91.06% Iglesias: 6.75% Lombardo: 1.26%

PARTIDO NACIONAL: 429,848 (41.19%) Larranaga: 65.93% Lacalle: 33.60% Maeso: 0.47%

EP-FA: 449,877 (43.11%) Vazquez: 100% P

ARTIDO INDEPENDIENTE: 2,558 (0.2%) Mieres 100%

PARTIDO INTRANSIGENTE: 1,731 (0.17%)

UNION CIVICA: 1,323 (0.13%) Lamorte 100%

PARTIDO LIBERAL: 970 (0.09%) Vera 76.15% Diaz 14.6% Curotto 9.2%

PARTIDO DE LOS TRABAJADORES: 719 (0.07%) Fernandez 100%

The Partido Humanista (114) and the Partido Gac (278) did not reach the minimum 501 votes required to participate in October's election.

BLANK VOTES: 15,969 ANNULLED VOTES: 7,022 Low voter participation for party elections

Less than half the 2.5 million Uruguayans eligible to vote turned out for the primary, though the 45% figure exceeded the Corte Electoral's prediction of a 40% voter turnout. The vote took place in a tranquil climate with short lines of voters, following a check of the more than 4,000 polling stations set up around the country. The primary elections are not obligatory, and press reports pointed to this as a reason for low turnout.

The head of the Corte Electoral, Martinez Zimarioff, said there was a delay in the opening of various voting centers, because at the last minute many poll workers abandoned their tables and had to be replaced by substitutes. The June 27 balloting also fell behind and was complicated because voters had to choose among lists of 2,082 candidates presented by the parties, since the election dealt with superintendent races in addition to presidential candidates. There were also entries for candidates for convention delegates for each political party, which created a long selection process that complicated the vote. Twelve presidential candidates registered for the vote, but only four of them were really in the race, since the rest represented minority constituencies with no possibility of taking the national political stage.

Vazquez presents historic opportunity for Uruguayan left

The charismatic Vazquez will be running for the third consecutive time for the presidency of Uruguay, and polls show him to be favored to win. The doctor and former mayor of Montevideo succeeded in building enough consensus within his party to avoid an internal contest. His victory would be the first for the EP-FA and would undo the hegemony the country's two oldest parties have always held.

Polls show Vazquez taking between 45% and 48% of the vote, though he would have to gain 50% of the vote or face a second round. It is the most optimistic electoral scenario the EP-FA has enjoyed in its 33 years of existence and could end the alternating presidencies between the Partido Nacional (Blanco) and the Partido Colorado. The electoral history of the Uruguayan left began in 1971, when it formed the Frente Amplio, receiving 18.3% of the vote for its candidate Liber Seregni.

The movement came to an immediate halt with the military coup of 1973 and stayed on hold until the recovery of democracy in 1984. Vazquez's main opponent will be the Partido Nacional's Larranaga, and, though the EP-FA is favored in October, the number of votes for the EP-FA and the Partido Nacional were closer than had been predicted.

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