

## COSTA RICA

**Date of Elections:** 2 February 1986

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament on the normal expiry of the 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

The 1986 legislative elections were held the same day as those for President of the Republic. Primary contenders in both races were the ruling National Liberation Party (*Partido de Liberacion Nacional*- PLN) and the Social Christian Unity Party (*Partido Unidad Social Cristiana* - PUSC), formed in 1983. Their presidential candidates - Mr. Oscar Arias Sanchez (PLN) and Mr. Rafael Angel Calderon Fournier (PUSC) - campaigned on similar platforms, stressing economic recovery and the country's traditional neutrality in foreign affairs, especially as tested in relation to neighbouring Nicaragua, where the Sandinista government was battling the "contras" guerillas backed by the USA. Mr. Calderon Fournier held the more conservative views of the two.

On polling day, Mr. Arias Sanchez won 52.3% of the popular vote and the social democratic PLN retained its position as largest party in the Legislative Assembly with 29 seats, four less than before; the PUSC came in a close second, with 25 seats. The newly-elected President (Costa Rica's youngest ever) was inaugurated for a four-year term on 8 May and announced a new 21-member Cabinet.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors	1,467,474
Voters . . . . .	1,185,222 (80.76%)

Political Group	Number of Seats
National Liberation Party (PLN) . . .	29
Social Christian Unity Party (PUSC)*	25
People United Coalition (PU) . . . . .	1
Popular Alliance . . . . .	1
Independent . . . . .	1
	57

\*New party formed since the 1982 elections.

2. *Distribution of Deputies according to Sex*

Men	51
Women	$\frac{6}{57}$