

PARAGUAY

Date of Elections: 14 February 1988

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 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 have their names entered 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 for election 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 applicable to the country as a whole. 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, it is automatically filled by alternate Senators or Deputies who have also been chosen at general elections.

Background and Outcome of the Elections

As is customary in Paraguay, the 1988 congressional elections were held simultaneously with those for President of the Republic. Candidates in the latter race were incumbent General Alfredo Stroessner Mattiauda of the ruling *Colorado* (National Republican) Party, Mr. Luis Maria Vega of the centrist Radical Liberal Party and Mr. Carlos Ferreira Ibarra of the Liberal Party. During the six-week campaign, the opposition called on the electorate to abstain or spoil their ballots.

On polling day, President Stroessner, in power since 1954, was overwhelmingly re-elected to an eighth term amid opposition charges of widespread voting fraud. In accordance with the Constitution, two-thirds of the Congress seats were also allotted to the victorious *Colorado*, the remainder being divided between the other contending parties in proportion to their share of the popular vote.

Statistics

1. *Distribution of Seats in the Congress*

Political Group	Number of Seats	
	Chamber of Deputies	Senate
<i>Colorado</i> Party.	40	20
Radical Liberal Party.	13	6
Liberal Party.	7	4
	60	30