
COLOMBIAN LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS AND PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES OUTCOMES

MAPPING THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

vali



Last March 13th, legislative elections and presidential primaries were held in Colombia. This time, the electoral arena was defined by the reconfiguration of the political forces within the Senate and the House of Representatives. Furthermore, the electoral results showed the levels of unrest caused by the global pandemic and the 2021 social turmoil with the rise and victory of alternative forces as well as the loss from more traditional parties.

This context will play an important part for the next legislative term as there are no clear majorities for any of the presidential candidates that will compete for office next May 29th. On the other hand, the presidential primaries¹ and the subsequent results redefined the electoral landscape for the presidential elections; Gustavo Petro (candidate from the left-wing) and Federico Gutiérrez (candidate from the right-wing) were the big winners, meanwhile Sergio Fajardo (candidate from the Center) and his inter party coalition (Centro Esperanza) suffer a huge blow in the aftermath of the elections.

From Vali Consultores we present a brief report in which we convey all the important information and analysis regarding the electoral results from the legislative elections and the political landscape of the presidential elections first round. Therefore, the paper is divided into three parts. The first part will analyze the Senate and House of Representatives composition; The second segment will be discussing the presidential primary results and its effects on the presidential elections first round; finally, the third segment considers the candidates' proposals for key economic stakeholders and their possible capacity to govern considering the new Congress composition.

1-In Colombia there is an electoral figure called "consultas presidenciales" or presidential consultations which is a form of inter party electoral competition. This means that certain candidates from a specific coalition (which in time contains several political parties) compete against each other for the presidential nomination. The consultations are only between the parties that belong to the coalitions, this is the reason why Colombia held three different presidential primaries at the same time. Each constituent has the right to vote only for one primary

LEGISLATIVE RESULTS

The legislative branch from Colombia is made up by two chambers, the Senate, and the House of Representatives. The Senate is composed of 108 seats and 102 of them are elected by a national district, which means any constituent from any region can vote for whichever candidate they want. Meanwhile, the House of Representatives is composed of 187 seats in which the representatives are elected via territorial districts. Colombia has 32 territorial districts; each district has 2 seats assigned by law and the subsequent seats are assigned according to the district population to guarantee a proportional representation. On paper this means that the Senate oversees national legislation while the territorial legislation is made by the House. The Senate and House results are the following:

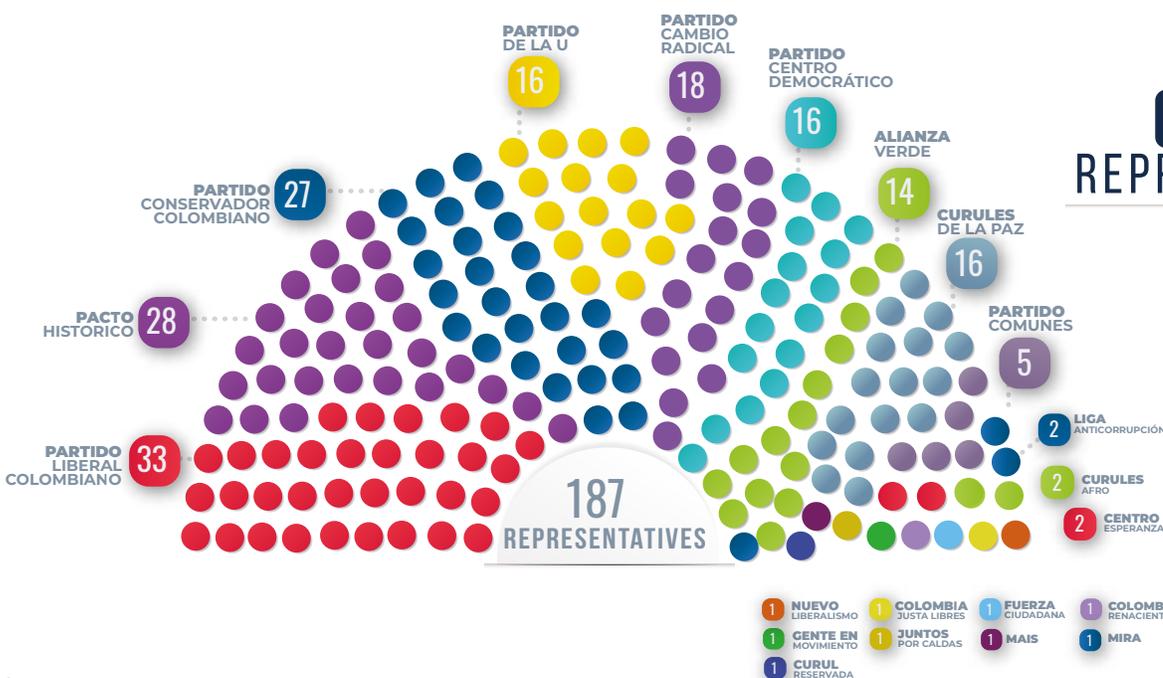
SENATE COLOMBIA

2022 - 2026



Colombia is a multiparty system, therefore for any legislation to pass in congress there must be inter party cooperation and coalitions, as one party cannot achieve majorities by itself. Usually, the coalitions are self-evident days after the election but the emergence of alternative parties such as Pacto Histórico and Centro Esperanza can hinder majority building processes. Furthermore, traditional political parties such as Centro Demorático, Cambio Radical and Partido de la U, lost their usual power. *In this landscape, 7 parties have 10 or more seats, this fragmentation means that there must be a space for negotiation and compromise between the parties as, regardless of the new elected government, there are no clear majorities for the next president to rule over (54 seats for a majority).*

Furthermore, two political parties can be considered as relevant actors in this new Senate. Firstly, Partido Liberal will be relevant for any political force, as they usually consider themselves independent from government or opposition and have a lot of intra party disputes which can affect their discipline and could lean for any possible government. Secondly, Partido Conservador can be a decisive actor as they are the second party with more seats in the Senate.



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE

2022 - 2026

- 1 NUEVO LIBERALISMO
- 1 COLOMBIA JUSTA LIBRES
- 1 FUERZA CIUDADANA
- 1 COLOMBIA RENACIENTE
- 1 GENTE EN MOVIMIENTO
- 1 JUNTOS POR CALDAS
- 1 MAIS
- 1 MIRA
- 1 CURUL RESERVADA

The House of Representatives shows a similar scenario as the one in the Senate. Once more, Pacto Histórico emerges as a considerable political force in the chamber (second with more seats), but they need to negotiate with the traditional parties in hopes to advance in their legislative agenda (Liberal, Conservador, Cambio Radical and Partido de La U add up to 110 seats, Pacto Histórico needs 94 seats for a guaranteed majority). Partido Liberal will become an important actor to negotiate with within congress and for presidential candidates as they need the votes within the chambers that this party can offer (33 seats).

Another challenge that the House has is the renovation rate within the chamber. ***Given that the new elected congress people are virtually new in politics, there is reason to believe that the more experienced legislators and the Senate will lead the main discussions in congress.*** More importantly, there is a considerable amount of political personalization as there are many new Representatives that come in as the only member of their party. This can be a huge advantage for the big parties as they can co-opt these individual legislators to pass or to slow down any bill.

Final vote count

The Colombian electoral system allows votes to be counted in two specific moments. The first moment is shortly after the election booths are closed and the electoral institutions announce a preliminary result called "preconteo" or precount. The second count is called "escrutinio final" or final vote count, in this count, votes may change for parties. For this election, the final vote count granted Pacto Histórico 3 additional seats in the Senate and 4 additional seats in the House of Representatives (19 seats in senate and 29 seats in the House). This meant that Partido Conservador, Coalición Centro Esperanza and Centro Democrático lost one seat each in the Senate while smaller parties lost their seat in the House. Furthermore, almost every big party gains at least one more seat in the House. With these new reconfigurations (specially the extra seats given to Pacto Histórico) some political parties took strategic decisions regarding their power in congress such as Partido de la U and Cambio Radical which decided to work in congress as one coalition to have more political leverage in hopes to advance in their agenda.

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES:

WHAT TO EXPECT NOW

The same day that legislative elections were held, three different presidential primaries took place too. Candidates from Coalición Centro Esperanza, Pacto Histórico and Equipo por Colombia were the coalitions that competed for their final presidential nomination. As seen in the chart below, the winner from Coalición Centro Esperanza (center) was Sergio Fajardo with 723.475 votes (31,63%) meanwhile the winner from Pacto Histórico was Gustavo Petro (left-wing) with 4.495.831 votes (77,23%), finally the winner from Equipo por Colombia was Federico Gutiérrez (right-wing) with 2.161.686 votes (52,14%).

**ELECTORAL
ABSTENTION IN
LEGISLATIVE
ELECTION : 34%**



The big winners from these primaries were Gustavo Petro and Federico Gutiérrez which meant both candidates consolidated their position as the respective candidates from the left and from the right. On the other hand, Sergio Fajardo and his coalition lost in terms of electoral power as the votes for these primaries were low in comparison to the other two electoral contests, and the votes within the coalition were spread thin too. Taking this into account it is necessary to assess each candidate's positions and possibilities ahead of the presidential elections firsthand. For presidential elections, the Colombian electoral system is arranged in a way in which a candidate must win with an absolute majority (50%+1) to become president. Usually, in the first round the votes are divided between an array of candidates, therefore an absolute majority is very hard to reach. Thus, the presidential second round allows only the two most voted candidates from the first round to compete against each other for the presidential seat. *For this reason, we consider the three frontrunners who have a real possibility to advance to the second round.*



Gustavo Petro

Gustavo Petro is the Pacto Histórico presidential primary winner and he recently named Francia Márquez (second place in primary) as his vice-presidential candidate. This has a significant effect in terms of Petro's possible allies for the presidential first round. Previous to his decision Petro had the possibility to make an alliance with Partido Liberal which roughly meant 2.329.045 votes (or translated into 33 seats at the House of Representatives) whilst Francia Márquez only achieved 783.160 votes in comparison. The decision to name Francia Márquez as his vice-president completely alienated the Partido Liberal leadership which could mean the loss of an important portion of votes and regional outreach. In other words, Petro had the possibility to secure opinion votes with Francia Márquez or to secure regional strategic votes from electoral structures established by Partido Liberal; he chose the former. This does not mean that Petro's possibilities are completely lost, most certainly he will go on to the second presidential round, nonetheless the effects of his decision would probably play an important part in the second-round outcome.

Sergio Fajardo



As previously predicted by polls, the results for this primary election were always going to be negative. Internal conflicts within the coalition between candidates turned into an electoral schism that saw the votes spread thin. As an important note, Fajardo couldn't achieve the same number of votes as the second-place candidate in the Pacto Histórico primaries. At first glance the other candidates from the coalition do not provide Fajardo with electoral certainty for the first round. Furthermore, he is a candidate whose political capital is found within the coalition not outside of it. Right now, the only possible ally he could find was Luis Gilberto Murillo (ex-presidential candidate) which can guarantee some votes in the pacific region but not enough, as the polls show Murillo only had less than 3% in vote intention. Additionally, Sergio Fajardo is debilitated in regions where he usually had electoral strength, such as Antioquia (which was won by Gutiérrez) and Bogotá (which was won by Pacto Histórico). Generally speaking, he is the candidate who faces more levels of uncertainty ahead of the first round as it is complicated to predict possible allies.

Federico Gutiérrez



Gutiérrez was the big winner of the three primary elections in terms of political capital and negotiation power gained, he could certainly be the candidate that unifies the right-wing sectors. All the other candidates from his primary confirmed their support for Gutiérrez and the legislative results from the coalition parties (Partido Conservador, Partido MIRA, Cambio Radical and Partido de La U) have considerable seats to negotiate as a coalition. Additionally, the door closed by Gustavo Petro to Partido Liberal could be opened to Gutiérrez and he could win regional outreach. Furthermore, one day after the primaries, Oscar Iván Zuluaga, who was the candidate for the government party (Centro Democrático) announced his withdrawal from the presidential race and subsequent adherence to Gutiérrez campaign. Therefore, Gutiérrez is the presidential candidate with more space to negotiate with an array of political parties and important stakeholders to compete against Gustavo Petro and Sergio Fajardo.

Throughout the primary's campaigns, the three presidential candidates presented their proposal over some key economic factors that are of interest for certain stakeholders. Their stance on some topics can be the differential factor which can lead them to win the race. The following chart describes the proposals in health, infrastructure, mining policy, agriculture and telecommunications from the main presidential candidates (Gustavo Petro, Federico Gutiérrez and Sergio Fajardo). Afterwards we analyze in a broad sense the capacity to govern for each candidate if they are to become president.

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES AND STAKEHOLDERS

ECONOMIC SECTOR	CANDIDATE		
	Gustavo Petro Pacto Histórico	Sergio Fajardo Centro Esperanza	Federico Gutiérrez Equipo por Colombia
HEALTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical reform by eliminating HPC'S and consolidating a Public Health System Medicine price control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical reform unifying HPC with Public health systems Medicine price control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal information system for medical systems No reform proposal
AGRICULTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agrochemical prohibition (glyphosate) Tariff increases for imported products Agricultural products price control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of the National industry of natural agrochemicals Green taxes Inversion for agricultural technological development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial agreements with small and medium enterprises State sponsored financial risk fund for natural disasters Economic incentives for agricultural development
MINING POLICY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow coal mining until current reserves run out Stop current explorations for oil extraction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fracking prohibition Environmental license regulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep mining/ environmental sensitive mining Environmental license regulation
INFRASTRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Railroad plan Infrastructural improvement for tertiary roads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure improvement for roads to incentivize and improve commerce and production lines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the current government plans for infrastructure New public-private sector alliance to develop roads
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal Internet access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internet for educational promotion Infrastructure development for optic fiber Public sector digitalization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural connectivity via 5G

The three candidates have a diverse programmatic agenda in terms of what they are trying to achieve once they are in office. It is important to note that each specific proposal can have or cannot have some specific support in congress which will require a more thorough analysis for each candidate. Nonetheless it is also relevant to describe in a broad sense what could be the landscape in terms of governance capacity for each candidate.

GUSTAVO PETRO.

Gustavo Petro represents a sector which recognises the need for a structural change in political institutions. In a possible scenario in which he becomes the next president he will count with the support of the 10 (5 Senate, 5 House) seats which belongs to Partido Comunes², the special electoral seats for indigenous people and probably the special electoral seats for the armed conflict victims (16 seats in the House). This means he could secure 21 seats for the Senate and 45 seats for the House of Representative; this number is way below the number needed to build a lasting majority. Petro could also count on some votes from Partido Verde as their internal divisions have brought close certain key legislators to him. Nonetheless, as a party, Coalición Centro Esperanza/Partido Verde will probably allied themselves from Petro if his proposals bring too much media attention or are very disruptive to the political system.

Additionally, Petro has completely closed the door on the possibility of an alliance with Partido Liberal which would have granted him some space for negotiations with the other parties. Now Partido Liberal is virtually a wildcard that can find alliances in parties opposed to Petro (Partido Conservador, Centro Democrático, Partido de la U-Cambio Radical, among others). Consequently, Petro's capacity to negotiate relies entirely on the capacity of key experienced legislators to attract individual personalities.

SERGIO FAJARDO.

Sergio Fajardo represents a sector which recognises there is a need for change of leadership but does not want a total political reform. Therefore, if Sergio Fajardo wins the presidency, he will have the most challenges in terms of possible alliances and coalition building. Fajardo could be a president who will not have a clear government coalition. Considering his relationship with the legislative branch he could count with 25 seats (Coalición Centro Esperanza/Partido Verde) divided into 13 seats for the Senate and 14 seats for the House of Representatives. Nonetheless, the internal division of the party could reduce Sergio Fajardo initial support as some legislators feel closer to Gustavo Petro programmatic vision.

2. Political party formed by Fuerzas Alternativas Revolucionarias del Común (Farc) former members. According to the Havana Peace Agreement this political party has 5 seats in the Senate and 5 seats in the House of Representative as part of the political participation negotiation.

In this scenario Fajardo will have to look for alliances in independent parties such as Partido Liberal, which share some of the candidate's vision in terms of economic development, agricultural development among other topics. This translates to 15 more seats for the Senate and 32 seats for the House of Representatives, but as discussed above, this does not guarantee him a clear majority to rule.

FEDERICO GUTIÉRREZ.

Federico Gutiérrez represents a sector which recognises the importance of maintaining the statu quo to guarantee stability in the political system. In this scenario, Gutiérrez could attract parties such as Centro Democrático, Partido Conservador, MIRA, Colombia Justa Libres and Partido de la U-Cambio Radical. This means he would have 55 seats in the Senate whilst 135 seats in the House, which will grant him a majority in one chamber. Nonetheless this number depends entirely on the discipline the newly formed coalition (Partido de la U-Cambio Radical) may have. About this, Partido de la U presented their political and programmatic agenda to Gutiérrez, this shows their commitment and intention to maintain a cooperative relationship with the candidate as he is a potential president. Nonetheless, Gutiérrez will have to face the alternative sectors which will declare themselves as the opposition, this includes parties such as Pacto Histórico and Coalición Centro Esperanza as their programmatic agenda differs hugely from the Equipo por Colombia candidate visions.



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