



BOLIVIA INFORMATION FORUM

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The Electoral Line-up

September 7 was the deadline for registering candidates for the December 6 elections, for the presidency and vice-presidency, as well as members of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies.

There are eight registered political groupings, with their presidential and vice-presidential candidates as follows:

- **Movimiento al Socialismo-Movimiento Sin Miedo** (MAS-MSM). **Evo Morales** and **Alvaro García Linera**.
- **Plan Progreso para Bolivia-Convergencia Nacional** (PPB). **Manfred Reyes Villa** (former prefect of Cochabamba) and **Leopoldo Fernández** (former prefecto of Pando, currently in jail).
- **Unidad Nacional** (UN). **Samuel Doria Medina** (a businessman) and **Gabriel Helbing**, (formerly a trade unionist from Santa Cruz).
- **Alianza Social** (AS). **René Joaquino** (mayor of Potosí) and **Charles Suárez** (evangelical from Santa Cruz).
- **Pueblos por la Soberanía** (Pulso). **Alejo Véliz** (peasant leader from Cochabamba) and **Pablo Valdez** (a lawyer).
- **Gente**. **Román Loayza** (peasant leader from Cochabamba) and **Porfirio Quispe** (small-scale businessman).
- **Movimiento de Unidad Social Patriótica** (MUSPA). **Ana María Flores** (ex senator for Reyes Villa's NFR) and **Guillermo Núñez del Prado** (lawyer from Santa Cruz).
- **Bolivia Social Demócrata**. **Remi Choquehuanca** (a former anti-corruption prosecutor) and **Nora Claros** (a lawyer).

Of these, only three presidential candidates will be of any real importance: Morales,

Reyes Villa and Doria Medina. Joaquino will be of significance in Potosí. The rest are non-starters. It is noteworthy that the attempts to construct a united opposition ticket failed, and that the opposition enters the campaign badly divided.

Important opposition figures were obliged to shelve their presidential ambitions at the last moment, including ex-president Jorge Quiroga and ex-vice-president Victor Hugo Cárdenas. Germán Antelo, who put himself forward as candidate for the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR - which still retains an electoral machine) settled for a senatorial candidacy for the PPB. Other significant voices within the old Podemos grouping have also stepped aside, including Walter Guiteras, Tito Hoz de Vila, Carlos Bohrt and Luis Vásquez.

With Morales well in front in the opinion polls, and the opposition divided, the real battle in December looks like being for the Plurinational Legislative Assembly, particularly the Senate (which the opposition has controlled in recent years). A further battle will take place next April, when elections for municipalities and prefects take place.

Congressional candidates. With eight fronts in the race, there will be a large number of candidates standing for the Chamber of Deputies – both uninominal constituencies and plurinominal districts (departments) – and the Senate (four per department). Of the three main forces, we can say the following:

- **The MAS.** The list for the MAS shows almost complete renewal of candidates. A number of important figures – Antonio Peredo, Edmundo Novillo, César Navarro,

José Pimentel, Gustavo Torrico, Nemesia Achacollo and others – are not standing again. Apart from the MSM candidates, René Martínez and Elizabeth Salguero are among the few to do so. The MAS list includes many people who are little known in national politics, and the social movements have played a crucial role in choosing candidates. While this was true also in the 2006 Constituent Assembly elections, it is much more the case now. At the level of candidacies for the Senate, some important independents have been included in the MAS list. They include Ana Maria Romero de Campero, the well-respected former ombudsman, who will top the MAS list in La Paz.

- **The PPB.** Key people accompanying Reyes Villa and Fernández are German Antelo, previously standing for the MNR and who is close to the corporate business interests of Santa Cruz, and Pablo Klinsky, hitherto one of the most conservative deputies for Podemos. Roger Pinto, a conservative senator for Pando, is also on the PPB list. Lourdes Millares, a conservative Podemos deputy for Chuquisaca, abandoned Jorge Quiroga, the former Podemos leader, at the last minute. The PPB seems to bring together some of the most conservative elements in the opposition, many linked to die-hard landowning elites bitterly opposed to ideas of agrarian reform, and the group of prefects who have been in opposition to the Morales government over recent years.
- **UN.** UN stood apart from Podemos in the existing Congress, and was originally a splinter group from the Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR). Its most important adhesion this time is Oscar Ortiz, an ultra-conservative senator for Santa Cruz who split off from Podemos earlier this year. He brings a number of other former Podemistas to the UN ticket. The alliance would seem to represent the interests of industrialists and entrepreneurs, although Ortiz's presence is a signal of support also from Santa Cruz agro-industrial interests. It is hard to know whether it will be a force for modernising

industrialists or rather retrograde landowners. There will be a splitting of the opposition vote in Santa Cruz.

- **Other lists.** There are three other lists with indigenous leaders, which will challenge the MAS in its own heartland: the AS with Joaquino (mainly in Potosí), Pulso with Véliz, and Gente with Loayza. Felipe Quispe, the former presidential candidate for the Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti (MIP), has joined the Gente list.

Despite its divisions, the opposition's best hopes will be by seeking to win votes at regional level with strong local candidates. Also they will try to persuade those who would opt for Morales to split their vote and support opposition candidates for the legislature. If recent opinion polls are to be believed, Morales has a very strong lead in terms of the presidential election. A Gallup poll recently gave him 57.7% support. The opposition focus on regional issues will also be important in building support in preparation for next year's key prefectural elections.

The electoral register. The electoral authorities (CNE) have been pushing ahead fast in their campaign to provide all voters with a biometric voting card. As of September 8, more than 2 million voters had been registered. The period for registration, which began on August 1, ends in mid-October. The CNE aims to register at least 3.5 million voters, possibly more. The introduction of the new register was an opposition demand, since it was claimed that the old register was out of date and contained many anomalies. If all potential voters can be registered, it will reduce the scope for opposition candidates to challenge the legitimacy of the election outcome. The process of electoral registration is being externally monitored by the Carter Center.

A full list of candidates for the elections can be found on the website of the CNE:
www.cne.org.bo