



Ecuador Election Update: July 2006

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2006 Election Schedule

President

First Round - October
15, 2006

Second Round -
November 26, 2006

Congress

First Round - October
15, 2006

Second Round -
November 26, 2006

Overview. With the conclusion of Ecuador's unexpectedly strong performance in the World Cup, public attention has shifted to the first round of the country's October 15 presidential and congressional elections. But uncertainty clouds Ecuadorian politics; three presidents have been ousted in the last ten years by popular protests, most recently in 2005, and nine presidents have served since February 1997. The election will be particularly challenging for presidential candidates who will not only have to win the votes of the electorate but also inspire citizens' confidence in political institutions. According to a survey by *Cedatos* in April, popular approval of Congress is at an all time low with 98% lacking confidence in the honesty of Deputies, and only 5% approving of the work being done in Congress. The poll revealed interim President Alfredo Palacio to have a 21% approval rating.

Presidential candidates in Ecuador are faced with the daunting task of attaining name identification in a political environment characterized by party fragmentation and instability. To date, 17 presidential candidates have registered their requests for eligibility with the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), which requires pre-candidates to submit a list of 100,000 signatures to qualify for the October ballot. Several candidates have materialized as serious contenders including current Vice-President León Roldós of the Ethical and Democratic Network and the Democratic Left (RED-ID) and Cynthia Viteri of the Social Christian Party (PSC). Other candidates that will have an impact on the debate are Rafael Correa of the Country Alliance party (PAÍS) and Luis Macas of Pachakutik Plurinational United Movement - New Country. Although former president Lucio Gutiérrez, ousted by Congress in April 2005, had tried to enter the race, Ecuador's top tribunal ruled against his candidacy on July 18.

With Gutiérrez out, the Ecuadorian political landscape is even more uncertain after the July 9 decision of two-time presidential candidate Álvaro Noboa to not enter the 2006 contest. Appearing on television to announce his decision, Noboa said, "There aren't guarantees that a president will last four years." A June 3 poll by *Informe Confidencial* had placed Noboa in second with 15% of voter preferences, 10 points behind the front-runner, current Vice-President León Roldós (RED-ID). However, Noboa's poll numbers had been slipping in recent months as other candidates began to develop name recognition.

In recent years, **the indigenous vote** has become a key group for building an effective governing coalition. The 2002 coalition of Gutiérrez with Pachakutik, an indigenous party founded in 1996, was instrumental in his presidential victory against Álvaro Noboa. That alliance fell apart in 2003 when Gutiérrez severed the alliance and Pachakutik ministers left the government, prompting the party to turn course and call for his removal. In July, Pachakutik announced that it would field its own presidential candidate in this year's election. After a month of high profile wrangling between leftist candidates Rafael Correa (PAÍS) and Luis Villacís (Democratic Peoples' Movement) for the support of the indigenous party, Pachakutik put its support behind party founder Luis Macas. The Macas platform may likely build on previous party objectives such as a constitutional reform to recognize multicultural society and bilingual education.

Recent polls show a very uncertain electoral picture as figures have yet to take into account Noboa and Gutiérrez dropping out of the field and Macas' recent entry. Nation-wide polls are not conducted regularly, with the majority of popular snapshots conducted at a more local level.

Candidate/ Poll	León Roldós (RED)	Álvaro Noboa (Prian)	Lucio Gutiérrez (PSP)	Cynthia Viteri (PSC)	Rafael Correa (PAÍS)	Marco Proaño (MRD)	Blank or invalid votes
Perfiles de Opinión 6/22/06 http://www.cre.com.ec	22%	15%	10%	15%	7%	----	26%
Cedatos GALLUP 6/5/06 (+/- 3.2%) * Excluding Gutiérrez http://www.cedatos.com.ec	20%	19%	N.A.	14%	8%	4%	25%
Cedatos GALLUP 6/5/06 (+/- 3.2%) * Including Gutiérrez http://www.cedatos.com.ec	18%	17%	15%	12%	7%	2%	24%
Cedatos GALLUP 5/8/06 (+/- 5%) http://www.cedatos.com.ec	23%	20%	14%	10%	7%	4%	12%

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