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# **Elections in Armenia**

## *2018 Early Parliamentary Elections*

Frequently Asked Questions

Europe and Eurasia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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## Frequently Asked Questions

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*Disclosure:*

*These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Armenian elections authorities as of December 4, 2018, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.*

## **When is Election Day?**

Elections to Armenia's National Assembly will be held on December 9, 2018. Polls will be open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

The official campaigning period begins seven days after the last day of registration and concludes one day before Election Day. In this instance, the campaign will officially take place from November 26 to December 7. December 8, the day before the vote, is a "silent" day, during which no campaigning is allowed.

## **Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?**

Citizens are voting for members of the National Assembly, or Parliament. After two failed attempts to form a government under new Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, snap elections were called. The Armenian National Assembly has a minimum of 101 seats. There are 1,390 candidates on 11 candidate lists.

## **What is Armenia's electoral system?**

Armenia has a parliamentary system of government. The unicameral National Assembly is the country's legislative body, with the prime minister serving as the head of government. Elections to the National Assembly are conducted via proportional representation (party list) vote, in which the parties with the highest number of valid votes above the minimum electoral barrier receive seats. There will be a two-tier proportional system of candidates, with deputies elected from a single, closed national candidate list and from one of 13 regional (district) open lists. At least 101 deputies will be elected in this manner, with an additional four seats reserved for national minorities, including Yezidis, Russians, Assyrians and Kurds. Members of Parliament are elected for five-year terms.

To receive parliamentary mandates, political parties must pass an electoral threshold of 5 percent while alliances must surmount a 7 percent barrier. Seats are distributed among the winning parties according to the number of votes received nationwide. Half of the seats are then distributed to the national list according to the order of candidates and half to the district lists according to the number of votes received. According to the Constitution, a "stable parliamentary majority" comprising no less than 54 percent of the seats must be achieved to form a government. Should the winning party or coalition achieve a simple majority but less than 54 percent of seats, additional seats will be assigned in order to obtain the 54 percent "stable majority." If a stable majority is not achieved through results of the elections, or by forming a political coalition within six days after the finalization of results, a second round of voting will be held between the top two parties' candidate lists 28 days after Election Day. In the interim, political parties can form new alliances, which may include other parties that ran in the first round and did not receive mandates.

On December 9, each voter will receive 11 ballots according to the number of political parties and political party alliances running in this election. A voter will choose the ballot of his or her preferred political party and place it in a voting envelope. If the voter decides to indicate his or her preference for one of the candidates from the district lists, they will mark the name of the preferred candidate before

placing the ballot in the envelope. By law, candidates listed as choices in districts must appear on the national candidate list as well. The issue of open versus closed lists had been a point of discussion during the election law reform process, though with the failure of the current Parliament to adopt changes to the electoral legal framework, the previous system will remain in place. The use of open district lists has been criticized by opposition parties and civil society previously as being conducive to abuse of state resources and vote buying. Women comprise 25 percent of political parties' national candidate lists.

Elections in Armenia are overseen by a three-tiered system of election commissions. The Central Election Commission (CEC) oversees national-level election implementation activities. Thirty-eight Territorial Election Commissions and 2,010 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs) implement decisions taken by the CEC and other superior bodies to administer elections on regional and local levels. Approximately 20,100 poll workers are expected to work on Election Day. The CEC, a permanent body composed of seven members, is elected by the National Assembly. All CEC sessions are public and streamed online.

The CEC will set up video monitoring cameras in 1,500 PECs on Election Day, livestreamed on the internet.

## **Who can vote in these elections?**

There are 2,574,916 eligible voters in Armenia as of November 2, 2018, of whom are 48 percent are male and 52 percent are female. There is a passive voter registration system in place for voters age 18 or older. The National Police are responsible for maintaining the central voter registry. Voter lists are posted on the Central Election Commission website as well as in front of each polling station for public scrutiny. Voter list inaccuracies and omissions can be reported to the police at least 10 days prior to Election Day. The Precinct Election Commissions (PECs) and Territorial Election Commissions are responsible for managing voter lists for their respective areas and resolving inaccuracies on those lists of eligible voters.

Supplementary lists of citizens temporarily in the precinct are prepared by PECs at least three days before Election Day. These lists account for temporarily relocated personnel, including military, police and patients in hospitals.

## **What provisions are in place to guarantee equal access to the electoral process for persons with disabilities?**

Ensuring physical accessibility for voters with disabilities is enshrined in the Election Code. Measures to ensure compliance with this part of the code are undertaken by local government and include installation of ramps for wheelchair access. Other materials designed to assist voters with disabilities in the polling stations are the responsibility of the Precinct Election Commission (PEC), as supported by the Central Election Commission, including the provision of appropriately-sized privacy booths, availability of magnification devices and use of braille ballot guides. PEC officers are trained to accommodate persons with disabilities as part of their general training ahead of Election Day. Use of mobile ballot boxes for voters who are hospitalized is permitted based on request of the voter.

## **Is out-of-country voting allowed?**

Out-of-country voting is not allowed for most Armenian citizens. However, approximately 729 diplomats and members of the military assigned abroad can vote via a secure electronic voting system in advance of Election Day.

## **Who can observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?**

Domestic and international organizations and individuals can be accredited to observe elections through the Central Election Commission (CEC). Domestic nongovernmental organizations can observe provided their designated observers receive training and the organization has had democracy and human rights objectives in their organizational charters for a predetermined amount of time. Political parties and candidates are also allowed to have proxies present at the polling stations on Election Day. Foreign and international organizations can observe elections if an invitation is issued by the president, the speaker of the Parliament, the prime minister or the CEC. Twenty-two domestic observation groups and eight foreign and international observation groups are expected.

All accredited observers can be present at an election commission session and in the polling station during voting. Observers can also observe the printing, transportation, storage, and counting of ballot papers and stickers, among other actions. Observers must remain neutral and not express preferential attitudes toward a candidate or political party and are not allowed to interfere with the activities of election commissions at any level.

## **What are the campaign expenditure and donation limits?**

Campaign expenditures are limited to AMD 500,000,000 (USD 1,030,000). Excessive campaign expenditures may trigger a fine or the revocation of the candidate list.

A campaign fund account must be opened at the Central Bank of Armenia by the party or candidate within seven days of registering in order to be eligible to receive donations. Political parties, candidates and individuals can contribute up to AMD 100,000,000 (USD 202,616), AMD 5,000,000 (USD 10,330) and AMD 500,000 (USD 1,033), respectively. Political parties that received at least 3 percent of votes in the last election will be eligible for state funding, which is prorated based on the percentage of votes received in the last election. Only Armenian citizens are allowed to donate to campaigns.

All political campaigns must employ staff who are trained for auditing and financial record keeping for the duration of the elections. Statements of accounts are to be audited every three days during the campaign period.

## **When will official results be announced?**

Within 24 hours of polls closing, the Central Election Commission (CEC) will announce preliminary results. After seven days, the final results summary will be released by the CEC.

## **How will election disputes be adjudicated?**

The right to petition election results is guaranteed under the Constitution. Election disputes and complaints are adjudicated for those whose personal rights are at stake, including voters, media representatives and political party representatives. Any decision, action or inaction of an electoral commission can be appealed to a higher commission or to the Administrative Court, although parallel administrative and judicial procedures are prohibited. Precinct Election Commission results can be appealed to the Territorial Election Commission (TEC), and TEC decisions can be appealed to the Administrative Court. However, petitions against final results of the National Assembly must be appealed to the Constitutional Court within five days of their announcement.

## Resources

- Armenia News [www.news.am](http://www.news.am)
- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights *Needs Assessment Report, Early Parliamentary Elections*  
<https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/armenia/401180>
- Central Election Commission of Armenia <https://www.elections.am/>
- ARMENPRESS <https://armenpress.am/eng/>