

Cuba sets course for parliamentary elections in March

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Nominating Assembly in Cuba (Source: [Juvenal Balal/Granma](#))

In Cuba, the candidates for the elections to the National Assembly on March 26 have been nominated. Last Monday, the news portal Cubadebate published a [list of all 470 candidates](#) in the parliamentary election, which is held every five years.

For the upcoming legislature (2023-28), the number of seats in the national parliament has been reduced by a good fifth, from 605 to 470. This is to maintain the proportional representation of one delegate per 30,000 voters in light of the shrunken electoral register since 2018.

Just under half of the candidates were drawn from neighborhood assemblies. The other half is made up of delegates from municipal parliaments and nominations by associations and mass organizations. To be nominated from the grassroots level, at least 50 percent of the votes cast by an open show of hands at the voters' meetings are required.

Twenty percent of the candidates work in education or health care, and women make up 55.3 percent. The average age of the nominees is 46.

President Miguel Díaz-Canel (62) was unanimously chosen as the candidate in the constituency of his hometown of Santa Clara. Raúl Castro (91) and revolutionary veterans Ramón Machado Ventura (92) and Ramiro Valdés (90) also stood again and were elected.

In the western Cuban coastal town of Cárdenas, the nominee was 29-year-old engineer Elián González, who rose to national prominence in 1999 in a custody dispute that affected U.S.-Cuban relations.

The former head of the Reform Commission and architect of the monetary reform implemented in 2021, Marino Murillo, will not run again.

By law, the Communist Party (PCC) is not allowed to participate in the candidate lineup, but most candidates are members of the PCC. Between now and March 24, the nominees will hold several meetings with the population to discuss concerns and problems in their respective constituencies.

Díaz-Canel described the election process, which this year has the motto "Better is Possible," as a "genuine expression of socialist democracy."

Cuban society today is "very heterogeneous and marked by contradictions," Díaz-Canel said at a meeting with representatives of higher education and academia following Tuesday's nomination meetings. "The most effective response to all these challenges is to promote the broadest possible public debate," the head of state said. After three years of crisis, he said 2023 must "become a better year," which includes a better-functioning parliament.

The current electoral cycle began in Cuba with municipal elections last Nov. 27. After the National Assembly is constituted, it is responsible for electing the 23-member Council of State and the president, after which it appoints the prime minister on the president's recommendation. It is considered likely that Díaz-Canel will seek a second term.