

ENROLLMENT AND UPDATE OF THE ELECTORAL REGISTER. VENEZUELA 2017.

The Electoral Register (ER) is the base instrument to carry out any kind of election. Citizens must be properly enrolled in order to have the right to vote and/or be elected*. Thus, the ER is considered the very heart of any electoral celebration. The citizens with a right to enroll are any Venezuelans who are 18 years old -until the very day of the election day-**. The execution of any election day requires doing of a number of activities that conform the whole electoral process and these are published along with the schedule. Among such activities, that need to take place before the publishing of the schedule, are the enrollment and update of the Electoral Register. The current regulations state that the enrollment and update in the ER are of an ongoing nature, this means that all citizens can enroll or update their data at any time of the year (Art.28, Organic Law for Electoral Processes, LOPRE for its initials in Spanish). During electoral years, the CNE had settled special operating centers with a deployment of fixed and itinerant centers enabled to enroll and update citizens' data all along the 335 municipalities and the 24 federal entities in the country and, in so, fulfilling the norm established in the article 33 of LOPRE that states that it is mandatory to settle these centers "in all difficult access zones and/or zones of greater concentration of people".

According to an analysis done by OGCD specialists, from the people enrolled in the ER until November 2016 and taking into consideration an increase of 500 thousand electors yearly, it could be said that approximately one million nine hundred sixty four thousand and thirty five (1.964.035) new electors were unregistered in the ER by December 2017. That is nearly two million (2.000.000) young electors between the ages of eighteen (18) and thirty (30) years old whose lawful right to participate during political election processes would have been suppressed by the non settlement of special enrollment and updating centers in the ER.

- Civic Observance of the Electoral Register. January 2017.

Within the framework of a citizen comptroller of the previous regional electoral process, REC (Red Electoral Ciudadana, a non-profit electoral observers group) designed a strategy that took place from January 23rd to January 27th of 2017 in fourteen (14) States of the country with the goals of:

- 1) Registering the CNE's behavior during the stage of enrollment and updating data in the ER facing the regional elections in 2017.
- 2) Verifying the fulfillment of the general rules of the enrollment and updating process of the Electoral Register of 2017.
- 3) Promoting the enrollment and updating of data in the ER as part of the daily activities during the regional elections process.

- Main incidents observed:

- 78% of the centers observed, during the week of January 23rd - 27th, were functioning while 24% of the offices observed were closed.
- The CNE did not set any kind of institutional messages related to the ER or the Regional Electoral Process during the days observed.
- There was a lack of materials to do any procedure in all centers observed.
- Citizens who had not yet turned 18 years old were not allowed to register
- Lack of staff in the regional offices of the CNE.

- Hostile environment towards volunteers and new electors accompanied by REC members.
- Obstruction on behalf of the National Guard (Guardia Nacional Bolivariana) in all Regional offices of the CNE.
- Regional CNE offices were closed to the public, militarized areas and offices surrounded by unofficial armed pro government groups
- Lack of enrollment equipment.
- Borrowed machines for institutional operations.
- During enrollment or updating processes, the centers requested documents non contemplated in the list of requirements (residence certificate).

*Organic Law for Electoral Processes (LOPRE for its initials in Spanish), article 27.

** According to the article 29 of LOPRE: “in order to be able to enroll in the Electoral Register, citizens must be eighteen (18) years old in the lapse between the established annual cut of the Electoral Register and the Election Day as long as this enrollment takes places before the annual cut of the Election Register”.