

## **VALIDATION PROCESS OF POLITICAL PARTIES**

### **Venezuela - 2017**

The validation of political parties is a regular process established by the Law of Political Parties, Public Meetings and Manifestations (LPPRPM, for its initials in Spanish) \*, billed in 1964 and partially reformed by the National Assembly in 2010.

According to this law, political parties should have renewed their memberships in December 2015, after the parliamentary elections held on December 6th. After a number of resorts and sentences by the TSJ (Tribunal Supremo de Justicia, the judiciary), as well as delays by the CNE (Consejo Nacional Electoral, the electoral organ), the process was scheduled for March 2017.

A first announcement was done by the president of the CNE on October 18th 2016, after the call off of the recall referendum, when she posted a press release with the electoral schedule for 2017 on the CNE's website. Such release included actions regarding the renewal of political parties. Also, it was informed that the organizations that did not get 1% of votes in the parliamentary elections of 2015, had to go through a membership renewal process, designed by the CNE, that would take place in a span of 90 days. Additionally, they announced that that the CNE had received requests by 62 parties willing to go through the process. A second announcement about the renewal was given on October 21st, after the sentence 878\*\* by the TSJ, in which it was stated that 62 organizations had lost their legitimacy. The span for the renewal process by the CNE was expanded for an additional 6 months (until May 2017)\*\*\*. In the end, only 59 organizations participated in the renewal process of 2017.

Particularities of the renewal process of 2017:

- a) Technical capacity installed: The number of polling centers in each state was determined through the amount of municipalities and it did not take into consideration the number of voters, which frontally violated the principle of proportionality, in detriment to the rights of citizens.
- b) Procedure and timing: In addition to the low number of machines and polling points set in every state, the validation process was long and unnecessary. It also used a registration and data transmission that was not audited.
- c) Renewal days: The schedule announced by the CNE to carry out the membership renewal of political parties took a total of 92 days (20 weeks), starting on March 4th until June 14th 2017.
- d) Validation days: The 59 parties participating in the process were urged to validate for 10 weekends in a row. The first 9 weekends would gather groups of 6 parties and the last weekend's group would be formed by 5 organizations. The schedule was followed the first 5 weekends. However, not only the dates of the rest of the process were moved, but also the number of parties varied.

The civic observance of REC. Main incidents in the validation of political parties:

Observers from REC (Red Electoral Ciudadana, a non-profit electoral observers group) were present during the first five validation weekends and the two repair weekends. A total of 35 REC observers in 99 polling centers in 16 federal entities in the country were part of the process.

#### Summon call:

- Opacity in the decision making
- Non usage of official institutional media
- Inexistent formal promotion of the event
- Delays in the execution of the process
- Unexpected changes and announcements
- Criteria regressive for political rights
- Arbitrariness and discretion

#### Execution

- Schedule changes barely announced
- Lack of appropriate signaling for the validation points
- Opening and closing schedules adjusted to the normative
- Irregular deployment of validation points
- Presence of security forces
- Exemplary civic behavior
- Active political campaign during the first five weekends
- Informal results every validation day
- Uncertainty, improvisation and discretion
- The constituent process overlapped the parties validation

#### Aftermath of validation days:

- Non spreading of preliminary results
- Information surrendered to political parties (data transmission) was outdated
- Correction repair without official results\*\*\*\*
- Information of followers published on the CNE's website
- 17 organizations validated

\*Art. 25 LPPRPM "National political parties will renew their memberships lists during the first year of every constitutional period, aiming to get at least 0.5% of the electoral votes", according to this law.

\*\*The Constitutional Chamber of the TSJ expanded the span for the validation of political parties for six months. October 21st 2016. <http://fundacionlaplomada.blogspot.com/2016/10/sala-constitucional-del-tsj-extendio.html>

\*\*\*See press release of TSJ: <http://www.aporrea.org/actualidad/n299225.html>

\*\*\*\*The correction repair is a phase of the renewal process through which the parties that did not obtain the number of signatures necessary to be validated could summon their members to complete it.