

These include a reliable voter list, ability of each candidate to get their message to voters, ability of citizens to exercise their vote on election day in secrecy and without intimidation, integrity of the vote count, and a transparent dispute resolution process.

Voter Registration List

Main concerns: Some are concerned that the voter registration list is inflated and has not been sufficiently purged of dead persons and non-citizens. The Venezuelan government is in the process of shifting responsibility of the civil registry to the National Electoral Council (CNE), along with the voters list. International observer missions have long recommended comprehensive audits of the voter list that would test it in two directions (list-to-field and field-to-list), but we are unaware of any such audits to date. Nevertheless, two studies described below address many of the concerns raised, and no one has reported any bias in the remaining errors on the list. Concerns about citizens not included have also been discarded. The current voter list includes 97 percent of all Venezuelans eligible to vote.

Demographic study: A study of the demographic consistency of the Venezuelan electoral register carried out by the Andres Bello Catholic University (UCAB) found that the relationship between the number of registered voters and

Pollworkers: Pollworkers (*miembros de mesa*) are chosen by lottery from the voters list and trained by the CNE. The opposition MUD reported that it received the list in July and that it has determined that there is no partisan bias in the selection.

Integrity of the Vote

General characteristics: The Venezuelan voting system is one of the most highly

RSA and the voter places his thumb on the machine to determine if there is a match: that is, the voter should have been registered in that particular precinct, and the ID number and fingerprint should match. If the ID number or the thumbprint has already been detected that day, the person is blocked from voting. If the system simply cannot detect a good match, the person is still allowed to vote as long as the ID card matches. This system is intended to address one of the complaints from both the government and the opposition in the past: in places where party witnesses were not present, the president of the voting table could “stuff the ballot box electronically” by repeatedly activating the voting machine him or herself.

It is therefore plausible that a portion of the electorate may not be aware of these changes and either unintentionally annul their vote or inadvertently select a different candidate. Although the CNE procedures are legal, questions have been raised whether this format in fact works to preserve the voters' will. In fact, The Carter Center recommended in its 2006 observation report that last-minute changes of political parties/candidates alliances should not be allowed. This would prevent the introduction of changes in the counting protocol that are not reflected on the ballot, and possible voter confusion.

Manual verification: The voting process permits voters to verify their ballots through a paper receipt generated by the voting machine. A comparison of a count of the paper

care; and teaching farmers in developing nations to increase crop production. The Carter Center was founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, in partnership with Emory University, to advance peace and health worldwide. Read more about The Carter Center at www.cartercenter.org.