

12-2-2005

## President Alvaro Uribe Launches Re-election

LADB Staff

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur>

---

### Recommended Citation

LADB Staff. "President Alvaro Uribe Launches Re-election." (2005). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur/13437>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiSur by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [amywinter@unm.edu](mailto:amywinter@unm.edu).

## President Alvaro Uribe Launches Re-election

by LADB Staff

Category/Department: Colombia

Published: 2005-12-02

Colombia's Corte Constitucional (CC) has cleared all legal obstacles for President Alvaro Uribe's run for a second term, allowing the conservative and very popular president to launch his campaign for the 2006 election. The president has created his own party but has support from the Partido Conservador, while some parties of the left are attempting to unify to put up an opposing candidate to run against him.

### *Formal announcement*

President Uribe formally announced that he would run for a second term in next year's elections on Nov. 27, saying he needed four more years to accomplish his goals of restoring security to the country and spurring economic growth. The vote will take place on May 28, 2006, and Uribe may not begin campaigning until after March 28. Uribe, a close US ally, becomes the first Colombian president in more than a century to run for re-election. The move came after his supporters in Congress passed a constitutional amendment earlier this year lifting a longstanding ban on presidential re-election. Colombia's highest court upheld the change (see NotiSur, 2005-10-28).

"I will work so that our country can consolidate democratic security, meet the social goals of eradicating poverty, and definitively root out corruption," Uribe, 53, said in a brief televised speech announcing his decision. "Democratic security" is the title of Uribe's strategy of dealing harshly in military actions against left-wing military groups like the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and the Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN).

In some polls, Uribe enjoys as much as a 70% approval rating. In the three and a half years since he came to power, violent crime has dropped, the economy has been on the upswing, and the army has pushed the guerrillas from many of their traditional strongholds. But correspondents for the BBC say there are fears that left-wing guerrillas will escalate a campaign of violence to avoid four more years of Uribe's rule.

Rebel attacks have seen bloody upswings in recent months, killing significant numbers of soldiers and civilians and contributing to a congressional censure of the defense minister (see NotiSur, 2005-07-22). Critics of the amendment allowing re-election loudly proclaimed that it has a poor track record in the region, with second-term leaders often veering toward authoritarianism. Even as Uribe was preparing for approval of his right to re-election in mid-November, the Congress was rejecting efforts to allow re-election for governors and mayors. Uribe had sought the reform, in addition to the reform that let him run for a consecutive term, but Senate leaders said there was no more time during the current session to work out the legislation.

Newspaper reports said the reform had no support in any sector of the Congress. Liberals felt that Uribe wanted the support of their mayors and governors, who hold a majority of the country's state

and municipal offices. Conservatives and other pro-Uribistas hope to take those seats from Liberals in the next election and have no interest in immediate re-election for the holders of local seats.

### *Uribe forms own party, left tries to unite*

Uribe felt sufficiently confident about his political strength that earlier this year he broke with the Partido Conservador structure that brought him to power in 2002, setting up his own Uribista party. The Conservatives have not abandoned their former member, however, and announced their alliance with him after a party vote that immediately followed his formal announcement of candidacy. He also has the backing of Cambio Radical, Unidad Nacional, Equipo Colombia, and Alas parties.

The parties of the Colombian left have also tried to unite forces to challenge Uribe. The Polo Democratico Independiente (PDI) and the Alternativa Democratica (AD) have joined forces to form the Polo Democratico Alternativa (PDA). The favorite candidate for the group appears to be former guerrilla commander and current senator Antonio Navarro.

Jaime Dussan, leader of the left-wing PDI, acknowledged that Uribe would be hard to beat. "Uribe has occupied all the political ground in the country," Dussan told local radio the day Uribe made his announcement. The Partido Liberal, the strongest opposition party, is also attempting to find a strong candidate. It has four primary candidates, the strongest being Horacio Serpa. Serpa was defeated in presidential elections in 1998 and 2002 and, unless Uribe suffers major setbacks in public opinion, would lose again in 2006.

Independent candidate Antanas Mockus, a philosopher and mathematician who has twice been mayor of Bogota, will also face off against Uribe. He enjoys popularity in Bogota, but has little national strength with which to wear down Uribe's strong support.

### *Electoral guarantees law also gets court approval*

The Ley de Garantias (electoral guarantees law) has also passed court muster, regulating the behavior of Uribe and his Vice President Francisco Santos. Among the ten "commandments" that the incumbent candidates will have to follow are prohibitions on the use of television and radio in presenting their official activities as a way to gain advantage and on the use of campaign symbols or references to candidates at the inauguration of public works or during official events. They may not produce programs of the "journalistic genre" or contract anyone to produce them, nor may they make government contracts outside of the security, defense, or fiscal realms. The two executives may not fire career government employees for "service quality" reasons or pressure them to support a cause. They are prohibited from using the presidential palace as campaign headquarters or having speeches broadcast on the national television station.

The humor section of Bogota daily El Tiempo lampooned the law's requirements, designed to separate the expansive powers of the president from his campaign effort, with its own list of commandments, including: "The President may not make proselytizing campaigns between 1:35

and 4:59 in the morning. On Sundays and holidays, the prohibition will be stricter, extending until 5 a.m....The financing for the presidential campaign may not receive support with foreign monies like dollars from Barbados, Brunei, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Liberia; francs from Djibouti, Madagascar, and Guinea; pounds from Lebanon and Sudan; florins from Aruba and Suriname." The Uribe camp faces more serious criticisms.

Accusations that paramilitary groups had infiltrated the country's secret police, the Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad (DAS), recently brought down the head of the department. There have been frequent attacks on Uribe (see NotiSur, 2005-06-17 and 2005-07-22), saying he offers impunity to paramilitaries in the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC). The prospect that the AUC has entered the nation's security services may become a major electoral issue.

Jorge Noguera, director of the DAS, left his post in the first week of November when allegations swirled around him and his department. This led El Nuevo Herald writers Gerardo Reyes and Gonzalo Guillen to say that "the overwhelming and defiant conquest of paramilitarism of almost all sectors of national life" was becoming a central electoral issue in Colombia. There have long been revelations of deep links between the armed forces and the paramilitaries.

-- End --