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## **Venezuela: Low Turnout For State Governor & Municipal Elections**

*by John Neagle*

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On Dec. 3, Venezuelans had the opportunity to select 20 state governors, 269 mayors and 1,963 city council members. According to the ruling Democratic Action (AD) party, about 70% of 9.2 million voters abstained. Voting in Venezuela is mandatory. The election marked the first time Venezuelans cast direct votes for gubernatorial and mayoral offices. Previously, the president designated state governors and there were no mayors as cities were run by councilpersons. On Monday, the AD claimed victory in 12 of the country's 20 states. Leftist union leader Andres Velasquez was elected governor of Bolivar state. Socialist candidate Carlos Tablante proclaimed himself governor of Aragua, site of important army and air force installations. Candidates of the main opposition party, the Christian democratic COPEI said they had won the governor's posts in oil-producing Zulia state, and in Miranda state. COPEI said that in alliance with other opposition parties, it had won 143 of the 269 mayoralties and 850 city council positions. AFP cited unidentified analysts who said the high abstention rate was the result of discontent over the national government's austerity plan implemented to meet requirements of foreign creditors, and of generalized suspicion of politicians due to corruption. Last week, four former ministers and six other senior officials in the government of president Jaime Lusinchi were arrested on charges of misuse of public funds totaling hundreds of millions of dollars. Lusinchi was Perez's predecessor, and also former chief of the AD party. (Basic data from AFP, 12/03/89, 12/04/89)

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