

Background

The National Assembly began the process of renewing CNE officials on April 9, 2014, one year after their terms were up. The process began with the appointment of eleven legislators to form the Preliminary Electoral Nominations Committee, comprised of six

Selection process for civil society members

Selection of the 10 members by the plenary session of the National Assembly was delayed, however, for several weeks

This same situation repeated itself during the second debate on the matter, on October 7; thus committee approval of these civil society members was deferred for the third time.⁷

Reactions from civil society

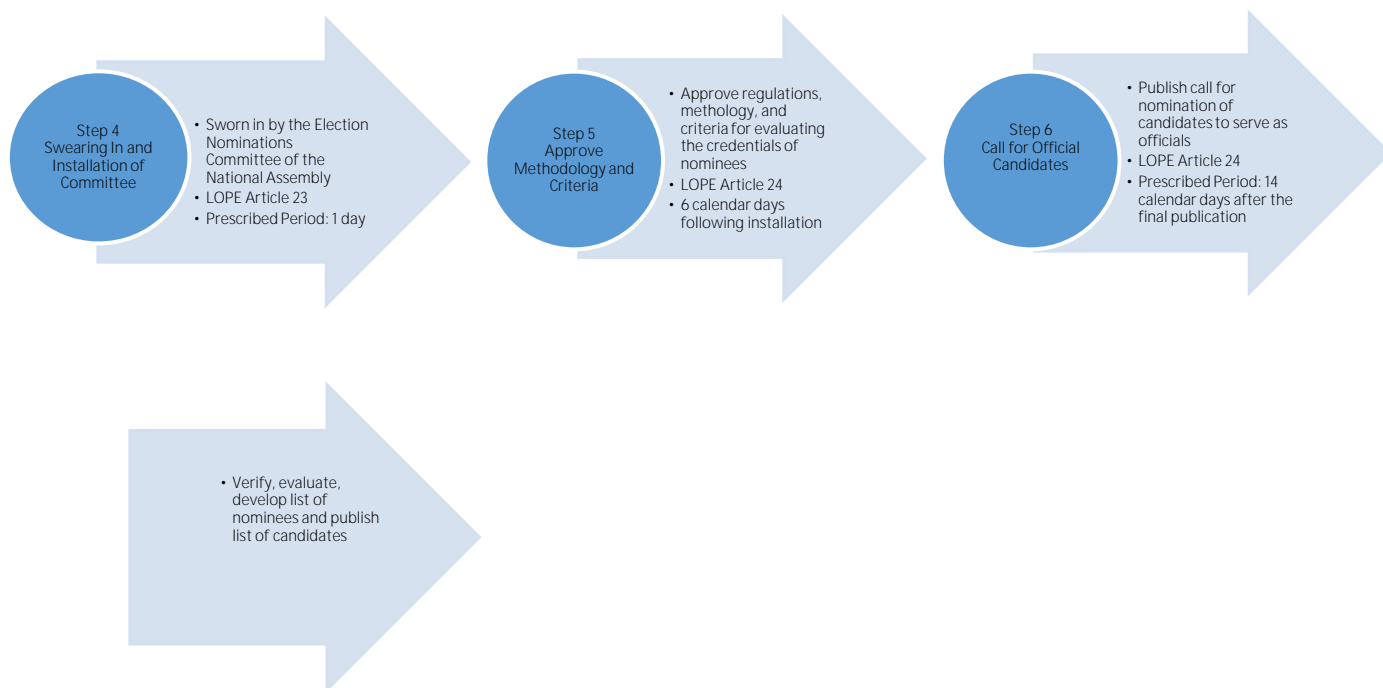
Given the possibility that the designation of civil society members of the Nominating Committee would fall to the Supreme Court as a result of the National Assembly's failure to reach an agreement,⁸ several voices from various sectors advocated for the legislature to reach a consensus. Former CNE official Germán Yépez noted in an October 13 interview, for example, that activating the Supreme Court to appoint these members should be resorted to only under extraordinary circumstances ([see note](#)). Meanwhile, the *Observatorio Electoral Venezolano* (Venezuelan Electoral Observatory-OEV), in a statement issued September 22, stressed the importance of electing officials who are impartial and professional, according to the Venezuelan Constitution. In a recommendation addressing Assembly deputies, the OEV stated that, beyond considerations of quotas for their respective political forces they were obligated to designate honorable Venezuelans who, by not being unconditional supporters of any party line, will not arouse the suspicion of any significant political actor and will be perceived by voters as capable of moving electoral processes forward under conditions of equality, reliability, transparency and efficacy, as stipulated in Article 4 of the LOPE ([see note](#)).

Ciudadanía Activa, *Queremos Elegir*, *Compromiso Ciudadano*, *Grupo La Colina* and *Súmate* all spoke out in similar fashion, requesting compliance with requirements spelled out in rules governing the selection of new CNE officials, such as allowing for public Nominations Committee sessions, so that citizens have access to the interviews of the candidates and the publication of their curricula vitae, thus enabling citizens to verify faithful adherence to the principle of independence and impartiality set forth in the Constitution. Some of these organizations also requested attendance by representatives of the Papal Nuncio or UNASUR as observers at these meetings ([see note](#)). These organizations reiterated the call made on October 13 with a new statement, urging legislative representatives to exhaust all means to reach a consensus, with two thirds of its members,⁹ on the designation of the 10 civil society members on the Electoral Nominations

Committee, once again obviating the possibility of intervention by the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court ([see note](#)).

Meanwhile, in a qualitative study based on the use of focus groups, the Center for Political Studies at the Andrés Bello

be associated with any political organizations.



Call for Nominations for CNE Directors

The Electoral Nominations Committee successfully accomplished Steps 5 and 6 in the above cronogram, approving by consensus their internal procedures and issuing a call for nominations on October 31, to close on November 13, 2014. The published criteria for candidates followed those established in the electoral law, including to have a university degree and at least ten years of professional practice, not be related to the President, and not to have ties to any political party.

Concluding remarks

Despite the delay due to the protracted appointment of civil society members of the Electoral Nominations Committee,¹³ it represents a significant achievement in terms of the process required to reach a consensus in the legislature. Representatives of the ruling party and the opposition parties alike concur in their positive assessment of this state of affairs. Deputy Miguel Pizarro of the *Primero Justicia-PJ* party and Deputy Jesús Farías of the

PSUV expressed agreement, for example, during a debate carried live on news outlet Globovision on October 15, by underscoring the wisdom that prevailed in the October 14 plenary session and the commitment to achieve consensus observed in each of the political forces to uphold the role of the National Assembly in the process of selecting Venezuelan electoral authorities ([see note](#)).

