



SERBIA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WATCH

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New Democracy, Democratic Center and Reformists of Vojvodina break with the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) and Support Kostunica.

Over the weekend, the Democratic Center (DC), Democratic Alternative (DA) and the Reformists of Vojvodina (RV) decided to support the candidacy of Vojislav Kostunica. According to BETA News, DC and DA decided to support Kostunica because his presidency, “will create the necessary political balance in Serbia and encourage efforts to preserve the common state of Serbia and Montenegro.” The RV said, “the constitutional position and substance of the autonomy of Vojvodina” would be accomplished faster with a Kostunica victory. This development marks a distinct break from the DOS coalition and could increase political pressure for organizing early parliamentary elections in the event of a Kostunica victory as DOS continues to splinter.

The Republic Election Commission

On September 18, the Republic Election Commission (RIK) accepted the candidacy of former Army Chief of Staff Nebojsa Pavkovic. The RIK had initially turned down Pavkovic's candidacy since he failed to collect the required 10,000 valid signatures for nomination. Yet Pavkovic's appeal to the Supreme Court resulted in a reversal of the RIK decision and the reinstatement of his candidacy.

This Supreme Court ruling has been regarded as controversial, especially by Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) which has questioned the decision-making processes of the RIK. Statements critical of the RIK could prove problematic as they risk diminishing public confidence in the electoral process.

Presidential Elections 2002

On September 29, voters throughout Serbia will go to the polls to elect a president. This election will replace Milan Milutinovic, elected in 1997 and since indicted by The Hague War crimes Tribunal (ICTY) for his alleged involvement in war crimes in Kosovo. This presidential election marks the first time that Serbian citizens will be able to choose between two or more democratic options for president.

NDI representatives in Belgrade are maintaining contact with candidates and activists trained in NDI's Political Party Program, and with the Institute's civic partner, the Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID), as it conducts a non-partisan election monitoring initiative. This third NDI electoral update provides a look at the campaigns, slogans and electoral developments. Throughout September, NDI will provide regular updates leading up to election day.

NDI's Serbia program is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

RIK announced that there will be 8,634 polling stations on election day, including 288 polling stations in Kosovo. According to the RIK, 6,555,405 people (including Albanians in Kosovo) will be eligible to vote.

The Campaigns

Controversy continued to mount between the respective campaign staffs of Labus and Kostunica. The Labus campaign challenged Kostunica to a debate, but the Yugoslav president declined, saying that he would debate “his would-be challenger” in the second round. In response, the Labus team has adopted the strategy of publicly posing a question a day to Kostunica on issues related to the economy and his achievements since gaining office. For example one question asked Kostunica, “At the UN you spoke about what political and economic reforms Serbia has managed to achieve. Just a few days before that in Cacak you said that those reforms have failed which is why Serbia has become a Balkan Colombia. Since you often make contradictory statements about things, who were you lying to? The heads of state at the UN General Assembly or the people of Cacak and Serbia?”

Presentation of Programs

Each presidential candidate is allotted time on Radio Television Serbia (RTS) to present their respective programs to the public. Highlights from appearances by Kostunica and Labus:

Kostunica

- Upon victory, Kostunica would urge the adoption of a new Serbian constitution in line with the constitution of Serbia-Montenegro and new parliamentary elections.
- Serbia should decentralize power into six districts, one of which would be

Kosovo, to encourage the democratic process.

- Kostunica would initiate different models of privatization and a new social program.

Labus

- In the next ten years, Labus said that borders would no longer exist in the Balkans, opening the path for increased economic progress in the region. He also stated that Serbia may be eligible for entry into the European Union by 2010 if the government in Belgrade continued with economic reforms.
- As president, Labus would ensure that Serbia have a new constitution in 2003, adopted by a 2/3 majority in the parliament and approved by the citizens in referendum.

Polling

Recent public opinion polls show Labus and Kostunica with nearly the same support in the first round of voting, but Kostunica gains a sufficient advantage for victory in a second round. Strategic Marketing (SMMRI) polling firm reported that Labus held a two percentage point lead over Kostunica (29% – 27%), while the Scan agency reports a three point lead for Labus (27% -24%). Both polls have SRS leader Vojislav Seselj running third, with between 10% and 12% of support.

CeSID

NDI partner, the Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID) hopes to field 10,000 monitors for the presidential election. Currently, CeSID is engaged in a media monitoring campaign throughout the country. A CeSID spokesperson recently stated that thusfar there have been no serious objections to the conduct of the electoral process.

Candidate Campaign Slogans (listed alphabetically)	
Vuk Draskovic, Leader of the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) http://www.spo.org.yu/	“He knows the way”
Branislav Ivkovic, Group of Citizens: SPS - Return to the Base www.spskongres.co.yu	“I know, I will, I can”
Vojislav Kostunica, President of Yugoslavia, Leader of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) www.znasrbija.org	“Serbia knows”
Miroljub Labus, Deputy Prime Minister of Yugoslavia Prominent Member of G17 Plus www.labus.org.yu	“Best for Serbia”
Tomislav Lalosevic, Group of Citizens www.serbianpresident.com	“So as not to let down our ancestors and betray our descendants.”
Vuk Obradovic, Leader of Socialdemocracy www.socijaldemokratija.org.yu	“Good for Everyone”
Nebojsa Pavkovic, Group of Citizens	--
Borislav Pelevic, Leader of the Serbian Unity Party (SSJ) and Serbian MP	“We keep our promise”
Dragan Radenovic, “Society of Free Citizens” www.predsednik.org	“While you might not care about politics, politics cares about you.”
Vojislav Seselj, Leader of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), MP in the Serbian Parliament	“Serbia in safe hands.”
Velimir “Bata” Zivojinovic Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS)	“Our Bata, Our President - SPS”

Key Dates in Election Timetable	
July 29	Official campaign period began.
September 9	Prospective candidates must submit signatures to the Republic Election Commission (RIK) and declare intention to run.
September 14	RIK announces the full slate of candidates.
September 15	The Official Gazette publishes the electoral rolls. Total number of voters should be announced by the RIK.
September 20	Ballot papers begin printing
September 26	The final electoral roll is announced. Campaign Silence period begins at 12:00 pm on 9/26.
September 29	Election Day: Polling stations opened from 7:00 am – 8:00 pm.
September 30	Polling stations counts must be completed by 2:00 pm.
October 1	Appeals must be submitted.
October 3	Official election results must be published in the Official Gazette by 8:00 pm.
October 4	Interested parties may examine ballots and election material.
October 13	Second round of election (if necessary).
December 1	Re-run of first round if less than 50% turnout (if necessary).

NDI IN SERBIA

With funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), NDI has supported democratization efforts in Serbia since 1997. NDI/Serbia works in the areas of governance, parliamentary development, non-partisan election monitoring, and political party building to bolster the institutions and practices that allow democracy to flourish. In preparation for these elections, NDI has provided training for democratically oriented political parties throughout Serbia. NDI continues to work with elected officials at various levels of government and in political parties, as well as with civic groups and special constituencies such as women and youth, to assist them in furthering the reform process.

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is a nonprofit organization working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide. Calling on a global network of volunteer experts, NDI provides practical assistance to civic and political leaders advancing democratic values, practices and institutions. NDI works with democrats in every region of the world to build political and civic organizations, safeguard elections, and to promote citizen participation, openness, and accountability in government. In Central and Eastern Europe, NDI conducts programs in Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia. For more information on NDI's Serbia programs, please contact Paul Rowland or Damian Murphy at NDI's Belgrade office at +381 11 361 2942 or Edmund Rhoads at NDI's Washington office at 202-728-5500.