

Bolivia's 2025 Elections: Implications for U.S. Policy

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Bolivia is scheduled to hold presidential and legislative elections on August 17, 2025. A possible change in government could shift Bolivia's policies after two decades of nearly continuous governance under the leftist *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) party. Internal party divisions and deteriorating economic conditions have fractured MAS's political support, increasing uncertainty about the election outcome. U.S.-Bolivia relations have been strained under MAS governance, in part due to Bolivia's [coca policies](#) and certain positions the Bolivian government has taken, for example, on [electoral outcomes in Venezuela](#). The United States and Bolivia have not exchanged ambassadors [since 2008](#).

Some Members of Congress, at times, have expressed interest in Bolivia's democratic processes and U.S.-Bolivia relations. In 2019, some Members expressed "[serious concern](#)" about irregularities in Bolivia's elections. Some Members also expressed concerns about alleged [human rights and civil liberties violations](#) under an interim government (2019-2020) and [political interference](#) in Bolivia's justice system. The 119th Congress may assess the implications of Bolivia's electoral process for U.S. relations as it conducts foreign policy oversight and exercises other legislative prerogatives.

Electoral Context

Bolivians are scheduled to elect a president, vice president, and members of the 130-member Chamber of Deputies and 36-member Senate. In the presidential race, if no candidate secures a [sufficient number](#) of votes, then a runoff election is to be held on October 19, 2025. All elected officials are set to serve five-year terms, beginning on November 8, 2025.

Some of Bolivia's past electoral processes have been marred by [irregularities](#). Allegations of voter fraud in October 2019 elections contributed to the [resignation](#) of former president and MAS founder Evo Morales (2006-2019); a [political crisis](#) and nearly a year of governance under an interim government ensued. National elections in October 2020, which observers [assessed](#) to be generally free and fair, resulted in the election of current President Luis Arce.

The Arce administration has faced several challenges. A power struggle within MAS between Arce and Morales supporters has [split](#) the party into competing factions. Bolivia also has grappled with an [economic downturn](#), despite the country's considerable [natural resources](#).

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The 2025 presidential field consists of eight candidates. Despite attempts to form a united coalition, several right-leaning candidates are running on individual platforms, including businessman and former politician [Samuel Doria Medina](#), representing *Alianza Unidad*, a coalition of center-right and right-leaning parties, and former president [Jorge “Tuto” Quiroga](#) (2001-2002), representing the right-leaning *Alianza Libre* party.

Competition among left-leaning candidates has been contentious. Morales’s candidacy is barred by [court rulings](#), and Arce [dropped out](#) of the race amid [low approval ratings](#). MAS leadership selected Arce’s ally and former interior minister [Eduardo del Castillo](#) as the party’s presidential candidate. Meanwhile, the MAS-aligned president of the Bolivian senate, [Andrónico Rodríguez](#), is the candidate of *Alianza Política*, a coalition of left-leaning and center-left parties. Morales has [criticized](#) Rodríguez for entering the contest, though he previously had been considered Morales’s political successor.

Morales has rejected the court rulings barring his candidacy. In June 2025, following the constitutional court’s decision that blocked Morales’s candidacy, Morales’s supporters staged mass protests and set up roadblocks that reportedly resulted in [clashes](#) that left four police officers and two protesters dead. Bolivia’s attorney general [announced](#) an investigation into Morales for alleged crimes in relation to the roadblocks. Morales also [faces](#) criminal charges related to an alleged relationship with a minor in 2015; Morales has denied the allegations, and his supporters [reportedly](#) have shielded him from arrest.

[Polling](#) from June and July 2025 suggests none of the presidential candidates is likely to obtain sufficient support to avoid a runoff election. Doria Medina and Quiroga led in these polls, attracting at most about 25% and 23% support, respectively. Among left-leaning candidates, Rodríguez attracted about 14% support in the June poll but dropped to 6%-7% support in July. The proportion of voters who indicated they are undecided or will cast blank or null ballots was higher than the support recorded for any candidate, which may [signal](#) part of the electorate’s continued support for Morales.

Potential Implications for U.S. Policy and the 119th Congress

The winner of the 2025 presidential election could initiate policy changes with implications for U.S.-Bolivia relations. Former President Morales expelled [U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration \(DEA\) agents](#) for alleged espionage in 2008, and successive U.S. Presidents have identified Bolivia as a major drug-producing country that has “failed demonstrably” to meet its obligations under international counternarcotics agreements each year since then, most recently in [September 2024](#). Nevertheless, some [law enforcement cooperation](#) has taken place during the Arce administration. [Quiroga](#) and [Doria Medina](#) have expressed a willingness to collaborate with foreign anti-narcotics agencies, including from Brazil and the United States, to combat drug trafficking. Rodríguez has [advocated](#) for government reforms to do so, while rejecting the DEA’s potential return to the country. Congress could evaluate the Trump Administration’s approach to U.S.-Bolivia security cooperation and consider proposals to appropriate foreign assistance related to such cooperation, if any.

The leading candidates also have proposed shifts in Bolivia’s economic policy, including pledging changes to develop Bolivia’s lithium sector. While Rodríguez [proposes](#) a state-led lithium development model, [Doria Medina](#) and [Quiroga](#) have advocated for private sector investment, potentially creating opportunities for U.S. firms. Congress could assess whether the results of the election are [likely to facilitate](#) U.S. investment opportunities in Bolivia’s lithium sector and could consider proposals intended to enhance lithium extraction cooperation between the United States and Bolivia.

More broadly, the three leading candidates have proposed different approaches to Bolivia’s foreign policy. Under MAS administrations, Bolivia sought to strengthen ties with [China](#), [Russia](#), and [Iran](#) and expressed support for authoritarian governments in [Venezuela](#) and [Cuba](#). [Doria Medina](#) and [Quiroga](#)’s party platforms propose reorienting Bolivia’s foreign policy away from authoritarian regimes and prioritizing relations with democratic countries. Rodríguez’s platform appears to pledge more continuity, including,

for example, [prioritizing](#) relations with developing countries. Rodríguez [reportedly](#) has stated that, as president, he would evaluate reestablishing ambassador-level relations with the United States. Congress may assess how Bolivia's geopolitical alignment could affect U.S. interests through hearings, reporting requirements, or other measures.

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