



AS IT IS

Chilean Voters Approve Plan to Rewrite Constitution

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Voters in Chile have approved a plan to rewrite the country's constitution.

Chileans voted Sunday on a proposal to replace the current constitution. Election officials reported that about 78 percent of voters supported creation of a new system of laws, while 22 percent were opposed.

Chile's Electoral Service reported Sunday night that 7.4 million votes had been counted, with nearly all voting stations reporting results.

Under the proposal, a group of 155 Chileans would be chosen next year to write up the new constitution. The document would be offered to voters for approval in a special election in 2022.

Chile's current constitution was approved during the rule of General Augusto Pinochet. It became the law of the land at a time when political parties were banned, and the government enforced heavy **censorship**. That constitution was approved by 66 percent of voters in 1980. But critics say many Chileans felt pressured at the time to accept it. The government was known to have arrested or killed suspected political opponents following the overthrow of the elected president, Salvador Allende.

Sunday's vote came after hundreds of thousands of Chileans repeatedly took to the streets in protests that often turned violent.

The vote was to take place in April but was delayed because of the COVID-19 health crisis. The pandemic has killed about 13,800 Chileans this year.

President Sebastian Pinera is urging Chileans to unite behind a new constitution that can provide “a home for everyone.” The document should include “the **legacy** of past generations, the will of present generations and the hopes of generations to come,” Pinera said.

Among issues likely to be considered are recognition of Chile’s **indigenous** Mapuche, stronger rights for workers and privatized systems for healthcare, education and retirement.

In the capital, Santiago, tens of thousands of people took to the streets to celebrate Sunday night. One celebrant, Paulina León, told The Associated Press the election results demonstrated the will of the people who had taken part in earlier protests.

“I was part of the marches a year ago and I have to take care of my decision and help build a **dignified** constitution.”

Felipe Caviedes also celebrated the results. “I am part of the social **diversity** that was **marginalized** 30 years in this country and now, at last, we can create it ourselves. Now there are real changes coming,” he said.

I’m Bryan Lynn.

The Associated Press and Reuters reported on this story. Bryan Lynn adapted the reports for VOA Learning English. George Grow was the editor.

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Words in This Story

ensorship – *n.* the process of removing opinions from books, movies, letters and other media

legacy – *n.* a situation caused by something from an earlier time.

indigenous – *adj.* having always lived or existed in a place

dignified – *adj.* behaving in a way that makes people respect you

diversity – *n.* a situation in which many different kinds of things or people are included in something

marginalize – *v.* to treat someone or something as if they are not important
