Political Profile

Government and Political Conditions

Brazil is a federal republic with 26 states and a federal district. The 1988 constitution grants broad powers to the federal government, made up of executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The president holds office for four years, with the right to re-election for an additional four-year term, and appoints his own cabinet. There are 81 senators, three for each state and the Federal District, and 513 deputies. Senate terms are eight years, staggered so that two-thirds of the upper house is up for election at one time and one-third four years later. Chamber terms are four years, with elections based on a complex system of proportional representation by states. Each state is eligible for a minimum of eight seats; the largest state delegation (Sao Paulo's) is capped at 70 seats. This system is weighted in favor of geographically large but sparsely populated states.

Nineteen political parties are represented in Congress. Since representatives to the lower house might switch parties, the proportion of congressional seats held by particular parties can change. The major political parties are:

- Workers' Party (PT-center-left)
- Democrats (DEM-center-right)
- Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB-center)
- Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB-center-left)
- Green Party (PV-left)
- Socialism and Freedom Party (Psol-left)
- Brazilian Labor Party (PTB-center-right)
- Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB-left)
- Democratic Labor Party (PDT-left)
- Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB-left)
President Lula was re-elected on October 29, 2006 in a second round victory with over 60% of the
vote, over Geraldo Alckmin of the PSDB. Lula's PT party failed to win a majority in either the
lower or upper houses in concurrent legislative elections and was obliged to form a coalition with
the centrist PMDB party--which won the most seats in the lower house and ended up with the
largest number in the Senate--and a collection of minor parties. The PT won five of twenty-seven
governorships, but the opposition PSDB remains in control of the critical states of Sao Paulo and
Minas Gerais. The PMDB, as in the legislative elections, won the most governorships of any one
party, controlling seven states. Because of the mandatory revenue allocation to states and
municipalities provided for in the 1988 constitution, Brazilian governors and mayors have
exercised considerable power since 1989.

Lula's electoral victory came despite a series of corruption scandals that resulted in the resignation
of senior PT officials and the electoral defeat of several congressmen from parties allied to the PT.
A number of congressional investigations are ongoing, though Lula has never been linked to any of
the scandals.

Chief of State and Cabinet Members

President--Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva
Vice President--Jose Alencar Gomes da Silva
Minister-Chief Casa Civil (Chief of Staff)-- Erenice Guerra
Minister of Defense--Nelson Jobim
Minister of Development, Industry, and Trade--Miguel Jorge Filho
Minister of Finance--Guido Mantega
Minister of Foreign Affairs--Celso Luiz Nunes Amorim
Minister of Justice--Luiz Paulo Barreto
Minister of the Environment--Izabella Teixeira
Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply--Wagner Gonçalves Rossi
Minister of Mines and Energy--Márcio Zimmerman
Ambassador to the United States--Mauro Vieira
Ambassador to the United Nations--Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti
Ambassador to the OAS--Ruy de Lima Casaes e Silva

Brazil maintains an embassy in the United States at 3006 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-238-2700) but it is temporarily located at 1025 Thomas Jefferson Street NW, Suite 300 Washington DC 20007, while the permanent embassy is being renovated. Brazil has consulates general in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, and consulates in Miami, Houston, Boston, Atlanta, San Francisco, and Washington, DC.

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