

Bolivian President Evo Morales leads presidential election poll by 11%



La Paz, July 23 (RHC)-- Bolivian President Evo Morales is ahead of his closest presidential rival by 11 percent, according to a new opinion poll published by pro-opposition outlet El Deber. However, the poll shows him falling short of a first-round victory.

A pro-opposition newspaper based in the city of Santa Cruz published the results of an opinion poll they commissioned. The results showed that Evo Morales, from the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS), is in first place with 37 percent, followed in second place by opposition leader Carlos Mesa from 'Citizens Community' at 26 percent. Oscar Ortiz of 'Bolivia Says No' reached 9 percent. A number of other candidates polled between 2-1 percent. The percentage of those undecided is 18 percent according to the poll.

The survey broke down the results by region, giving Morales a victory in 6 of the country's 9 departments, with the largest lead being in Cochabamba where Evo is ahead with 55 percent. The poll also said that if the election was a two-way contest, Evo Morales would come first with 40 percent, and Carlos Mesa second with 38 percent.

Bolivian Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera spoke to reporters about the poll, by saying that if the undecided share was spread evenly, then Evo Morales would achieve a first-round victory. Under Bolivia's electoral system, a first-round victory requires 50 percent of the vote, or 40 percent if the winner is ahead by 10 percent.

Garcia Linera also offered his thoughts on why Morales is ahead, saying "The Movement Towards Socialism is a national party, it is not an improvised party or one of failed politicians; [Evo] has always been solid and he is the only one who has a government program. The rest are poorly designed scribbles, and people know it, we build jobs, welfare; we take people out of poverty"

The leading right-wing opposition candidate Carlos Mesa has been hit by party infighting and scandals after a number of his spokespeople resigned, while he is accused of accepting funds from the U.S. after failing to explain the source of large campaign donations.

Though Evo Morales is ahead by a large margin, his projected share of the vote is lower than previous electoral victories that gave him comfortable first-round victories of over 50 percent.

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