

Luis Guillermo Solis Wins Costa Rica's Presidential Election Run-off



San Jose, April 7 (RHC-AGENCIES) -- Luis Guillermo Solis, presidential candidate of the Citizens' Action Party (PAC), easily won Costa Rica's presidential election run-off on Sunday, beating his ruling party opponent who gave up campaigning a month ago.

Solis garnered 77.7 percent of the vote with results in from 77.6 percent of polling booths, Costa Rica's election tribunal said on Sunday night. Johnny Araya of the conservative National Liberation Party (PLN) garnered just 22.3 percent of the vote.

Solis' supporters waved red-and-yellow PAC flags in the streets of San Jose, and cars honked horns in celebration.

His win hands the young Citizens' Action Party its first presidential victory and wrests power from the National Liberation Party, which has been in power since 2006.

Solis, a former diplomat and historian came in ahead of his rivals in the first round of voting on February

2nd. He won 30.64 percent of the vote, while the candidate of the National Liberation Party polled 29.71 percent.

He then took a huge lead in opinion polls ahead of the run-off vote and, in a bizarre twist, Araya announced last month he was halting his campaign.

On March 5th, an opinion poll suggested Solis had the support of 64 percent of voters with his rival lagging behind with 21percent.

This prompted Araya to give up his presidential bid. He said proceeding would be a waste of money.

"It is only prudent not to spend millions on publicity, meetings and other events. We will respect the constitutional provisions, but I will refrain from any electoral activity," Araya told reporters at the time. However, he remained on the ballot as required by the constitution, and his party continued to campaign.

Solis ran on a vow to fight Costa Rica's stubborn poverty rate and to stamp out corruption. He has also promised to boost social spending, although he says he will wait two years before raising taxes.

"We want to recover that sense of solidarity, of social inclusion, and commitment to the neediest Costa Ricans that has been lost," the 55-year-old Solis told a news conference over the weekend.

He faces numerous hurdles, however, as his Citizens' Action Party will have just 13 of the 57 seats in Congress and he will need to find the money to finance social programs.

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