

Argentine Electoral Calendar – March 29, 2023

Provincial Elections

16 of Argentina’s 23 provinces have announced the decoupling of their local elections from the national electoral cycle, meaning many provincial voters will take to the polls on two separate occasions this year—first to elect their state lawmakers and again to elect their federal representatives. Argentina’s federal system devolves certain prerogatives to the country’s provinces. Among those is the right to set local election dates, a license that many of the country’s federated states have exercised over the last few decades. During the last general elections in 2019, only three provinces kept their local votes in-sync with the federal electoral calendar. Provinces also decide how their local parties conduct the nomination process. While most have primary elections, some, such as Neuquén and Río Negro, allow party leadership to choose a nominee.

Provincial authorities de-link their local votes from national elections for a number of reasons, including voter disenchantment with national politics. The number of vote decouplings so far this year indicates that many provincial actors perceive their national-level allies to be potential electoral drags and prefer to be judged separately by local voters. This is very likely the case for provincial executives aligned with the governing *Frente de Todos* (FdT) coalition, whose leader, President Alberto Fernández, maintains low approval ratings. For the increasingly unpopular ruling bloc, the decouplings could prove troublesome during federal elections as local coalition representatives could struggle to mobilize disillusioned voters to turn out on various separate occasions. In *Juntos por el Cambio*, uncertainty surrounding candidacies has generated unease in local branches of the opposition coalition, causing provincial affiliates, such as that of Mendoza, to favor electoral decoupling.

Federal Elections

National-level elections kick off with the Open, Simultaneous, and Obligatory Primaries (PASOs) to select presidential candidates. The votes are set to take place on August 13, and competition is heating up in both major coalitions. President Alberto Fernández is so far the only member of *Frente de Todos* to have stated his intention to run, but Economy Minister Sergio Massa is weighing his own potential at the polls. The degree to which he is perceived as an effective steward of the economy will determine whether or not Massa launches a campaign (see January’s [Political Climate](#)



[Report](#), ps. 3, 8). While Vice President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner has said that she will not stand for any elected office, her base is calling on her to run. Kirchner's decision comes as her supporters argue that the judiciary is working to "proscribe" her from politics (see February's [Political Climate Report](#), p. 4), and her choice will necessarily impact the outcome of *Frente de Todos'* primary. Argentine Ambassador to Brazil and 2015 presidential candidate Daniel Scioli has suggested that he might consider launching a campaign. And while he has denied having presidential ambitions, Buenos Aires Province Governor Axel Kiciloff could be a possible Kirchnerist candidate should the vice president not run.

Within the opposition *Juntos por el Cambio* coalition, a number of candidates have declared their intention to run. The bloc's two frontrunner candidates are Buenos Aires City Mayor Horacio Rodríguez Larreta and *Propuesta Republicana* party President Patricia Bullrich. Jujuy Governor Gerardo Morales of the *Unión Cívica Radical* has also announced that he will seek JxC's presidential nomination. Though speculation had swirled that former President Mauricio Macri might launch a campaign to return to the *Casa Rosada*, he clarified on March 26 that he will not be a candidate. **All presidential hopefuls have until June 24 to finalize their candidacies.**

On October 22, voters will take to the polls to elect their congressional representatives as well as their president. Those living in provinces that kept their local elections linked to federal ones will be voting to fill posts across all levels of government. For the presidential race, a runoff will take place if no candidate wins more than 45% of the first round vote (October 22).

Closer Look: Electoral Decouplings

- **Mendoza** decoupled its elections from the federal calendar amid uncertainty surrounding candidacies in both major coalitions.
- In **Córdoba**, local Peronist actors are far more popular than their national counterparts and wished to be judged separately from them, a calculation that informed the province's decision to detach its vote from the federal calendar.
- The **City of Buenos Aires and Buenos Aires Province's** elections will remain tied to the federal vote as major actors in both the capital city and the surrounding province identify strongly with national political figures.
- A number of **Peronist controlled provinces**, including **Santa Fe, Chaco, and Tucumán**, divorced their local elections from federal ones. Provincial actors looking to maximize their chances at the polls likely recognized that association with their national peers could prove an electoral drag.

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