

ELECTIONWATCH GEORGIA



Georgia Post-Election Watch: May 2010 Local Elections

On May 30, 2010, thousands of Georgians cast ballots throughout the country in local elections in order to elect their municipal leaders. In total, deputies of 64 municipal councils were elected to four-year terms. A highlight of the elections was the Tbilisi mayoral race. Tbilisi is home to approximately one-third of Georgia's population of 3.8 million, and is important in setting the political landscape for parliamentary elections in 2012 and presidential elections in 2013. Finally, the elections marked the first time the mayor of Tbilisi had been elected directly by the people, as opposed to the previous practice of election by the Tbilisi city council.

The race was won by incumbent mayor Gigi Ugulava, who surpassed the 30 percent threshold needed to avoid a second round. A member of President Mikheil Saakashvili's ruling party, United National Movement (UNM), Ugulava is seen as an ally of the president. The elections were competitive, and focused primarily on economic and city service issues. Following the announcement of results, Irakli Alasania and Giorgi Chanturia independently gave concession speeches, both of them acknowledging the results and pledging to work with Mayor Ugulava in his new term. This marks the first time in Georgia's recent history that a major race has been conceded without argument or threats of protest.

Candidate	Party	Vote (%)
Gigi Ugulava	United National Movement	55.2
Irakli Alasania	Alliance for Georgia	19.06
Giorgi Chanturia	Christian Democratic Movement	10.71
Zviad Dzidziguri	National Council	8.31
Gogi Topadze	Industry Will Save Georgia	5.20

Source: [Civil Georgia](#)

Mayor Ugulava will work with a city council that is dominated by the UNM, which took all 25 single mandate seats and 14 of the 25 proportional seats. The Alliance for Georgia will hold five seats capturing 18 percent of the vote, followed by Christian Democratic Movement's three seats (12 percent) and National Council with two seats (8.2 percent). The remaining seat belongs to Industry Will Save Georgia which mustered a little more than six percent. Parties and blocs earning more than five percent of the vote nationwide will also have the ability to seat their members on the Central Election Commission in expectation of the 2012 parliamentary elections.

In city councils outside of the capitol, the UNM gained 66 percent of the votes, followed by the Christian Democratic Movement with 12 percent, Alliance for Georgia with nine percent, and National Council with 6.7 percent. Only one of the remaining other 13 registered parties captured more than a handful of votes as Industry Will Save Georgia

took 4.19 percent of the vote nationwide. According to the Central Election Commission, voter turnout nationwide was reported at 49 percent. Out of 981,505 registered voters in Tbilisi, 457,903 or 46.7 percent turned out at polling stations with no major obstacles to voting reported. There is overall consensus that the local elections of 2010 marked substantial progress over past elections and met international standards.

In the aftermath of the elections, the political landscape is changing. Already, the Alliance for Georgia, which had consisted of Our Georgia-Free Democrats, New Rights, Republican and Georgia's Way parties has dissolved as an official alliance. With two years to go until the 2012 parliamentary elections, it is very likely that this will not be the last change in political alliances, as parties re-evaluate their agendas and platforms in light of their electoral performance.

The level of attention paid to the local elections by the U.S. and international communities will hopefully serve as an impetus for practice in Georgia to refocus their efforts on local and regional issues. Parties which gained representation at the local and regional levels now have the opportunity to spend the next two years actively demonstrating that they are capable of listening to constituent concerns and developing policies which will address those outstanding issues.

IRI in Georgia

One of the crucial elements in furthering democracy building in Georgia is creating and maintaining well-organized, stable political parties. After the Rose Revolution, all major political parties that did not enter the new government had lost credibility with the electorate and needed to re-build their organizations from the ground up. IRI has worked steadily since 1998 to strengthen the internal party structures of all parties, whether they are aligned with the government, parliamentary opposition or non-parliamentary opposition.

Following the presidential election in January 2008, IRI began working with several new or resurgent parties to help them build their structures and compete in the May 2008 parliamentary elections. Since the end of the 2008 election cycle, IRI has held trainings for both leadership and functionaries from nearly all major political parties in Georgia. IRI has also assisted several major parties in establishing strong women's chapters to advocate for women's issues within the party structure and the government. IRI has a long-standing relationship with major youth organizations and party youth organizations in Georgia, which it uses to train young party activists in everything from political campaign techniques and management skills to election observation. This nation-wide network of young political and civil society activists provides the backbone for future party development.

Since May 2003, IRI has conducted nationwide polling and focus groups with the aim of informing the development of governance, party platforms and ideologies based on issues of importance to the electorate.

In September 2008, IRI started a new governance program in the regions which aims to increase the capacity of regional and municipal elected officials to effectively manage their mandates, increase local government transparency, and communicate with their constituents with a greater degree of autonomy from Tbilisi.



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