

Costa Rican Voters Would Ratify CAFTA

Angus Reid Global Monitor

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A majority of decided voters in Costa Rica would endorse a commerce deal with the United States, according to a poll by Unimer published in *La Nación*. 51.5 per cent of respondents would ratify the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) in this year's referendum.

In May 2004, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua agreed to the CAFTA with the United States. The Dominican Republic followed suit in August. The agreement—which would reduce or eliminate taxes and tariffs on imports—must be approved by each country's legislative branch. To date, Costa Rica remains the only country that has not ratified the CAFTA.

Óscar Arias—a member of the National Liberation Party (PLN)—won the February 2006 presidential election with 40.92 per cent of all cast ballots. He was sworn in for the second time in May 2006. Arias supports the CAFTA and expects to have it ratified by the end of this year.

On Apr. 13, Arias announced that Costa Ricans would be asked in a referendum whether they want the country to ratify the CAFTA or not. The plebiscite—which can only be binding if at least 40 per cent of all registered voters take part—is scheduled for Oct. 7.

On Aug. 1, academic and "No" campaign leader Eugenio Trejos discussed his views on the referendum, saying, "We have pushed for debate and have had to dismiss some assertions, such as the fact that CAFTA's defeat will lead to 500,000 jobs lost. We have repeatedly stated that we are respectful of democratic institutions, but are demanding guarantees so that the process is crystal-clear and truly reflects the will of the people."

Polling Data

How would you vote on the referendum to ratify the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA)?

(Decided Voters)

Yes 51.5%

No 42.1%

No reply 6.4%

Source: Unimer / La Nación

Methodology: Interviews with 1,300 Costa Rican adults, conducted from Jul. 18 to Jul. 26, 2007. Margin of error is 2.7 per cent.

