

Most Decided Voters Oppose CAFTA in Costa Rica

Angus Reid Global Monitor

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A majority of decided voters in Costa Rica believe a pending commerce deal with the United States should not be ratified, according to a poll by Universidad de Costa Rica. 56.7 per cent of respondents would vote "No" in this year's Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) 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. 3, Costa Rican bishop Ángel Sancasimiro called on the public not to be divided by the plebiscite, declaring, "At this moment, the polarization is evident. Let's be careful; the homeland will not have a future if we are led to believe that those who think differently from ourselves are our enemies."

Polling Data

How will you vote in the referendum on the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA)?

(Decided Voters)

Yes 43.3%

No 56.7%

Source: Universidad de Costa Rica

Methodology: Interviews with 1,000 Costa Rican adults, conducted from Jun. 2 to Jun. 10, 2007. Margin of error is 3 per cent.