

Tribunal Electoral de Panama

“THANKS TO THE TECHNOLOGY NOW AVAILABLE IN PANAMA, ALL OF ITS CITIZENS CAN OBSERVE NATIONAL VOTING RESULTS IN REAL-TIME, AND IT ALLOWS THE AGENCY TO LEGALLY, ACCURATELY AND OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCE THE WINNERS WITH CONFIDENCE.”

—MAGISTRATE EDUARDO VALDES

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

INDUSTRY

- Public Sector

BUSINESS ADVANTAGE

- Panama's election processes are considered a model of fairness in Latin America and as such, has rebuilt the trust of its people, and garnered the interest of neighboring countries with similar challenges.

SYBASE TECHNOLOGY

- Adaptive Server® Enterprise
- Replication Server®
- PowerDesigner®
- PowerBuilder®

KEY BENEFITS

- Enforces democracy by achieving fair and free elections
- Allows the agency to unofficially recognize the new President Elect within two hours
- Provides high level of security through the data gathering system used for elections and other civil information

In 1990, right after the invasion, a new Tribunal Electoral was established and this agency is now one of the founding blocks of Panamanian democracy. Tribunal Electoral has since held four democratic elections—gaining high respect and is recognized as a reliable agency by Panamanian people. Tribunal Electoral has enabled Panama to accomplish the one of the most recognized democracies in Latin America. As part of this effort, Sybase technology serves as the backbone data management system.

DEFEATING THE DICTATORSHIP


The very essence of a free government is free and fair elections, but between 1968 and 1989 Panama lived under a dictatorship and democracy that was at best a rumor. Throughout its republican history, Panamanian elections were manipulated by whoever was in power. According to Magistrate Eduardo Valdes, of the Electoral Tribunal of Panama, those in power would only count their votes and would ignore most votes for the opposition. This situation came to a head in the elections of 1989, when the dictatorship declared its own victory despite several indicators that the candidate of an alliance of rival parties had overwhelmingly garnered more votes. The dictatorship was removed from power on December 20, 1989, and the democratically-elected president of the May 1989 elections was then recognized and established as president of the Republic of Panama. To guarantee fair and free elections, an Electoral Tribunal was reorganized with new Magistrates in 1990, and this agency is now one of the pillars of Panamanian democracy.

The Electoral Tribunal has three departments: The Electoral Department, which is in charge of the organization and execution of electoral processes in Panama. Its responsibilities include democratic elections, referendums, plebiscites, the voters list, electoral records, and recognition of political parties. The Civil Registry is responsible for civil records such as registration of births, deaths, marriages, etc. Finally, the Citizenship Identifications Department provides governmental citizenship documents by issuing the National Identity Card, a mandatory document that every Panamanian has to acquire upon reaching 18. Now, under the Electoral Tribunal, Panama fairly and freely elects a president, one vice president and a legislature on the national level, as well as Mayors and city councils every five years. Since 1990 the majority of the people have sided with principal alliance of the opposition, reinforcing the credibility of the Electoral Tribunal.

The Electoral Tribunal has implemented multiple IT systems to accomplish its different constitutional missions. All of them are set up to enforce democracy and all these systems are vital to achieving fair and free elections. At the core is a database of each citizen's civil information (birth, marriage, death, etc.), in order to provide documentation at age 18 to ensure fair play at the polls. The institution has a national digital network with the latest technology in order to provide decentralized service for civil registry and ID daily service. The system is so efficient that it allows the agency to unofficially recognize the new President Elect within two hours. The official declarations have been made in 72 hours after the polls have been closed for the last three General Elections and two Referendums. Panamanian polls continue to show that the Tribunal Electoral is the most trusted agency of the public sector.

AN ESTEEMED MODEL FOR THE FACILITATION OF ELECTIONS

Panama's data gathering system that is used for elections and other civil information is based on its registry of vital facts. Those facts are captured by local decentralized computer terminals connected to central servers. These terminals are located at the various Electoral Tribunal offices throughout the country, which includes the largest



public and private hospitals, all connected online. The largest chains of supermarkets also are connected on line to issue birth and death certificates. Slowly but surely remote areas are being provided with different wireless communication technologies to extend the online service. The identification documents are unique for each citizen once their birth is recorded. These digital documents with biometrics controls (fingerprint and facial) have a high level of security and inviolability, minimizing the possibility of alteration and that of a citizen voting multiple times during a single election.

Sybase Replication Server and Adaptive Server Enterprise are at the heart of the system. Replication Server synchronizes replicate copies of data on heterogeneous platforms throughout a client/server network. The system enables data movement from operational to decision support systems to meet Panama's performance needs during the data gathering process and on Election Day. This helps the Electoral Tribunal merge data from disparate sources and ensures accuracy. The macro processes are at the core of the system and the accurate results achieved by Electoral Tribunal would be impossible without the Sybase technology.

Some of the most important functions supported include:

- Internet module so that political parties can submit their long list of candidates 24x7 from their headquarters, the module automatically validating the different legal and constitutional requirements upon submission and prior to their formalization.
- Recruitment of the Impartial Recruiting Staff hired to work during the elections at the more than 5,500 voting stations, each requiring four officers. They are all recruited and trained from the general public and required to have an impartial profile subject to the scrutiny of the political parties.
- Another Internet module so that the political parties can submit their representatives at each voting station.
- Establish the list of voters based on their address, and subject to the scrutiny of all political parties and candidates prior to the elections, allowing them to vote only once, and only for specific electoral positions and candidates based on where they live.
- Develop, monitor, count votes and quickly publish the results.

Thanks to the technology now available in Panama, all of its citizens can observe national voting results in real-time, and it allows the agency to legally, accurately and officially announce the winners with confidence. With this program, Panama has become a model country in Latin America in the facilitation of elections and the maintenance of databases.

INSTILLING TRUST IN DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

The Electoral Tribunal project for democratic elections and its components have been beneficial for Panama and for the entire world. This project has promoted and sustained democracy while creating a peaceful social environment allowing businesses and individuals all over the world to trust in the Panamanian electoral process and its democratic society. This process is celebrated every five years in a free and transparent manner while remaining respectful to each citizen's civil rights. This peaceful environment and electoral transparency has allowed Panama to develop in multiple ways. The country's political transitions are smoother, and election results are no longer met with skepticism. The election system and the database that supports it also allow Panama to achieve sustainable economic growth.

WORLDWIDE PRESTIGE FOR PANAMA

Panama's election processes are considered a model of fairness in Latin America. National office holders are selected through a democratic electoral celebration distinguished by being free, just and fair. This has been a key element towards sustaining the democratic transition that has allowed Panama to bring forth its national personality and maximize its prestige around the world.

By 1990, Panamanians were tired of living in a dictatorship and prior traditional fraud politics, and were enthusiastic about the prospect of free and fair elections. Perhaps the most powerful endorsement of all: The Tribunal Electoral's performance has earned the confidence of its citizens.