

Your Guide to the
FRENCH
ELECTIONS

2012

January 2012

 **FRENCH-AMERICAN**
FOUNDATION

United States

Your Guide to the

French Elections 2012

INTRODUCTION

France, a founding member of the European Union, has a population of 65 million (including overseas territories) and is the sixth largest economy in the world. In spring 2012, six months before the highly anticipated American presidential elections, France will hold its presidential and legislative elections. With the euro zone experiencing a major crisis and Nicolas Sarkozy ending his first term as President of France in a challenging position, the upcoming election will be closely watched. What follows is your guide to the French elections and a brief overview of the French political system.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| <i>April 22, 2012</i> | First Round of the Presidential Election |
| <i>May 6, 2012</i> | Second Round of the Presidential Election |
| <i>Mid-May 2012</i> | Inauguration of the new President of the Republic |
| <i>June 10, 2012</i> | First Round of National Assembly Elections |
| <i>June 17, 2012</i> | Second Round of National Assembly Elections |

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

France's political system is organized as a semi-presidential republic, meaning that its executive branch is led both by a president and a prime minister. Current President Nicolas Sarkozy and Prime Minister François Fillon both belong to the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) party. Unlike the U.S. president, who is elected indirectly by the Electoral College, the French president is elected directly by universal suffrage for a five-year term and serves as the head of state. The next presidential election will be held on April 22, 2012, with a probable run-off election scheduled for May 6, 2012. The prime minister is appointed by the president and leads the government.



Division of Powers

The president names the prime minister, presides over the cabinet, serves as commander-in-chief of the armed forces and concludes treaties. The president may not introduce legislation but may instead only make suggestions to Parliament and the prime minister. The prime minister directs the operations of the government and, while not the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, is responsible for the management of defense policy and defense-related activities of government ministries. The prime minister is responsible for the implementation of laws and, unlike the president, may introduce bills in Parliament. Most of the president's powers are subject to countersignature by the prime minister; one notable exception is the power to dissolve the National Assembly, the more prominent of the two chambers of Parliament. (This occurred most recently in 1997 when President Jacques Chirac's decision to dissolve caused an unfavorable result. His party's majority was lost during forced early legislative elections.) Importantly, in the event of a national emergency, the president may assume comprehensive powers.

“Cohabitation”

When the president's political party controls the National Assembly, the president is the dominant player and can appoint any prime minister, typically from the same party. However, if an opposing party controls the National Assembly, the president must choose a prime minister and a cabinet who reflect the majority party. This power sharing arrangement is known as “cohabitation.”

The Cabinet

The third component of the executive branch is the cabinet. The cabinet is a council of ministers appointed by the president on the recommendations of the prime minister. Traditionally, the cabinet comprises members of three ranks. Ministers (*ministres*) are the most senior members of the Government; Deputy Ministers (*ministres délégués*) assist ministers in particular areas of their responsibility; Secretaries of State (*secrétaires d'État*) assist ministers in less important areas and attend cabinet meetings only occasionally. The number of ministries, as well as the nature of their responsibilities, can vary. Find a list of the current cabinet on the following page.

François Fillon

Prime Minister

Ministers

Alain Juppé

Minister for Foreign & European Affairs

Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet

Minister for Ecology, Sustainable Development, Transport & Housing

Michel Mercier

Keeper of the Seals, Minister of Justice & Freedoms

Bruno Le Maire

Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries, Rural Affairs & Regional Development

François Sauvadet

Minister for the Civil Service

François Baroin

Minister for the Economy, Finance & Industry

Xavier Bertrand

Minister for Labor, Employment & Health

Luc Chatel

Minister for National Education, Youth & Voluntary Organizations

Valérie Pécresse

Minister for the Budget, Public Accounts & Administrative Reform, Government Spokesperson

Gérard Longuet

Minister for Defense & Veterans

David Douillet

Minister of Sports

Frédéric Mitterrand

Minister for Culture & Communication

Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin

Minister of Solidarity & Social Cohesion

Laurent Wauquiez

Minister for Higher Education & Research

Claude Guéant

Minister of the Interior, Overseas France, Local Authorities & Immigration

Maurice Leroy

Minister of Urban Affairs

Deputy Ministers

Patrick Ollier

Deputy Minister for Parliamentary Relations

Eric Besson

Deputy Minister for Industry, Energy & the Digital Economy

Henri de Raincourt

Deputy Minister for Cooperation

Philippe Richert

Deputy Minister for Local Authorities

Nadine Morano

Deputy Minister for Vocational Training

Jean Leonetti

Deputy Minister for European Affairs

Secretaries of State

Thierry Mariani

Secretary of State for Transport

Marie-Luce Penchard

Secretary of State for Overseas Territories

Marc Laffineur

Secretary of State for Defense & Veterans

Nora Berra

Secretary of State for Health

Benoist Apparu

Secretary of State for Housing

Marie-Anne Montchamp

Secretary of State for Solidarity & Social Cohesion

Frédéric Lefebvre

Secretary of State for Small & Medium-sized Industries, Trade, Consumer Affairs & Tourism

Claude Greff

Secretary of State for Family

Pierre Lellouche

Secretary of State for Foreign Trade

Jeannette Bougrab

Secretary of State for Youth & Community Life

Edouard Courtial

Secretary of State for the French Living Abroad

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

France's Parliament consists of two chambers, the Senate and the National Assembly. Parliament passes laws, votes on the budget and monitors the actions of the executive branch.

National Assembly

There are 577 deputies in the National Assembly. The National Assembly is responsible for submitting and amending bills and voting on the budget. While both chambers must pass a bill for it to become a law, the government can decide to give the National Assembly the last word in the legislative process in the event of a disagreement between the two chambers. Unlike the Senate, the National Assembly has the power to cause a government to fall if a majority of the total Assembly membership votes to censure the government.

Deputies in the National Assembly are elected to a five-year term by direct universal suffrage in a two-round system of elections. Every five years, the full National Assembly is up for re-election. In the first round of elections, a candidate must receive more than half of the votes cast in order to win. If there is no winner from the first round, a second round of elections is held; the winner is the candidate who receives the largest share of votes.

The next legislative elections will be held on June 10 and 17, 2012. As a result of Constitutional revisions, French nationals living abroad will be represented in the National Assembly for the first time in 2012. In North America, French citizens will vote in advance on June 2 and June 16, 2012. French nationals living abroad will elect 11 deputies, one for each of the electoral districts listed on the following page.

Senate

The Senate's legislative powers are similar to those of the National Assembly. The Senate submits and amends bills as well as votes on the budget. However, the National Assembly can overrule the Senate in the legislative process in the case of a disagreement. Unlike the National Assembly, the Senate cannot be dissolved. Members of the Senate are elected indirectly by electoral colleges in their districts and serve six-year terms. Every three years, half of the Senate is up for re-election. There are 348 seats in the Senate, including twelve senators representing French nationals living abroad. The last Senate election was held in September 2011, in which the Socialist Party took the majority for the first time since the beginning of the Fifth Republic in 1958.



Electoral Districts for French Nationals Living Abroad

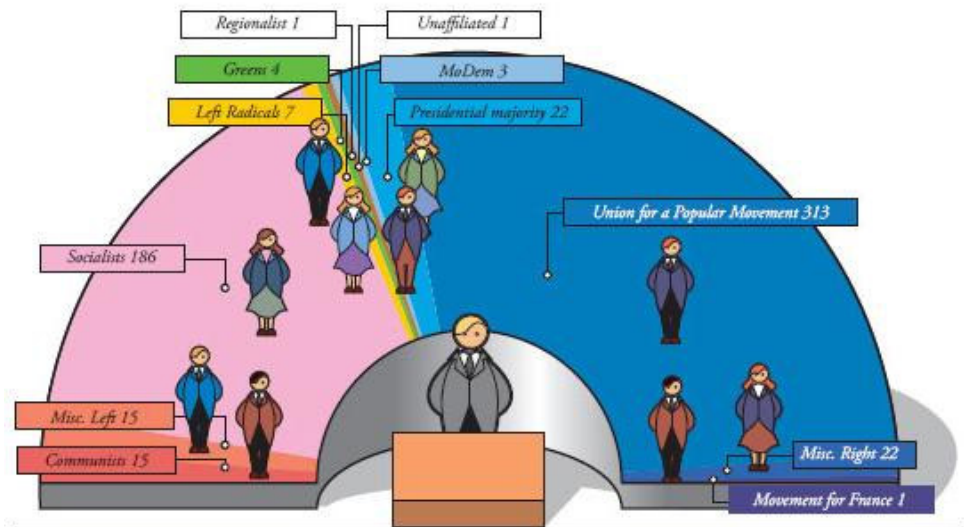
DISTRICT	COUNTRIES
1	<i>Canada, United States of America</i>
2	<i>Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela</i>
3	<i>Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom</i>
4	<i>Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands</i>
5	<i>Andorra, Monaco, Portugal, Spain</i>
6	<i>Liechtenstein, Switzerland</i>
7	<i>Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia</i>
8	<i>Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Italy, Malta, San Marino, Turkey, Vatican City</i>
9	<i>Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tunisia</i>
10	<i>Angola, Bahrain, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Oman, Qatar, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Syria, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe</i>
11	<i>Afghanistan, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, China, East Timor, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Micronesia, Moldova, Mongolia, Nauru, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Fiji, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Russia, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Vietnam</i>

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION PROCESS

The President is elected directly to a five-year term in a two-round system of elections. If none of the candidates receives a majority of votes (50 percent or greater) in the first round of voting, a second round of elections is held between the two top candidates from the first round. This system of run-off voting encourages the candidates to appeal to a wider cross-section of voters because candidates in the second round must win the support of voters whose candidate has been eliminated. Since the revision of the Constitution of July 23, 2008, the number of terms that a president can serve is limited to two. The two rounds for the next presidential elections are scheduled for April 22 and May 6, 2012.

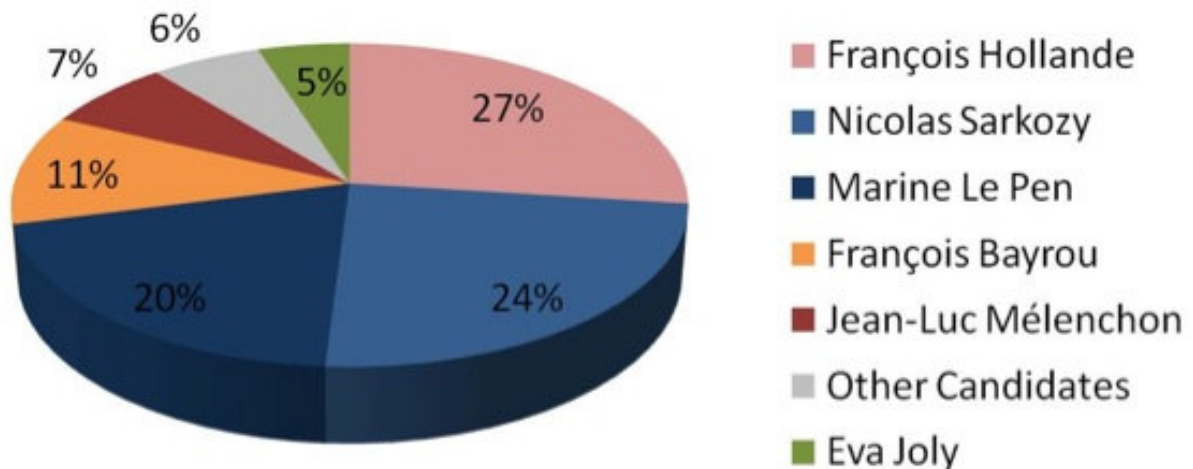
Party System

Unlike the United States' two-party political system, France has a multi-party political system. Currently, the four main parties represented in the National Assembly are: the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), the Socialist Party (PS), the New Center (Nouveau Centre) and the Communist Party (PC).



2012 Elections

In a poll conducted from December 13 to December 15, 2011, by Ifo for the *Journal du Dimanche*, current presidential candidates polled the following results:



THE CANDIDATES

Below are biographies of candidates from the main parties and an overview of their political platforms.



François Hollande, 57 and a former French-American Foundation Young Leader, currently serves as a deputy in the National Assembly and is a prominent member of the Socialist Party. From 1997 to 2008, he was the First Secretary of the French Socialist Party. He was the Mayor of Tulle from 2001 to 2008 and has been the President of the General Council of Corrèze since 2008.



Hollande was nominated through the organization of a primary election for the Socialist Party. More than 2 million people voted in the historic primary race, the first time that primary elections were open to all registered voters prepared to pay one euro to the Socialist Party and sign a declaration supporting the values of the left.

To solve the debt crisis, the Socialist candidate advocates a return to a balanced budget by 2017 and a reform of the French tax system so that earned income and investment income are taxed at the same rate. His other major proposition is the creation of tax benefits for companies hiring a young employee while keeping a senior one.

Hollande studied at the prestigious Institute for Political Studies (Sciences-Po) as well as the École Nationale d'Administration for French civil servants and government officials.



Nicolas Sarkozy, 56, is the current president of France and was elected on May 6, 2007. Sarkozy has yet to announce his candidacy as the UMP candidate, concentrating instead on his duties with the ongoing crisis over the euro and budget deficits. He may not formally announce his candidacy until later this year.



For his presidential campaign in 2007, Sarkozy made the freedom to work overtime one of his key pledges, as well as an important reform of the higher-education system. He also advocated several changes to the tax system, including a lowering of the maximum tax rate and relief on inheritance tax. The Parliament passed several reforms and laws to reach these goals during the first half of Sarkozy's term. However, most of the changes to the tax system, which proved unpopular among the middle class, were rescinded in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

Over the course of his career, Sarkozy has held many political positions, including city council member, mayor, deputy in the National Assembly, minister of the budget and minister of the interior under President Jacques Chirac. After studying law, Sarkozy studied at the Institute for Political Studies (Sciences-Po).



Marine Le Pen, 43, is a far-right nationalist politician and a member of the European Parliament. France's far-right Front National (FN) has been enjoying a renaissance since Marine Le Pen was elected party leader this year. She is credited with bringing a softer image to the party, founded in the 1970s by her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who was notorious for his xenophobic remarks and his support for the death penalty. In 2002, Jean-Marie Le Pen caused a political earthquake when he defeated the Socialist candidate in the first round of the presidential election, losing in the second-round run-off to Jacques Chirac.



Marine Le Pen advocates a protectionist ideology, and as a “eurosceptic”, she claims that the implementation of the euro caused a rise in prices and that its abandonment would lead to an increase in purchasing power. She blames globalization, inter-governmental organizations and free trade for the decline of the agriculture and fishing industry, de-industrialization, offshoring and structural unemployment.

Le Pen studied law, graduating with a Master’s Degree in law in 1991 and a Master of Advanced Studies (DEA) in criminal law in 1992. Accepted to the Paris bar, she worked as a lawyer for six years.



François Bayrou, 60, is a former member of the National Assembly of France and of the European Parliament and served as the minister of national education from 1993 to 1997.

In 2007, Bayrou was the Union for French Democracy (UDF) candidate for the second time. In the months leading up to the 2007 presidential election, Bayrou’s strong poll numbers surprised many, complicating an election that was expected to be run primarily between Nicholas Sarkozy and Ségolène Royal. Ultimately, he was unsuccessful in his attempt to qualify for the second round of the election. However, with 18.57 percent of the vote, this was the best performance by the UDF in a presidential election since 1981.



Following his defeat, Bayrou formed a new centrist party, the Democratic Movement (MoDem). He has been the president of the Democratic Movement since its creation in 2007. While some UDF politicians followed Bayrou, the majority opposed him and set up a rival party, called the New Center, which pledged to support an alliance with the UMP.

While holding centrist positions, Bayrou and his platform have historic ties with the right. Today, the MoDem and its candidate promote the “made in France” position and the development of relations between big companies and small ones. Education is a priority for Bayrou, who is also a strong advocate of the European Union. He is a fervent supporter of France’s system of *laïcité* (French secularism).

Prior to embarking on his political career, François Bayrou was a history teacher.



Jean-Luc Mélenchon, 60, is the founder and the co-president of the Left Party. He is a member of the European Parliament and served as the minister of vocational education from 2000 to 2002.

As a member of the Socialist Party from 1977 to 2008, he represented the party's left wing and advocated for the alliance of the Socialist Party with the Communist Party and other extreme left parties. In 2008, when the Socialist Party once again refused to form an alliance with its extreme-left partners, Mélenchon decided to leave the party over the disagreement.



The Left Party was created in January 2009. During the various local elections since its creation, the Left Party has succeeded in gathering the different leftist forces, including the Communist Party, to represent the “other left”. The Left Party defends an anti-capitalist and anti-free market position that is popular with the working class.



Eva Joly, 67, won the primary race for France's newly expanded environmental party, The Greens – Europe Ecology, in July 2011. This platform was formed in 2010 from the merger of the Greens and the Europe Ecology coalition. Since its creation, the party has played the role of the “third man” just behind the Socialist Party and the majority UMP, winning more seats in the Senate, the European Parliament and local elections than in previous elections.

Born in a working-class suburb in Norway, Eva Joly came to Paris as a young au pair to finance her legal studies. She now holds joint Norwegian-French nationality and will be the first dual national to run for the French presidency. She vowed to be the "candidate of mixed blood" and of "a France which doesn't accept discrimination or segregation."



Joly has promised to oppose lobbyists and financial-interest groups and suggested that investing in employment should also include investment to improve working conditions. She is a fierce advocate of eliminating France's

dependency on nuclear power.

Before entering politics, Joly worked as a judge, specializing in financial affairs, and in 1990, she joined the High Court of Paris as an investigative judge. She quickly made a mark with her tireless crusade against corruption, including her most famous case involving France's leading oil company – Elf Aquitaine.

THE FRENCH-AMERICAN FOUNDATION

Founded in 1976, the French-American Foundation is the principal non-governmental organization linking France and the United States. Our mission is to promote a dynamic French-American partnership and to advance the values that these two countries represent. We provide high-level policymakers, academics, business leaders and other experts on both sides of the Atlantic with a platform to share knowledge and best practices on a wide range of policy issues. Our goal is to inform debate and to identify solutions to common issues of global concern.

We accomplish this mission through conferences and study tours on subjects such as leadership, national security and defense, sustainability, equality of opportunity – for universal access to education, employment and health care – business, media and culture.

Board of Directors

<i>Pierre Albouy</i>	<i>Shannon Fairbanks</i>	<i>Howard H. Leach</i>	<i>Alfred J. Ross</i>
<i>Jean-Luc Allavena</i>	<i>Charles Ferguson</i>	<i>James G. Lowenstein</i>	<i>Anthony A. Smith</i>
<i>Paul S. Bird</i>	<i>Elizabeth Fondaras</i>	<i>Joanne Lyman</i>	<i>Craig R. Stapleton</i>
<i>François Bujon de l'Estang</i>	<i>Adam Gopnik</i>	<i>David T. McGovern</i>	<i>Marie-Monique Steckel</i>
<i>Anne Cox Chambers</i>	<i>Jean-Marie Guéhenno</i>	<i>William B. Matteson</i>	<i>Pierre Tattevin</i>
<i>Allan M. Chapin</i>	<i>Catharine Hamilton</i>	<i>Christophe Navarre</i>	<i>John A. Thain</i>
<i>Paul B. Clemenceau</i>	<i>Arthur A. Hartman</i>	<i>Michael E. Patterson</i>	<i>G. Richard Thoman</i>
<i>Alain Coblenca</i>	<i>John G. Heimann</i>	<i>Marie-Noëlle Pierce</i>	<i>Antoine G. Treuille</i>
<i>Walter J.P. Curley</i>	<i>John G. Heimann</i>	<i>Leah Pizar</i>	<i>Antonio Weiss</i>
<i>Michel David-Weill</i>	<i>Janet Howard</i>	<i>Douglas Price</i>	<i>Guy Wildenstein</i>
<i>Deborah Devedjian</i>	<i>Yves-André Istel</i>	<i>Clyde E. Rankin, III</i>	
	<i>Jean Karoubi</i>	<i>Felix G. Rohatyn</i>	



28 West 44th Street, Suite 1420
New York, NY 10036

(212) 829-8800
info@frenchamerican.org

www.frenchamerican.org