

A glance at Venezuela's referendum

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CARACAS, Venezuela --

A referendum before Venezuelan voters Sunday asked them to decide on 69 changes to the constitution proposed by President Hugo Chavez and his congressional allies. The revisions include the following key changes:

- Lengthening presidential terms from six to seven years. Eliminating terms limits to allow the president to run for re-election indefinitely.
- Redrawing the country's political map and allowing the president to handpick provincial and municipal leaders.
- Allowing the president to declare a state of emergency for an unlimited period, as long as "the causes that motivated it remain."
- Prohibiting large land estates. Allowing the state to provisionally occupy property slated for expropriation before a court has ruled.
- Prohibiting foreign funding for "associations with political aims." Critics warn this could be used to strangle human rights groups.
- Creates three new classes of communal property, in addition to private and state property.
- Establishing a socio-economic system based on "socialist, anti-imperialist principles."
- Granting the president control over the Central Bank, which previously had autonomy.
- Reducing the official workday from eight to six hours.
- Reducing the minimum voting age from 18 to 16.
- Creating a fund to pay social security benefits for the first time to workers in the informal economy, such as maids and street vendors.