

Italy puts new electoral system to the test

The election will be held under new rules rushed into law in December by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. He says the new system – which returns Italy to a system of full proportional representation – will ensure greater stability, but critics say it is designed to hinder the opposition from securing a workable majority



COALITIONS



THE UNION: Centre-left coalition

led by **Romano Prodi** – former prime minister and former president of European Commission

Parties include **Left Democrats** (social-democrat), **Daisy** (centre-left), and **Communist Refoundation** (reformed communist)



HOUSE OF FREEDOMS:

Centre-right coalition led by billionaire media tycoon **Silvio Berlusconi**

Includes Berlusconi's **Forza Italia**, **National Alliance** (conservative), **Union of Christian Democrats** (Catholic centrist), and **Northern League** (autonomous right-wing Northern Italian)



NEW ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Guarantees absolute majority for coalition emerging ahead in election

Chamber of Deputies

Lower house

630 seats

PARLIAMENT

Two chambers elected by universal suffrage for five-year term

Senate

Upper house

315 seats

Vote count determined on national basis. Winning coalition gets at least 340 seats (54%) even if it gets less than 54% of vote

Party in coalition needs at least 2% of vote to win a seat – **Union** has more parties below or around 2% threshold than **House of Freedoms**

Vote count determined on region-by-region basis. Winner gets at least 55% of seats in that particular region

Critics say system is not guaranteed to produce clear majority, and could pave way for instability