



Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, President of Iceland

Government Systems in Iceland

March 24, 2015
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How is Iceland Governed?

Information about Iceland's Government Systems

Iceland is constitutional republic with a president. Executive power is exercised by the Government. Iceland is arguably the world's oldest parliamentary democracy, with the Parliament, the Althingi, established in 930. Legislative power is given in both the parliament and the President. The judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature.

HITSORY:

The earliest inhabitants of Iceland were the Irish hermits, who left the island upon the arrival of the pagan Norse people in the late 9th century. A constitution drawn up in c. 930 created a form of democracy and provided for an Althingi, the world's oldest practicing legislative assembly. The island's early history was preserved in the Icelandic sagas of the 13th century. In 1874, Icelanders obtained their own constitution, and in 1918, Denmark recognized Iceland, The Act of Union, as a separate state with unlimited sovereignty.

Government of Iceland:

Iceland has a parliamentary form of government. The President and the leaders of the parties discuss which government is possible. The result is given to the parties for approval. The head of the Government is the Prime Minister. The cabinet stays in power until the next general election or a new government is formed. The ministers sit in the Parliament and every minister has a responsibility for his area.

Icelandic Parliament:

The Parliament convenes on October 1 each year, commencing in each instance a new legislative session. The role of parliament is generally viewed as being to monitor the executive branch, both the government (e.g. by means of questions to ministers), and the administration as a whole.

Islandic Constitution:

The Icelandic constitution is very similar to the Danish constitution and some articles have even been copied and translated over to Icelandic. According to the Constitution of Iceland the Icelandic Parliament and the President jointly exercise legislative power in the country. All legislation passed by the Parliament must receive the consent of the President before it becomes law. The judiciary is entrusted with judicial power and according to the Constitution, the President holds the supreme executive power, but it is in fact the cabinet that holds the supreme executive power. The Icelandic Parliament is called Althingi and is one of the oldest parliaments in Europe (established in 930). The Parliament is composed of 63 delegates. The members have parliamentary immunity and swear allegiance to the Constitution.



The President of Iceland: The President is elected by direct popular vote for a term of four years, with no term limit. The Constitution gives the president plenty of power, but in reality, he has a more representative role. This tradition has been established for a long time since the president is the successor of the Danish king, who has had a more representative role as well. The president is supposed to be party-neutral. It lies in his responsibility to build the government. The President today is Mr. Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson. He has been in office since 1996 and was re-elected for his third term 1st August 2004. He is a former Minister of Finance and was a professor of political science at the University of Iceland and a member of the Icelandic parliament before he was elected