

OCTAVIO LEPAGE

**President (equivalent to our Speaker) of the Senate
and, therefore, also President of Congress**

Born in 1922 in a small town in eastern Venezuela, Lepage (pronounced lay-pa-hay), after obtaining a law degree from the Central University of Venezuela, has spent his entire adult life in active politics as a member and leading figure in the Acción Democrática party (AD) which is also the party of President Pérez.

He was first elected Deputy (MP) in 1946, in Venezuela's first, and short-lived attempt at parliamentary democracy. In 1948, following the country's last successful military coup, as Secretary-General of AD, he dissolved the party due to persecution by the dictator's military police, and became an underground resistance fighter. He was imprisoned from 1950 to 54, and in exile from 1954 to 58, when the dictatorship was overthrown and parliamentary democracy restored.

Since 1958 he has been a Deputy and then a Senator. Once before he was President of Congress, has been Chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, and twice was Minister of the Interior, in the first presidency of Carlos Andrés Pérez in the mid-70s, and then in the AD government of then President Jaime Lusinchi in the mid-80s.

In 1988, he competed with Pérez to become the presidential candidate of AD, and although he had the support of Lusinchi, he lost. Following this, Lepage has not been considered a political ally and supporter of Pérez.

Lepage was chosen President of Congress in April of this year.

As President of the Congress, Lepage would take over as Acting President in the event of Pérez resigning, and would remain in this position for up to a month, by which time Congress is required by the Constitution to name a Provisional President until the end of the constitutional term, 2 February, 1994. At that time, the winner of the 5 December 1993 elections will take over as President.

Throughout his political career, Lepage has been a faithful AD team member and obedient cabinet minister.