



By: TA | AP Insight

Flávio Bolsonaro secures presidential bid despite headwinds



Brazilian senator Flávio Bolsonaro, one of the sons of former President Jair Bolsonaro, was confirmed as the presidential candidate of his father's Liberal Party on Saturday in a bid against incumbent President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva even as his campaign faces many headwinds.

The younger Bolsonaro still seeks a running mate and does not enjoy the support of centrist parties as his father did.

Few Brazilian political heavyweights were in attendance, in yet another sign of his troubles forming an alliance against Lula.

The 45-year-old senator's popular stepmother, Michelle Bolsonaro, a leader for many evangelical voters, was one of the notable absences among about 500 people cheering him on at the Arena Mercado Livre Pacaembu in Sao Paulo. Recently, the two exchanged barbs in public.

Still, Flávio Bolsonaro managed to bring in Argentina's President Javier Milei and expects to get endorsements from several members of the U.S. President Donald Trump administration.

But most notable damage to his campaign will be noted in those absent rather than present.

Bolsonaro has so far failed to recruit a high-profile female running mate after attempts to lure former Agriculture Minister Tereza Cristina.

Her Popular Party, which has a stronghold in Congress and was key for Jair Bolsonaro's presidency, was not expected to field a presidential candidate but its distancing from Sen. Bolsonaro has been surprising.

"That's not necessarily bad for us," lawmaker Zé Trovao told journalists before the convention began. "We can have a more ideological campaign and when time comes it will be them coming to us, having to agree to our agenda if they want to get rid of Lula and the Workers Party."

Flávio Bolsonaro "has faced a **problem each week**, sometimes two problems," said political consultant Thomas Traumann, based in Rio de Janeiro. "This convention might be the moment in which he says what he thinks, what he intends to do as president. So far, he has been on the defensive, saying the campaign only starts in August."

Lula's Workers' Party will confirm the 80-year-old's reelection bid in a convention on Aug. 2, also in Sao Paulo, one of the key battlegrounds of October's vote.

Flávio Bolsonaro faces an uphill battle for the presidency

Many of the troubles Sen. Bolsonaro has faced are self-inflicted. Support to his bid started to wane in May after he admitted he had requested millions of dollars from jailed banker Daniel Vorcaro to pay for a film about his father's life. The revelation shocked many of his allies.

Flávio Bolsonaro then visited the White House and the U.S. State Department days later expecting to get a **Trump boost**, but now many voters, business leaders and politicians blame him for the U.S. government imposing new tariffs on **Brazilian exports** of up to 37.5% as of Friday.

Even as most of Brazil was glued to the TV watching the World Cup, Sen. Bolsonaro faced another blow to his campaign.



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leaving him too.”

His stepmother, who is very popular with Bolsonaro's key base of evangelical voters, recorded a video to say Sen. Bolsonaro was being disrespectful to her in a phone conversation.

Then last week, Sen. Bolsonaro also drew criticism after repeating debunked claims on the reliability of Brazil's electronic voting system, echoing those that led the country's top court to rule his father ineligible.

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As the convention was being prepared, the senator and his stepmother made amends in separate videos.

Sen. Bolsonaro made the first move in a live broadcast, in which he apologized and added he is being “disproportionally persecuted” by others, as his father was.

Michelle Bolsonaro accepted Sen. Bolsonaro's apology on Friday, in what could be a first move of reconciliation within the family as the campaign begins.

“Let's sit down, let's talk, let's adjust details and together we will get a big army of people who do good to rescue our Brazil,” she said in a video published on Friday.

Traumann, the political analyst, says Sen. Bolsonaro will see himself in his convention with a much tougher time appealing to moderates than he did when he started his bid in December.

“He was showing himself as the moderate Bolsonaro, the one who took COVID vaccines, who is kind to his two daughters,” Traumann said.

“He has lost voters who are against the Workers' Party, but are also more moderate. Now he has the radical core of his campaign, and his attempt now is to stop that group from