

Greenland's election winners push back against Trump's wish to take control of the island

By DANICA KIRKA

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NUUK, Greenland (AP) — A party that favors a gradual path to Greenland's independence from Denmark won a surprise victory in parliamentary elections, held in the shadow of U.S. President Donald Trump's stated goal of taking control of the island.

The center-right Demokraatit Party has pushed back against Trump's rhetoric, saying it is for Greenlanders to decide the future of the strategically important territory, which holds large reserves of the [rare earth minerals](#) needed to make everything from mobile phones to renewable energy technology. The Arctic island is also home to a U.S. air base and straddles strategic air and sea routes in the North Atlantic.



Members of the Naleraq party applaud during a party after parliamentary elections in Nuuk, Greenland, Tuesday, March 11, 2025. (AP Photo/Evgeniy Maloletka)

The result should send a clear message to Trump that Greenland is not for sale, Demokraatit leader Jens-Friederik Nielsen [told Sky News](#).

“We don’t want to be Americans. No, we don’t want to be Danes. We want to be Greenlanders. And we want our own independence in the future. And we want to build our own country by ourselves, not with his hope,” he said.

Trump has been outspoken about his desire to control Greenland, telling [a joint session of Congress last week](#) that he thought the U.S. was going to get it “one way or the other.”

Moving toward independence from Denmark

A break from Denmark wasn’t on the ballot, but it was on everyone’s mind. Greenland was colonized 300 years ago by Denmark, which still exercises control over foreign and defense policy.

The island of 56,000 people, most from Indigenous Inuit backgrounds, has been on a [path toward independence](#) since at least 2009, and the 31 lawmakers elected will shape the island’s future as it debates whether the time has come to declare independence.

Four of the five main parties in the race sought independence, but disagreed on when and how.

Second-place finisher Naleraq is the most aggressively pro-independence, while Demokraatit favors a more moderate pace of change.

“What approach to independence will win the day will ultimately depend on if Demokraatit decides to form a coalition government, and if so, with which party,” said Dwayne Menezes, managing director of the Polar Research and Policy Initiative.

A surprising victory

Demokraatit won nearly 30% of the vote, compared to just 9% in the election four years ago, Greenlandic Broadcasting Corporation KNR TV reported, while Naleraq came in second with almost 25%, up from nearly 12% in 2021.

Demokraatit’s upset victory over parties that have governed the territory for years indicated many in Greenland care just as much about social policies such as health care and education as they do about geopolitics.

Nielsen, 33, appeared to be surprised by his party’s gains, with photos showing him sporting a huge grin and applauding at the election party.

He said that Greenland needs to stand together “in a time of great interest from outside,” KNR TV reported.

Danish broadcaster DR reported that Nielsen said his party would reach out to all other parties to negotiate the future political course for Greenland.

Denmark's reaction

Danish Defense Minister Troels Lund Poulsen congratulated the Demokraatit party and said the future Greenlandic government would likely have to “deal with massive pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump,” according to DR.

He added that “it’s not the case that you can just take part of the Danish Realm — the future of Greenland is based on what the Greenlandic people and government want,” DR reported.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, meanwhile, called the election “a joyful day and a celebration of democracy” in a statement Wednesday. She congratulated Demokraatit and said the Danish government would await the results of coalition negotiations.

Uniting the country

Prime Minister [Mute Bourup Egede](#) had called the vote in February, saying the country needed to be united during a “serious time” unlike anything Greenland has ever experienced.

On Wednesday, after the results were known, Egede thanked voters in a Facebook post for turning out and said the parties were ready to turn to negotiations to form a government.

His party, Inuit Ataatigiit, or United Inuit, received 21% of the vote. This is a significant decline from the last election, when the party came in strongest with 36% of the vote, according to KNR TV.

Inuit Ataatigiit had been widely expected to win, followed by Siumut — two parties which had dominated Greenland’s politics in recent years.