

Berlusconi returns to power in Italy

by UPI

ROME -- Media mogul Silvio Berlusconi has swept back into power, winning a third term as Italy's prime minister, election results Monday showed. Berlusconi, 71, defeated center-left challenger Walter Veltroni by a wider-than-expected margin, the Italian news agency ANSA reported. Projections showed Berlusconi's coalition winning in the House by 45.9 percent to Veltroni's 39.1 percent, with similar margins in the Senate prompting Veltroni to concede in a phone call to Berlusconi, ANSA said. Berlusconi succeeds Romano Prodi, who resigned after losing a vote of confidence in the Senate in January. Prodi had served since defeating Berlusconi in 2006. Berlusconi told ANSA he "always knew from the opinion polls" he would win but that with victory comes "a great responsibility." "I will govern for five years but difficult months are ahead which will require extraordinary effort," he said. Voter turnout was slightly more than 80 percent, down from 83.5 percent in 2006.

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