

MEXICO
Election Observation Mission Report

July 2, 2000

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From “perfect dictatorship to difficult democracy...” Acclaimed author Mario Vargas Llosa described Mexico’s July 2, 2000 watershed transition in this way. The historic decision by the Mexican people has set their country on a course likely to be decidedly different from its past.

For the first time in the country’s modern history, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) will not occupy the Presidential Palace at Los Pinos. In defiance of history and despite popular expectations, political maverick Vicente Fox Quesada handed the PRI a resounding defeat at the polls. Fox’s center-right National Action Party (PAN) and its alliance partner the Green Party (PVEM) also strengthened their positions in the Senate and Chamber of Deputies, furthering a trend begun in 1997 when the PRI first lost its majority in the Chamber.

Citizens in nine states—Campeche, Colima, Guanajuato, Mexico State, Morelos, Nuevo Leon, Queretaro, San Luis Potosi, and Sonora—cast votes in contests for state congresses and municipal councils. Finally, in Mexico City, voters elected their mayor (*jefe de gobierno*), the legislative assembly and—for the first time—all 16 city delegates. The election of Mexico City’s delegates is yet another breakthrough toward providing representative, accountable government. The delegates formerly were appointed by the mayor.

The International Republican Institute (IRI) deployed a 43-member delegation to monitor Mexico’s July 2 elections. The delegates were all duly accredited by the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE). IRI was invited to monitor the elections by several of Mexico’s principal political parties and the IFE. The members of IRI’s delegation monitored the vote in 12 states, including the Federal District, and four states where local elections were held. In all, IRI observers visited hundreds of polling stations and spoke with over

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one thousand voters about the election.

IRI's delegates concluded that Mexico's electoral institutions have made tremendous progress toward winning the confidence of voters. Building on the experience of the 1997 midterm elections, the independent nonpartisan Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), advanced the cause of democracy by administering an overwhelmingly free and peaceful election. Mexico's political parties furthered the democratic transition by graciously accepting the results and pledging to work together amicably to ensure a smooth transition.

The following are among the chief findings of IRI's Mexico election observation project:

- IRI's observers were impressed by the civic responsibility demonstrated by Mexican voters. National turnout was approximately 70 percent. For the most part, only minor administrative problems occurred in opening polling stations, and voting was conducted in an orderly fashion in most places.
- Special polling places (*casillas especiales*) set up to receive the vote of citizens away from home on election day, however, were an exception. A significant number of special polling places visited by IRI delegates experienced difficulties, mostly having an insufficient number of ballots to satisfy demand.
- Voters professed a high level of assurance that their candidate could win, demonstrating trust in the IFE's work. The consolidation of the IFE's autonomy and its nonpartisan efforts to involve citizens were among the most important of the 1996 reforms. The federal election administration apparatus is functioning very well.

- Election environment issues such as campaign financing and access to the media continue to dominate the concerns of voters and political parties. Although significantly reformed and much improved in 1996 to help level the playing field, laws regarding party funding and media access may be insufficient to regulate the behavior of parties and candidates. Vote-buying, voter coercion, and the use of public funds (other than those designated for parties) for partisan purposes remained lightning rod issues during the pre-election period.

Overall, the election was a tremendous success for the people of Mexico. According to IRI's delegation leader former U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker, III, "the results signify an historic opening of the Mexican political system. This opening, for which President Ernesto Zedillo deserves much credit, will prove as important for Mexico as the liberalization of the country's economic system. The country is poised to play an even greater role on the world stage."

INTRODUCTION

Vicente Fox Quesada, a rugged state governor and former Coca-Cola executive whose popular style revolutionized Mexican campaigning, garnered 42.5 percent of the popular vote and was elected the next president of Mexico on July 2, 2000.

Although the polls had the race too close to call, many analysts were surprised not only by Fox's victory but by the six percentage point margin as well. It was unthinkable only a few years ago that an opposition candidate could beat the PRI. Many believed that despite recent improvements in election administration, the entrenched party organization would ensure victory for its successor Francisco Labastida Ochoa. Instead, Mexican voters chose to move their country forward toward still greater democratic pluralism.

No single party achieved a majority in balloting for the 128-seat Senate and 500-seat Chamber of Deputies. Fox's Alliance for Change, comprised of the National Action Party (PAN) and the Green Party of Mexico (PVEM), won the most seats in the Chamber of Deputies with 224. They garnered 53 seats in the Senate. Combining the PAN and PVEM seats in the previous legislature, they held 125 in the Chamber of Deputies and 31 in the Senate. The Alliance for Mexico, comprised of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and others, lost ground in the Chamber of Deputies but increased its numbers slightly in the Senate. All opposition parties combined now surpass the PRI in both houses. The PRD maintained its hold on the mayoralty of Mexico City and the PAN won both gubernatorial elections on July 2.

The results on July 2 signified an historic opening. However, the trend towards more plural government in Mexico had been building steadily for some time. Successive electoral reforms have

opened the door to greater competition in recent years. PAN and PRD candidates made serious inroads in 1997, when they denied the PRI an absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies, and increased their governorships to seven. By July 2000, 11 states had opposition governorships.

The July 2 elections came at a decisive juncture in the country's transition to democracy. It was unlike any other election in Mexican history for the following reasons:

- For the first time, both major opposition political parties—the National Action Party (PAN) and the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD)—formed separate alliances to enhance their respective electoral competitiveness. Although there were a total of 11 political parties registered with IFE to compete in the elections, the strategic alliances reduced the actual number of presidential candidates to six.
- This was the first presidential election to be administered under the electoral reforms of 1996, which transformed the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) into an autonomous body. These reforms have leveled the electoral playing field by a significant degree, providing opposition parties with far more money and media access than before.
- July's election was the first presidential election to be administered by an autonomous Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), which has come to be widely regarded as impartial.
- This was the first presidential election to include a candidate chosen by an open party primary. The PRI's Francisco Labastida Ochoa was selected via an unprecedented, if controversial, process of open voting.

Past presidents had chosen their successor by *dedazo*.¹

- It was also the first presidential election to include an opposition candidate seen as an “outsider” by his own party. Vicente Fox Quesada began his campaign as early as November 1997 raising funds independently and creating an extremely powerful base of support, *Amigos de Fox*, outside the PAN structure. By 1999, Fox had developed such momentum that the PAN’s nomination was never in doubt.

Economic Context

This was the first presidential election in over 20 years not to be plagued by economic woes. Estimates of five percent GDP growth and declining inflation as well as a relatively stable peso contributed to a calmer political environment. By contrast, the past few transfers of power have been accompanied by economic crises—either leading up to the vote or sparking just thereafter.

Role of the Church

The Roman Catholic Church, long quieted in Mexico by decades of difficult relations with the state, became more vocal during the 2000 election campaign, calling on Mexicans to reject fraud and embrace democracy. One hundred and twenty bishops convening in early May declared that failing to vote in the presidential balloting would constitute a “moral sin.” Many saw this renewed interest in electoral politics and democracy by the Church as a thinly-veiled attack on the PRI. In fact, Church officials went so

¹ The word *dedo* in Spanish means finger. *Dedazo* is roughly translated as fingering or pointing—suggesting that past PRI presidents simply pointed at the man who was to succeed them.

far as to draft a letter stating that “If power does not change hands, there is no democratic transition.”² Vicente Fox took advantage of the Church’s statements and positioned himself to benefit from them.

² John Ward Anderson and Garance Burke, “Mexican Church Sheds Cloak of Political Silence,” *Washington Post*, May 14, 2000.

ELECTION RESULTS - JULY 2000

PRESIDENTIAL RESULTS	Candidate	%
<u>Alliance for Change</u> National Action Party (PAN) Mexico's Green Party (PVEM)	Vicente Fox Quesada	42.52
<u>Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)</u>	Francisco Labastida Ochoa	36.10
<u>Alliance for Mexico</u> Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD) Labor Party (PT) Social Alliance Party (PAS) Convergence for Democracy (CD) Nationalist Society Party (PSN)	Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas	16.64
Others		2.54

LEGISLATIVE RESULTS	Chamber of Deputies	Senate
<u>Alliance for Change</u> National Action Party (PAN) Mexico's Green Party (PVEM)	224	53
<u>Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)</u>	210	58
<u>Alliance for Mexico</u> Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD) Labor Party (PT) Social Alliance Party (PAS) Convergence for Democracy (CD) Nationalist Society Party (PSN)	66	17

Source: Mexican Federal Electoral Institute (IFE).

OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY

IRI has conducted 88 election observation missions in more than 30 countries, including Azerbaijan, Cambodia, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Kenya, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Russia, South Africa, and Ukraine. IRI sponsored election observation missions to Mexico in 1994 and 1997. Through these observation activities, IRI has earned a reputation for impartiality and professionalism in the analysis of this fundamental democratic practice. IRI monitors elections primarily to achieve the following objectives:

- ▶ Help ensure elections are open and transparent, in part by identifying and deterring irregularities and fraud;
- ▶ Increase citizen participation and confidence in the integrity of the electoral process;
- ▶ Inform and educate interested audiences about the electoral and political processes of the country in question; and,
- ▶ Make recommendations to improve future election processes.

IRI construes elections as a subset of the broader political process and regards international election monitoring as just one component in its efforts to advance democratic practices. Observer missions—which also include pre- and post-election assessments—make their observations under two broad categories: electoral environment and election administration.

IRI does not make simple findings as to whether an electoral process can be categorized as free and fair. The observers' goal is to catalogue strengths and weaknesses of the process and to make specific recommendations to improve the process.

THE 2000 MEXICO OBSERVATION MISSION

With funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)³, IRI sponsored a 43-member observer mission to the July 2 presidential and legislative elections in Mexico. The mission was led by former U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker, III with co-leaders U.S. Congressman David Dreier and San Diego Mayor Susan Golding. Electoral reforms enacted in 1994 introduced rules allowing foreigners to monitor Mexico's elections, and IRI's delegates were fully accredited by the electoral authorities as "foreign visitors" (*visitantes extranjeros*). IRI was invited to observe the elections by Mexico's major political parties.

Prior to July 2, IRI conducted pre-election assessment missions in five Mexican states and the Federal District and issued three reports⁴. IRI chose assessment locations carefully. Staff weighed several criteria to select the states for pre-election missions. For example, states in which IRI had assessed in prior years, states where local elections were slated to take place during 2000, and states where conflict was predicted were prioritized while maintaining a balance of locations locally governed by each of the three major parties.

Pre-election assessment teams conducted meetings and interviews with representatives of political parties, electoral officials, non-governmental organizations, and media representatives. IRI teams

³ USAID's Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) funded this mission.

⁴ IRI visited the Federal District, Jalisco, Tabasco, Nuevo Leon, Campeche, and Zacatecas. See Appendices for Assessment Reports.

questioned citizens about the national races as well as the state and local level elections, when relevant. Assessors worked to understand the background, local context, and specific concerns of citizens in the states visited. Issues such as campaign activities, candidate funding, media access, and the use of public funds for political purposes dominated most domestic and international observers' overall assessment of the Mexican electoral process. IRI maintains that these critical issues are best understood in the weeks and months before election day—when questionable activity is more likely to occur. For this reason, IRI dedicated substantial time and resources to pre-election assessment missions.

Additionally, IRI worked closely with a Mexican civic group, the National Women's Civic Association (ANCIFEM), which deployed over 1,500 election observers across the country.⁵ ANCIFEM volunteers participated in several pre-election assessment missions, and in some cases ANCIFEM observers accompanied IRI's delegates as they visited polling sites on election day.

The members of IRI's delegation monitored the vote in 12 states, including Campeche, Chiapas, the Federal District, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Mexico, Nayarit, Nuevo Leon, Oaxaca, Puebla, Tabasco, and Zacatecas. IRI witnessed local elections held in four of those states. The delegates visited several hundred polling stations and spoke with hundreds of voters about the election.

The mandate of the delegation was to observe the process, not to interject itself in it, even if delegates believed the process was somehow being compromised. Observers were permitted to question election officials, but not to suggest any immediate

⁵ See Appendices for a description of IRI's ongoing work with ANCIFEM.

modifications in their behavior that could be construed as interference. Accreditation as official “foreign visitors” by the Mexican government permitted IRI’s delegates to observe every aspect of the electoral process.

The day before the elections, the mission divided into teams and traveled to 12 states where they would observe the balloting and counting processes (the counting process also includes the collection, handling, and transportation of ballots) on election day. The balloting and counting were observed, with careful recording of data to support any claims of voting irregularities. The observers recorded the presence and behavior of party representatives, the secrecy of the vote, adherence to proper voting procedures, police or other military presence at the polls, and any impermissible campaigning. Observer teams remained in their deployment regions until the day after the elections to monitor any post-election issues. The teams then reconvened in Mexico City for debriefings.

Members of the delegation made their observations under two broad categories: election administration and electoral environment.

Election Administration

The equitable and consistent administration of the electoral process is necessary to ensure a legitimate opportunity for eligible voters to vote. Observers evaluated activities that are crucial to effective election administration, including: recruitment and training of election workers; capacity of officials to implement the process according to established guidelines and procedures; the production, distribution, and adequacy of election materials; availability and accessibility of voting locations; the performance of election observers and party representatives; and the presence and performance of police and the military. This evaluation extended

to an examination of the election law itself to determine whether it contained clear guidelines and procedures or if vague and ambiguous language allowed for wide administrative discretion and, consequently, an inconsistent application of the law.

Observers examined the process with a critical eye toward opportunity or motive to commit electoral fraud and abuse. Observers performed random checks against fraudulent practices, while providing a disincentive against such practices by their presence. The willful tampering or destruction of election materials; the manipulation of such materials; use of ineligible or multiple voters; coercion, intimidation, and bribery of voters were all issues to which observers paid close attention.

Electoral Environment

Delegation members were also responsible for observing the state of the electoral environment—the specific conditions of the campaign period that may affect voting on election day. Elements of the electoral environment can include political party and candidate campaign activities, the role and impact of civic organizations, the extent of attempts by government officials to control aspects of election-related activities, the role of the media, and issues of concern to the public.

Civic education to inform citizens about the electoral process and to build confidence in its fairness was an important issue in the weeks before the election. Observers also were called upon to determine the level of voter understanding regarding ballot procedures and the voters' familiarity with parties, candidates, and their policy positions if the election outcome is to be deemed meaningful. Democratic elections can be undermined when voter ignorance, misunderstanding, or fear can be manipulated to generate support for or against a particular candidate or party.

Finally, observers were asked to consider the larger historical and political context in which elections take place. The particular stage of a country's democratic evolution, combined with the milieu of traditions and beliefs that come together in a political culture, must be appraised and applied to specific observations.

Observer Procedures

Upon arrival in Mexico, IRI delegates met with national election authorities, political party representatives, candidates, U.S. officials, and other relevant individuals or organizations. Delegates divided into teams for travel to the deployment sites throughout the country, where they held a second round of meetings with local election officials, party leaders, and others. The purpose of these meetings was to help delegates gain an understanding of the political context of the elections, receive first-hand information regarding the conduct of the process, and pose questions to the responsible authorities regarding election administration.

IRI provided observers with material including relevant excerpts from the election law, guidelines and tips for observation, and standardized forms for recording information on individual voting stations. The latter included a section asking observers to record their larger impressions and conclusions regarding both positive and negative features of the process.

On election day, observers began visiting polling stations early in the morning to monitor procedures on opening the sites, election materials and other administrative preparations before the sites officially opened. Once the sites opened, observers attempted to cover a diverse geographic cross-section of their respective regions. Team members recorded the presence and behavior of partisan pollwatchers and media observers, the expertise of the poll workers and their knowledge and compliance of the election law

and relevant guidelines, the secrecy of the process, adherence to proper election procedures, police or military presence at the sites, and any impermissible campaign activity.

Upon returning to Mexico City, each team was asked to identify the positive and negative features of the electoral process in their assigned region and to provide evidence to substantiate those findings. Important distinctions emerged between pervasive infractions and isolated events. The resulting preliminary statement forms the foundation of this in-depth report drafted by IRI staff.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The Federal Electoral Institute (IFE)

Federal elections in Mexico are administered by a central public autonomous authority known as the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE). The IFE's responsibilities include the organization of all federal contests including elections for President of the Republic and the Deputies and Senators who make up the National Congress.

Background

A series of electoral reforms to the Mexican Constitution in 1989 brought about the passage in August 1990 of a new electoral law, the *Federal Code of Electoral Institutions and Procedures* (COFIPE). The COFIPE envisioned the creation of an entirely new electoral body which became the IFE in October 1990. Subsequently, additional reforms to the COFIPE and the Constitution further refined the structure and role of the IFE. Electoral reform has been a constant trait of the Mexican system. In fact, the July 2000 elections were the first elections in over a decade to be organized under the same rules as the previous ones.⁶ However, this was the first Presidential vote under the new system.

Reforms enacted between 1964 and 1986 have been characterized as limited compromises aimed at allowing the PRI to maintain its hegemony while at the same time preventing the disappearance of the opposition. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, as the opposition began to grow in strength, the PRI carried out additional electoral reforms to consolidate its hold on the legislature albeit with

⁶ The July 1997 legislative elections were the first federal elections organized under the ambitious 1996 reforms.

increasingly fewer seats.⁷ Dissatisfaction with these reforms as well as the political and economic turmoil of the early 1990s led President Ernesto Zedillo to call for a genuine opening of the electoral system and increased avenues for competition. Completed in 1996, the most significant electoral reforms to date brought major changes to the IFE as well as to rules governing the critical issues of media access and public funding for campaigns.

The 1996 reforms reinforced the level of independence and autonomy of the IFE, completely removing representatives of the Executive Power from the leadership of the electoral body. This process was known as *ciudadanización* (“citizenization”)—granting independent-minded citizens authority over the administration of elections. Before 1996, the interior minister headed the IFE. Today the executive body, the General Council, is composed of nonpartisan citizens nominated by the political parties and confirmed by the Chamber of Deputies.

IRI assessors and observers heard only positive comments about the independence and trustworthiness of the IFE General Council from political party representatives and non-governmental organizations during the pre-election period and on election day. In selected states, IRI did hear allegations of political inclination by local IFE representatives. Despite these isolated allegations, IRI observed overwhelming confidence throughout Mexican society in the IFE’s ability to properly administer the process at the national level. In meetings with IRI assessors and observers, IFE president José Woldenberg affirmed the readiness of all logistical aspects of the election and IFE representatives at the lower levels appeared

⁷ See José Antonio Crespo, “Raising the Bar: The Next Generation of Electoral Reforms in Mexico,” CSIS Americas Program, *Policy Papers on the Americas*, XI, I (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 7, 2000).

equally prepared.

Structure

The IFE is a permanent institution headquartered in the Federal District of Mexico with a decentralized structure facilitating its functioning throughout the entire country. In addition to the transparent process for selecting the General Council, a professional electoral civil service was developed to guarantee the nonpartisan professionalism and technical ability of IFE personnel. This civil service recruits, selects and trains every individual directly involved in the preparation and organization of elections.

Although the most visible part of the IFE is the national level General Council headed by Dr. José Woldenberg, the IFE structure is large. The IFE is composed of three types of bodies—the directive bodies (Councils), executive and technical bodies (Boards), and surveillance bodies (Commissions). Each has varied responsibilities for the overall process. There is one executive Council, one technical Board and one surveillance Commission at each level of administrative division: national, state, and district. Thus, the executive function encompasses one General Council (headquartered in the Federal District), 32 Local Councils (one in each state), and 300 District Councils (one in each electoral district.) Similarly, there are technical and surveillance bodies in each state and district in addition to the one at the national level.

The General Council is composed of a Council President, an Executive Secretary, eight citizen electoral Councillors, one Councillor for each party bloc in the Congress, and one representative for each political party or coalition.⁸ It is important

⁸ There are currently five Councillors representing the Congress and six representing the political parties and coalitions. There

to note that only the Council President and eight citizen electoral Councillors have a vote in the General Council; all other members may voice opinions, suggestions, or complaints but have no formal power in the Council.⁹

The citizen Councillors are elected for a period of seven years by the two-thirds vote of the Chamber of Deputies, from proposals formulated by the political party blocs of the Chamber of Deputies.¹⁰ The General Council is the only permanent executive body. The Local and District Councils are installed and function only during election periods.

The structure of the Local and District Councils is similar although not the same as the General Council. Local and District Councils include seven citizen councillors with voice and vote—one president and six councillors—designated by the absolute majority vote of the General Council. They serve two electoral periods and may be re-elected. There are 10 members with voice but not vote including political party representatives and heads of various IFE technical bodies.

Responsibilities

The IFE has responsibility for all activities related to the preparation, organization and carrying out of all federal elections.

were 11 national political parties registered to contend in 2000. However several alliances were formed resulting in only six candidates for president, each of which is entitled to only one IFE representative.

⁹ Thus, the 2000 General Council was comprised of 21 members, nine with voice and vote, and 12 with voice and not vote.

¹⁰ The current IFE Councillors were appointed on October 31, 1996 and will serve until 2003.

It compiles and updates the Federal Registry of Voters; defines electoral districts; registers political parties, coalitions and candidates; sets the spending limits for election campaigns; distributes and reviews reporting on public funding for political parties; designs, prints and distributes all election materials; selects polling places; selects and trains poll workers; computes electoral results; verifies the election result for Deputies and Senators¹¹; and designs and implements voter education and motivation programs.

The IFE also administers the registration of election observers and international visitors to the process, granting financial support to Mexican organizations whose proposals are approved.

State Electoral Institutes

Nine states and the Federal District cast votes in state contests this July. In two of these, new Governors were elected. Four more states will vote later in the year—three of them for Governor. The IFE does not have jurisdiction over state and local elections. Independent electoral institutions function in parallel with the IFE in each of Mexico's 31 states and the Federal District. These bodies are called State Electoral Institutes, or State Electoral Commissions in some cases. In the same way that the IFE is responsible for all aspects of federal elections, these Institutes are charged with administering the elections for governorships, state congresses, and municipal councils. They are governed by individual state electoral law and not bound by the COFIPE. The IFE and other federal electoral institutions have no authority over them.

¹¹ The Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judiciary (*Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación*) verifies the result for President of the Republic.

Most states have made the necessary changes to bring their electoral laws in line with the spirit of the 1996 federal electoral reforms. Since 1996, independent citizens, for example, have had responsibility for the administration of elections previously conducted by state government officials. The number of citizen councillors in each state and the lengths of their terms vary. However, most have adopted a structure similar to that of the IFE, with subordinate district and municipal offices designated to manage various aspects of the process. All states rely on the federal voter registry and the federal electoral credential. Each state arranges to pay the IFE for the maintenance of the state registry and to accredit citizens to vote. Most state party representatives expressed confidence in the registry and many commented that citizens' unwillingness to update their own information or verify their inscription was the major impediment to a flawless list.

In the majority of cases, state polling places (*casillas*) are co-located with federal ones. In states where federal and state voting will take place on the same day, individual agreements are negotiated between each State Institute and the IFE about what level of coordination will exist between the two institutions. No level of coordination is mandated by law, and each state decides for itself how much of its election administration it will cede to the IFE. States that will hold elections after the federal vote tend not to negotiate coordination agreements with the IFE but do rely on the IFE's voter registry and maintain the same polling places wherever possible.

Public financing for state races is also administered by the State Electoral Institutes in the same way the IFE administers federal financing. The amounts of money available for state contests are significantly smaller than for the national races and vary, along with the calculations for dividing the money among the parties, from state to state. The reporting requirements imposed on parties

to account for the use of these funds also depend on the state.

Significantly, political parties and citizens expressed less confidence in the state electoral authorities than in the IFE. Reforms to the Federal Electoral Code were largely duplicated at the state level, but the implementation of these reforms has been uneven and many State Electoral Institutes are relatively inexperienced and have yet to prove themselves.

For example, State Electoral officials in Jalisco told IRI assessors that the public's image of them was tainted somewhat by difficulties during the 1997 election cycle. The Councillors in place now were elected in 1997 only four months before the election. They understandably faced significant logistical difficulties and believe that the public was less than forgiving of their inexperience. However, they expressed great confidence in their ability to administer their November 2000 state vote and noted that they expect things to run more smoothly this time.

In Nuevo Leon, where state and local voting took place concurrently with the national July 2 elections, the State Electoral Council had never before administered an election. In 1997, the IFE administered the state elections in Nuevo Leon under a special arrangement between the IFE and the State Electoral Council. Some political party representatives in Nuevo Leon commented that they would prefer that the IFE continue to administer the state races, as they expressed more confidence in the IFE than the State Council. These party representatives—mainly from the PRI—did not appear concerned about the implied loss of state independence.

The PRI's misgivings about the State Electoral Council may stem from a recent decision taken against them by the Council. On May 5, 2000, the State Electoral Council of Nuevo Leon imposed the harshest sanction ever handed down to a political party in that state when it fined the PRI approximately \$5 million for allegedly

having received funds from the state government between 1996 and 1997. This sanction amounted to the denial of eight years of public financing for the party. The PRI fought the decision and appealed to the State Electoral Tribunal, which ultimately reversed the sanction on June 4.¹² From the outset, the PRI criticized the timing of this sanction—several years after the fact and during an election period—as politically motivated. They cite this case as evidence that the head of the State Electoral Council is linked with its major rival in this state, the National Action Party (PAN), now in the statehouse.

The PAN in Nuevo Leon also had complaints about the State Electoral Council citing an extension given for registration of certain candidates which they claim favored the PRI. The PAN insisted that all its candidates had fulfilled all the registration requirements by the deadlines established by law and that in order to uphold the rule of law, no party may be granted exceptions. Excepting this complaint, however, the PAN indicated its view that the State Electoral Council was improving and that the party had confidence in the Council's ability to administer the election. Even though it was the Council's first independently administered election, the PAN sought to bolster confidence in the institution and not discredit it over relatively minor issues.

The Registry of Voters

The IFE is responsible for compiling and maintaining the registry of voters (*Padrón Electoral*). The voter lists (*Listados Nominales*) used to check-in voters at polling places are drawn directly from

¹² The Tribunal ruled that although certain individuals may have improperly appropriated government funds, there was not enough evidence to prove that the money made its way into the official party coffers.

the registry. As previously mentioned, the IFE's voter registry is also used by all 31 states and the Federal District for state and local elections.

Of an eligible voting population of approximately 60 million citizens, the voter registry contains approximately 59.6 million names among whom 58.8 million have a valid voter identification card and are inscribed in voter lists.

To be eligible, voters must be citizens by birth or naturalization, be 18 years of age by election day, and have an "honest way of life," that is to say, no criminal judgments against them. Voters must be inscribed in the federal voter registry and have received an official voter credential. According to current law, citizens must appear in person to vote and may only do so within the territory of Mexico, i.e., there is no absentee balloting nor are there polling places in the exterior.

Voters are included in the federal registry according to a geographic division known as an electoral section. By law, each section must include a minimum of 50 and may include a maximum of 1,500 voters. In each section, a polling place must be installed for every 750 voters or fraction thereof.

The current registry was originally created in 1991, when the government and political parties agreed to toss out the existing one and create a completely new registry from scratch. This was the first assignment of the relatively new IFE. In fact it had only a few months to complete the task before the next election, scheduled for July 1991. Before the 1994 elections, 36 independent audits of the registry were conducted by Mexican and international accounting firms, and several more have been completed since then. Between the 1994 and 1997 elections, the IFE spent approximately \$12 million to include in the registry a photograph of each voter, a precaution which the IFE claims no other country has taken.

The registry is continually revised and is considered by electoral officials and political parties to be at least 97 percent accurate, a commendable feat considering the sheer number of people who must be accounted for. It is estimated that each year approximately two million Mexican reach voting age; two million registered voters change their address; and 300,000 die.

The registration period lasts from the day after a federal election until January 15 of the next federal election year. Voter lists are required to be revised each year by March 25 and must be published within 20 days to allow voters and political parties to review and correct them. The IFE has until May 15 to decide on all recommended changes. Unsatisfied parties may appeal to the Electoral Tribunal.

In election years, each political party is given an electronic copy of the Registry by March 15 and a print copy by March 25. The parties have until April 14 to submit complaints, which the IFE must rule on by May 15.

A month before the election each party is given a full printout of the list (including photographs) so that the parties' election observers may confirm that the list used in polling stations is the correct one.

In part because of the tremendous time and expense that has been dedicated to create and maintain it, all of Mexico's political parties agree that the integrity of the voter registry is no longer a concern.

The members of IRI's delegation paid close attention to the registry on election day. Observers noted very few incidents of citizens being turned away because they did not appear on the voter list. Many more were not able to vote because they had come to the wrong polling place. Overall the voter registry appeared to function extremely well.

VOTER REGISTRY PROFILE

GENDER DISTRIBUTION	VOTER LISTS
Women	30,460,754 (51.75%)
Men	28,401,533 (48.25%)
TOTAL	58,862,287 (100%)

AGE DISTRIBUTION	VOTER LISTS
18 to 34	28,689,830 (48.74%)
35 to 54	20,301,510 (34.49%)
55 and up	9,870,847 (16.77%)
TOTAL	58,862,287 (100%)

(Source: Federal Electoral Institute, IFE)

Voter Credential

Citizens must present an IFE-issued voter credential to polling station officials in order to vote. The voter credential is also widely used in Mexico as the main document of identification for purposes such as signing a check.

Voters were able to request replacements for lost or damaged credentials until February 29, 2000 and the last day to obtain voter credentials is March 31. The card is extremely sophisticated, incorporating 14 different security measures to prevent forgeries including a photograph, fingerprint, signature, serial number, magnetic strip, and a hologram that partially covers the photograph. It features a bar of dates that are designed to be defaced when the citizen votes and other features that become

visible when viewed under black light. None of the party representatives interviewed by IRI's assessment or observation teams expressed any concern about the integrity of the credential.

IRI observers witnessed very few incidents of concern involving voter credentials, the majority of which involved voters who had lost or misplaced their cards and attempted to vote, albeit unsuccessfully, without them.

Polling Places

On July 2, Mexicans voted at approximately 115,000 polling stations (*casillas*)—approximately 77,500 located in urban areas and 37,500 in rural areas. The electoral code stipulates that each polling station be managed by a Polling Station Board of Directors (*Mesa Directiva de Casilla*) comprising nonpartisan citizens chosen by lot and trained by the IFE. Each Polling Station Board of Directors consists of a president, a secretary, and two examiners. The president's authority over the polling station on election day is absolute: the president may move the polling station should it prove necessary, and only he or she decides whether a vote is valid during the counting process. Three substitutes are also chosen to be standing by in case one of the four principal members should fail to arrive or otherwise be unable to perform his or her duties.

While polling station officials are not financially compensated for their time, IFE does provide for their meals. Polling station officials open the polls for voters at 8:00 a.m., close them at 6:00 p.m., and then work to tabulate the votes for several more hours. In 1997 the IFE attempted to provide pollworkers with two box-meals each. However, this proved to be a huge logistical problem, resulting in the decision that for 2000 each pollworker would be given a meals stipend of 150 pesos, about US \$15.

To staff the 115,000 polling stations IFE had to recruit and train approximately 805,000 individuals. Because the participation of the selected individuals is discretionary, IFE must overcompensate by drawing approximately five-and-a-half million Mexicans to obtain the 805,000. All pollworkers are chosen by a randomized double lottery system known as *insaculación*. Registered voters born in a month drawn by lot were selected during the first round. Each of them was then contacted by IFE representatives and invited to receive basic pollworker training. Over two million people received the first round of training in March and April. The second round of the lottery reduced this initial group by selecting only those voters whose last name began with a letter drawn by lot. This smaller group of citizens received further training before the July 2 vote. The electoral codes stipulates that illiterate and elderly people are to be removed from the process, and the person with the highest level of education should be assigned the post of president.

IRI assessors reviewed copies of IFE training materials and interviewed training coordinators in several states prior to the elections. The IFE media campaign to motivate citizens selected as pollworkers to participate and the intensive program to contact, train, and follow-up with those selected was an impressive undertaking resulting in a high degree of success.

Many polling stations visited by IRI observers lacked the full complement of seven workers, but the vast majority had at least the principal four. In a substantial number of cases pollworkers arrived late, while in some they did not arrive at all. In other isolated cases, pollworkers were confused about their duties or seemed to lack adequate training. Overall however, Mexico's volunteer pollworkers performed their jobs with extreme competence and dedication. In fact, IRI observers commented that in the majority of *casillas*, pollworkers expressed confidence and pride in their participation as the citizen administrators of this

crucial election.

Delegates observed widespread late openings of *casillas*. In most places where voting did not begin on time it was due to slow or problematic set-up by the pollworkers. It was noted by several observers that even when pollworkers had arrived early they were unable to prepare their materials and the polling site in time to receive voters at 8:00 a.m. In other areas there appeared to be confusion about the requirements of the law. Some pollworkers interpreted the 8:00 a.m. start time as the deadline to begin preparations whereas most understood that voting itself should begin by this time. However, in most cases the delays were relatively minor.

The only other issue of note regarding polling places is the matter of concurrent federal and state voting. In areas where delegates observed voting for federal and state contests taking place in the same polling place, they noted inconsistencies in administration. For example, in the Federal District, observers noted varied procedures for handling the multiple ballots in different polling places. Voters in some *casillas* were required to form two separate lines, or get in line twice, to check in and receive ballots from the federal and state tables while in other *casillas* voters checked in for all balloting in one step. While the federal and state processes are fully independent of one another, voters might have benefitted from a clearer understanding of how the co-located voting tables are to coordinate. Further, IFE trained volunteers should be instructed on the specifics of negotiated agreements between state electoral bodies and the IFE.

Special Polling Places

While voting proceeded very well overall in the approximately 115,000 regular polling places, the situation was quite different at the special polling places (*casillas especiales*). Special *casillas* are

designed to allow people who are away from their home districts on election day to vote. The number of contests for which voters may cast ballots in special *casillas* depends on how far away from home the voter is, i.e., outside his section, district, state, or circumscription.¹³ By law, a maximum of five special *casillas* may be set up in each of Mexico's 300 electoral districts. In 1994, chaos ensued at the special polling stations when they ran out of ballots early in the day. The special polling stations had been given just 300 ballots each at the insistence of opposition party leaders, who feared these sites might be more susceptible to fraud attempts. Since then the number of special polling places has not changed. However, since 1997, 750 ballots are now given to each special *casilla*.

Despite the increase in ballots since the last presidential election, it appeared the demand for ballots at these stations far outstripped the supply once again. IRI observers noted widespread problems at special *casillas*. Many closed early after having run out of ballots and very long lines to vote could be found at most sites. In several locations, observers witnessed chaotic confrontations between voters and polling station officials. In Puebla, local security forces were called in to calm a tense situation in which voters refused to be turned away from a special *casilla* when ballots had run out. An oft-repeated, yet unsubstantiated, charge accused the Mexican armed forces of assembling to vote en masse at special polling

¹³ Voters outside their section, but within their district, may vote for all federal contests: President, Senators by proportional representation and relative majority, and Deputies by proportional representation and relative majority. If outside their district, but within their state, they may all elect all but Deputies by relative majority. If outside their state, but within their circumscription, they may elect all but Deputies by relative majority and Senators by relative majority. Voters outside their circumscription may elect only President and Senators by proportional representation.

places, thus using up all the ballots before civilians could vote.

Pollworkers and voters were frequently confused about who was allowed to vote at the special *casillas* as well as what ballots could be cast by whom. More training for pollworkers to be assigned to these special *casillas* might have better equipped them to deal with these difficult situations. Nevertheless, the issue of too few ballots is one that must be resolved in the political arena and no amount of training or preparation by electoral authorities could have prevented the negative response of citizens unable to cast their votes, especially during an election such as this in which the outcome was predicted to be extremely close.

Political Party Representatives

Political party representatives may be accredited by the IFE to observe the conduct of the vote. The PRI, PAN and PRD all commented to IRI assessors that they expected to be able to place observers at over 90% of polling places. In some cases, most notably the southern regions, the PAN had made arrangements with the PRD to have PRD observers look out for both their interests. Whereas in some northern regions, the PRD asked the same of the PAN. Political parties believe strongly that their participation at polling places is essential and that the presence of party pollwatchers prevents fraudulent activity. Correspondingly, they take this role very seriously.

Nonetheless, the way political party representatives carry out this vital activity is subject to intense scrutiny. Where the representative sits or stands, whether he or she is clearly identified as a party representative, even how he or she looks at or addresses voters, can be very important. Mexico's long history of voter coercion has left many voters wary about the secrecy of their vote. As noted above, party representatives are given exact copies of the voter registry to allow them to verify that the list used is the correct

one. It was clear that voters in some areas were concerned about party representatives' ability to verify who had voted. By and large, however, IRI observers noted very few cases of inappropriate behavior by political party representatives.

Voting Materials

IRI's delegates observed almost no problems with regard to voting materials. But for an isolated case or two, polling stations were equipped with all the necessary materials. The materials were properly packaged and had been delivered to polling sites at least one day before July 2.

In addition to the highly sophisticated voter registry and credential, the voting process itself incorporates a myriad of secrecy and security measures. For example, polling stations have completely enclosed voting booths with curtains emblazoned with the text, "your vote is free and secret." Ballot boxes have translucent sides to prevent pre-stuffing. Indelible ink is used to mark each voter's finger after casting his or her ballot. The ballots themselves incorporate seven distinct security measures added since the 1997 mid-term elections.¹⁴

Counting of Ballots

Casilla workers diligently complied with the complex procedures for counting ballots, continuing, in some cases, for three or four hours past the 6:00 p.m. poll closing. Voters who had joined the line before 6:00 p.m. are permitted by law to vote and were allowed to do so in almost all locations observed by IRI. The

¹⁴ Security measures include various watermarks, visible and invisible fibers, microprinting, inverted printing and pantographic images.

President of the *casilla* officially closes the station when voting is complete.

Next, unused ballots are marked to render them void and are placed in a separate envelope. The two examiners then open each ballot box and count the ballots to make certain that the number of people on the Voter List checked as having voted matches the number of ballots cast. The votes are then counted and tabulated, with the outcome noted on forms (*actas*) provided.

In Chiapas, IRI observers witnessed minor problems with the vote count. In one site pollworkers discovered more ballots in the boxes as the *actas* were being completed. The problem was resolved appropriately, despite causing a significant delay, by beginning the count again from scratch.

In most areas the vote counting was an exciting time as Mexicans waited to see the results. Observers throughout the country noted a growing feeling of comraderie as the day rounded out with ballot counting. IRI delegates witnessed a variety of counting styles in the various states where we observed. For example, it was noted that in PAN dominated areas, the vote count tended to be conducted out loud in a very public ceremonious way. Several delegates commented that as the ballots stacked up for Fox, the counter's voice got louder and louder. In PRI dominated areas delegates witnessed a more sedate and matter-of-fact completion of the count.

Immediately after the count is finished, copies of these forms are given to the political party representatives. The results also are written on a poster that is placed in a prominent location at the polling station. Political party representatives and registered election observers monitor every step of this process.

The ballots are then placed in envelopes provided with the other

election materials, and a copy of the results form is placed on the outside of the envelope. At this point, the president of the *casilla* dismisses the secretary, examiners, and substitutes, and takes the ballots and tallies to the offices of the District Electoral Board (*Junta Distrital Electoral*). Political party representatives and registered election observers are free to accompany the president, and many—including most of IRI's delegates—did so on July 2.

Preliminary Results (PREP)

The IFE's Program for Preliminary Electoral Results (PREP) was designed to quickly gather election returns as they were delivered to the District Electoral Boards, compile them in Mexico City, and present them to the citizenry, the media, and the parties. To this end, a Compilation and Transmission Center (CEDAT) was established in the offices of each of the country's 300 District Electoral Boards.

As part of the program, the president of each *casilla* delivers an official tally sheet to the CEDAT staff immediately upon arrival at the District Electoral Board offices. The CEDAT compiled the information and transmitted it by computer to the National Center for the Reception of Preliminary Electoral Results (CENARREP) by computer.

The IFE made the PREP results accessible on its website in realtime. Interested parties in Mexico and around the world could simply log on to the Internet to see the returns as they came in. Several other websites carried direct links to the PREP results and there were no reported technical difficulties with the system. Clear trends were evident within hours of the polls closing and the PREP's results varied from the final results, released several days later, by less than one percentage point.

Resolving Electoral Disputes

The Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judiciary (*Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación*) and the 32 State Electoral Tribunals—one per each of Mexico’s 31 states, plus the Federal District—are the institutions that have been mandated to resolve electoral disputes in Mexico.¹⁵

IRI assessors met with the president and all six magistrates of the federal tribunal during a March pre-election mission. Tribunal officials acknowledged that the process for resolving electoral disputes in Mexico has undergone a slow and measured evolution since the early 1800s. Yet, they also noted that the most far-reaching changes have taken place in the past 10 years.¹⁶

Since the early-1800s and throughout most of the 1900s, Mexico’s rubber-stamp Congress was principally responsible for resolving electoral disputes through a self-validating process (*autocalificación electoral*). This process consisted of the Electoral College of the Chamber of Deputies possessing the authority to validate the election of the country’s president and the federal deputies, and the Senate’s Electoral College possessing the authority to validate the election of federal senators. It was not until the 1940s that opposition parties began to voice their

¹⁵ Under the 1996 reforms, TEPJF can also adjudicate state and municipal level electoral disputes, but only as an appeal from the ruling of the corresponding State Electoral Tribunal.

¹⁶ The information provided in this section was obtained during the assessment team’s meeting with the TEPJF and complemented with a publication written by Dr. Flavio Galván Rivera, the TEPJF’s Secretary General of Agreements. Flavio Galván Rivera, *Derecho Procesal Electoral Mexicano*, McGraw-Hill, Mexico City, Mexico, 1997.

displeasure over the partisanship of the electoral dispute resolution process and demand that impartial parties assume these responsibilities. Opposition outcry resulted in the founding of the Federal Commission for Electoral Vigilance (*Commission Federal de Vigilancia Electoral*) in 1946. This commission, however, was set up under the Ministry of the Interior, thus failing to diminish concerns over the lack of impartiality.

While the constitutional reforms of 1977 continued to give the federal Congress supreme authority over electoral disputes, they did grant the Supreme Court the capacity to perform a judicial review as a recourse in electoral dispute resolution (*Recurso de Reclamación*). Although the Supreme Court was limited to rendering non-binding legal opinions, these reforms did open the door for the judiciary to assume a greater role in the future. Nine years later, the constitutional reforms of 1986 resulted in the creation of the Tribunal for Electoral Contentiousness (*Tribunal de lo Contencioso Electoral*). However, as had been the case with the 1977 reforms, the federal Congress continued to be the supreme authority, with the Tribunal limited to issuing only non-binding legal opinions. In spite of the shortcomings, the creation of the Tribunal for Electoral Contentiousness did signal a continuation toward more judicial recourse in electoral dispute resolution.

It was not until the dramatic crisis of the 1988 presidential election—when the Federal Electoral Commission’s computer system crashed under curious circumstances while tabulating the vote—that political pressure climaxed, forcing the creation of the IFE and the Federal Electoral Tribunal in 1990. While the reforms stipulated that it was mandatory for the tribunal to deliver resolutions, the resolutions could still be modified or revoked by the Chamber of Deputies. In essence, this sustained the supremacy of the Congressional Electoral Colleges, in that their resolutions were definitive and beyond appeal. Given that Tribunal magistrates were to be nominated by the President of Mexico and

confirmed by the Chamber of Deputies—which at the time continued to be under PRI majority—they were viewed as lacking autonomy.

The constitutional reforms of 1993 instituted a judicial process for validating election results, a responsibility that previously lay with the Chamber of Deputies. Although these transformed the Tribunal into the supreme authority with electoral jurisdiction, the Tribunal was mandated only to validate the election of deputies and senators. The Electoral College of the Chamber of Deputies would sustain the authority to validate the presidential election.

The boldest, most wide-sweeping reforms were undertaken in 1996 during the Zedillo administration. Furthering the goals of having electoral dispute resolution become a judicial process, the Federal Electoral Tribunal was reorganized and renamed the Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judiciary (TEPJF) and moved under the organizational structure of the judicial branch. The Electoral Colleges were disbanded, and TEPJF was given the authority to validate the presidential election, while the IFE was given the authority to validate the election of federal deputies and senators. In an attempt to further instill the division of powers, the Supreme Court was made responsible for nominating the magistrates of the Tribunal, which then required a two-thirds Senate vote for their confirmation. The seven magistrates serve 10-year terms and may be removed only through a laborious impeachment process.

The TEPJF's year-end report, submitted to the Supreme Court of Justice on September 22, evinced a very busy year. In 2000, the Tribunal resolved a total of 2,155 complaints on a wide range of election-related issues. The July 2 voting, by contrast, produced only 122 complaints by political parties. The Tribunal annulled a total of 90,840 votes (roughly 0.2 per cent) for deputies by relative majority and only one *casilla* with 439 votes for President.

The TEPJF's most important post-election role may be resolving appeals of State Electoral Tribunal rulings. For example, the Federal District Legislative Assembly results are under discussion as of this writing and appeals to the TEPJF are to be resolved soon.

Specialized Office for Attention to Electoral Crimes

Mexico has three institutions dedicated to the issue of elections, the (IFE), which is public, autonomous, and organizes elections; the Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judiciary (TEPJF), which resolves electoral disputes at the federal level or appeals of State Electoral Tribunal rulings; and the Specialized Office for Electoral Crimes (*Fiscalía Especial para la Atención de Delitos Electorales - FEPADE*), an independent arm of the Attorney General's office. In contrast to the other two electoral bodies, the FEPADE is governed by specific chapters of the penal code dealing with elections, and not the Federal Electoral Code (COFIPE). An IRI assessment team met with the head of the FEPADE, Dr. Javier Patiño Camarena in April.

Reforms to the Mexican electoral system consolidated electoral crimes under the federal penal code as opposed to the electoral law.¹⁷ Historically, electoral law issues have been more politicized than criminal issues and, according to Dr. Patiño, treating electoral violations as crimes elevates the public's faith in their prosecution. In addition, the inclusion of electoral crimes in the penal code allows for more severe sanctions and penalties, up to and including imprisonment.

The FEPADE has technical autonomy from the Attorney General, but is part of the Attorney General's overall budget. The FEPADE

¹⁷ Electoral crimes are treated in Articles 403 to 413 of the Federal Penal Code.

does not submit its opinions for the Attorney General's clearance. However, the institution is criticized by the opposition for a perceived lack of independence from the administration.

A large part of the FEPADE's mandate, as described by Dr. Patiño, is not only to prosecute electoral crimes, but to prevent them. There are different categories of offenses corresponding to each kind of electoral actor (voters, pollworkers, political parties, etc.) The FEPADE published specialized educational materials for each universe and printed easy-to-read brochures that were distributed in cooperation with the IFE.

For each complaint the FEPADE receives, it first decides if it has jurisdiction. If not, FEPADE is supposed to forward the complaint to the proper authorities. Second, it determines if there is sufficient evidence to proceed. Finally, if there is sufficient evidence, FEPADE determines if there was a violation of the law.

Between 1997 and 1999 the FEPADE received a total of 1,341 complaints. They had resolved 1,007 (76 percent) by the end of 1999, leaving 24 percent still in process. Of the 1,007 resolved complaints, the FEPADE obtained only 135 indictments. The comparatively low number of cases ruled to be violations of the law has fueled criticism that the FEPADE has been less than vigorous in prosecuting alleged violations.

Of the complaints that go before a judge, 95 percent of judicial rulings uphold the FEPADE indictments. For the cases it tries, FEPADE has a good success rate, but critics assert that overall, it spends a lot of time and money for relatively few prosecutions. One possible reason for the small number of overall cases is the requirement that people submitting complaints of potential violations appear in person to ratify their charges. Dr. Patiño explains that this requirement is intended to prevent frivolous or politically-motivated charges from being brought, but admits that it

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may discourage potential whistle-blowers.

Overall, the impact of the FEPADE appears to be limited. The general population seems not to know about this institution, and most of those who know it exists cannot explain its role vis á vis the IFE and other public institutions focused on electoral matters.

ELECTION ENVIRONMENT

Successive reforms to the election system have diminished concerns about the administration of elections. More prevalent during the 2000 election cycle were concerns regarding the election environment; specifically, vote buying and coercion (*compra y coacción*) and the use of public funds for partisan purposes. These are activities typically carried out during the pre-election period, although they can also take place on election day. IRI assessors paid careful attention to these issues during pre-election missions deployed to five states and the Federal District and observer delegates were asked to report on any instances of coercion witnessed on July 2.¹⁸

Pre-election assessment teams met with relevant actors including political party representatives, electoral authorities, non-governmental organizations, and the media to gather a complete impression of the unique local context in which both national and local campaigns were conducted.¹⁹ The specific political environment differed in each assessment site. In some cases, national level issues were of somewhat less concern than a state or local contest, such as the governor's race in Tabasco, or the state legislature elections in Campeche.

IRI also monitored the "level playing field" issues of access to the media, debates, and campaign finance. Candidates' ability to compete fairly is determined in part by the existence and even

¹⁸ Pre-election missions visited the Federal District, Jalisco, Tabasco, Nuevo Leon, Campeche, and Zacatecas. These states were chosen based on specific criteria described on page 14 of this report.

¹⁹ See Appendices for IRI's three Pre-Election Assessment Reports.

application of election law. IRI assessors attempted to determine the extent to which pre-election period rules were fairly administered and every candidate was given an equal opportunity to campaign. The reality in each state varied. In some states fairness and equitable application of the law were in question, while in others this was less so.

Political Party Financing

The 1996 electoral reforms introduced public funding for political parties, both for ordinary operations and for federal election campaigns. This year approximately \$317 million was distributed by the IFE—approximately \$155 million for campaigns, \$155 for ordinary expenses, and \$6.5 million for specific activities such as research and voter education. Parties raised millions more in private donations, making these the most expensive elections in Mexican history.

The funds earmarked for campaigns are distributed according to a 30/70 formula: 30 percent is distributed equally among the 11 registered parties²⁰, and 70 percent is distributed according to the share of the vote each party won in the previous federal election. As a result, public funding for electoral campaigns provided the opposition parties with more cash than they have ever had before.

There are maximum campaign spending limits for each federal office. For example, this year no presidential candidate—whether representing a coalition or a single party—could legally spend

²⁰ Thirty percent of the \$155 million disbursed for campaigns divided by the 11 parties amounts to approximately \$4.2 million per party.

more than \$51.7 million on a campaign.²¹

The use of private funds is also constrained by a complex system of spending limits established during the 1996 reforms. Private funds may not exceed 49.9 percent of the total monies received from the IFE and 90 percent of campaign funds must come from public disbursements. Therefore, only a small portion of monies acquired through fundraising events, member dues, and individual donations can be used for campaigns.

There are caps on individual donations as well as the total funds parties may raise from individuals.²² An important loophole in the campaign finance law concerns public collections (*colecta pública*), which ostensibly permits parties to raise funds through ad-hoc public collections. Parties need not specify the donor's name nor the quantity he or she gave when reporting funding under this heading. How forthcoming the parties will be in reporting these donations will be difficult to determine.

Parties are required to provide detailed reports on their spending, and there are clearly defined penalties—parties may be fined or even stripped of their registration—if they cannot provide adequate documentation or if they exceed the spending limits. Annual reports on ordinary expenses are due within 60 days of the end of the reporting year. The IFE must review these within 60 days of

²¹ This is a maximum limit for all spending regardless of the source of funds.

²² No party may receive private contributions in excess of 10 percent of the total IFE financing for all parties' ordinary activities. Correspondingly, this year the private contributions limit was approximately \$15.5 million. Individual donations are limited to .05 percent of the total IFE financing for ordinary activities—\$77,500 this year.

submission. Campaign spending reports are due within 60 days of the close of the campaign period and the IFE has a period of 120 days after receiving them to review parties' submissions.²³

The difficulty arises from the fact that a party will only be penalized for exceeding spending limits if it delivers a report to the IFE indicating it has done so. The IFE did attempt to independently monitor campaigns' expenditures for media time. However, there are no independent audits of total party spending. Should the IFE suspect less than full reporting, the electoral law does not give the IFE the authority to access candidates' or parties' financial records. Many observers suggest that the relative laxity in reporting requirements for campaign expenses may encourage parties to misuse private funds and exceed spending limits with impunity.

Public Funding for Political Parties 2000

Party	For Campaigns	For Ordinary Expenses
Alliance for Change	\$46.67 mil.	\$46.67 mil.
PRI	\$46.92 mil.	\$46.92 mil.
Alliance for Mexico	\$52.81 mil.	\$52.81 mil.
PCD	\$2.76 mil.	\$2.76 mil.
PARM	\$2.76 mil.	\$2.76 mil.
DS	\$2.76 mil.	\$2.76 mil.
TOTAL	\$154.68 mil.	\$154.68 mil.

²³ By law, campaigns must end three days prior to the election. This year the official campaign period ended June 28, 2000.

Party	For Specific Activities
Alliance for Change	\$3.63 mil.
PRI	\$1.14 mil.
Alliance for Mexico	\$1.64 mil.
PCD	\$124,000
PARM	\$0
DS	\$990,000
TOTAL	\$6.6 mil.

(Source: Federal Electoral Institute, IFE)

Debates

The Presidential candidates held two debates: the first, with all six candidates on April 25, and the second, with the three main contenders, on May 26. Poll numbers showed Fox to have won both by a wide margin. Ultimately however, more important than the candidates' performances during the debates may have been the controversy about when and how these events would be scheduled, if at all. The first debate was not very dynamic and amounted to a panel forum at which each candidate was given time to make a statement. Fox and Labastida attacked each others' personalities and policies and each side declared itself the winner. Viewers, however, were not overwhelmingly affected by the debate. According to a poll by the newspaper *Reforma*, 53 percent of respondents were not influenced to change their vote and 30 percent said the debate only reinforced their preference.²⁴

²⁴ "Gustó el debate", *Reforma*, April 26, 2000.

The second debate almost didn't happen. It was originally scheduled for May 23, but by several days beforehand, the format had still not been settled. Fox was advocating a more interactive structure with questions posed by a panel of journalists, and Labastida was lobbying for the inclusion of the other candidates. None was prepared to compromise and it appeared the debate might not take place.

A series of public negotiations ensued. The three candidates appeared on national television to discuss the impasse. They then agreed to meet and continue discussions in front of television cameras at Cárdenas' campaign headquarters. All three were able to agree on the format and details of the debate but could not come together on a date. Fox insisted that it take place that day, according to the original schedule, whereas Labastida and Cárdenas wanted to delay a few days. Fox appeared extremely stubborn and did himself substantial damage when he refused to compromise demanding that the debate take place, "*Hoy, hoy, hoy!*" ("Today, today, today"). Cárdenas and Labastida agreed on May 26 but Fox refused to commit. He had been put on the defensive and his poll numbers dropped significantly.

However, Fox finally did agree to participate and made up some of his support with a strong performance in the debate. The flexible format allowed participants an opportunity to respond to opponents' statements and produced a lively exchange.

Access to the Media

Political parties' ability to campaign via radio and television has developed over the last several decades as subsequent electoral reforms have addressed parties' overall access to the media. The right to free air time for parties during election periods was first legislated in 1973. In 1987, the right took on a permanent character allotting 15 minutes per month to each party during

election and non-election years alike. In 1990, reforms added additional free time during election periods to be dispensed according to parties' relative representation in government. In 1996, further reforms added even more free time.

Thus, there are currently three different forms in which political parties can have access to the media.

1. Official air time (*tiempos oficiales*) mandated by the Federal Electoral Code (COFIPE)

This form of access to the media consists of 15 minutes of free air-time per party per month indefinitely, even during non-election periods.

This is complemented during election periods by additional air-time that IFE purchases (as per the COFIPE) and distributes free-of-charge to the political parties. IFE distributes this additional free air time to the political parties through the 30/70 formula—30 percent equally among all political parties and; 70 percent based on the previous federal election results.

2. Paid-for political advertisements or “spots”; and,
3. Daily news coverage.

In the past six years, there has been enormous progress in terms of access to the media. Aside from the fact that the COFIPE mandated air time has helped level the playing field, the additional financial resources that all political parties now receive—as a result of the 1996 electoral reforms—have enabled the parties themselves to purchase substantial amounts of additional air time.

According to Alonso Lujambio, member of IFE General Council, the improved *paid-for* access to the media by political parties is

evidenced by the increases in spending over the past six years for television and radio air time. In the 1994 presidential election, political parties allocated an estimated 25 percent of their expenditures toward media; that amount rose to an estimated 55 percent for the 1997 mid-term elections. IFE estimates the amount increased to 65-70 percent for the July 2000 elections.

One of the benefits of allocating expenditures for media access is that this makes it possible for IFE to better monitor and quantify expenditures. Not all expenditures are as transparent and quantifiable as media spots are.

In terms of unpurchased daily news coverage, the IFE conducted a careful monitoring of media coverage and released frequent public reports on the amount of time devoted by the media to each candidate. These reports consistently documented higher levels of news coverage for Labastida than any of the other candidates. The IFE's fourth monitoring report, released in June, showed the PRI receiving 37 percent of television coverage and 40 percent of radio coverage, compared to 26 percent for television and 26 percent for radio for the PAN-led Alliance for Change, and 20 percent for both tv and radio for the PRD-led Alliance for Mexico. IFE councillors tasked with observing the media expressed their concern about what they called "persistent and unbalanced radio and television coverage of election campaigns favoring the PRI."²⁵

Some members of opposition political parties contend that, although important, it is no longer simply the quantity of coverage, but its quality that matters most. To address this concern, non-governmental organizations such as the *Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos* and one of Mexico's major newspapers,

²⁵ Guadalupe Irizar, "Preocupación mayor cobertura al PRI," *Reforma*, June 2, 2000.

Reforma, monitored press coverage to detect and report on imbalanced or biased news coverage.²⁶ In an early analysis completed by the *Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos*, Labastida received more favorable coverage, particularly by the two major television stations, Televisa and TV Azteca. The organization's president Oscar González stated, "There is reason to believe that the private media in this country, particularly the two main television channels, are not respecting the Mexican people's right to information."²⁷

Related to the concern about daily news coverage of campaigns was the issue of government officials using television and radio time to campaign for their party's candidate. No major party was free from criticism in this area. The PRD mayor of the Federal District was accused of using her media time to remind voters of her party's accomplishments for the benefit of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, and PAN governors in several states were criticized for speaking out on behalf of Vicente Fox. Mexico's President Ernesto Zedillo was perhaps singled out more than any other figure for campaigning on behalf of Labastida via lengthy and frequent radio and television appearances touting the good works of the PRI. *Reforma*'s monitoring revealed that between February 25 and May 25, 2000, President Zedillo's messages received 22 total hours of air time.²⁸

²⁶ *Reforma* conducted a campaign called "Pulso Electrónico" to monitor radio and television coverage of campaigns for three months between February 25 and May 25, 2000.

²⁷ Ramon Sevilla Turcios, "Alertan sobre favoritismo en televisoras," *Reforma*, April 27, 2000.

²⁸ "Critican campana de Zedillo en medios," *Reforma*, June 4, 2000.

The IFE itself also is supposed to receive free air time for voter education and motivation campaigns. A controversy arose, however, when for the first time the *Cámara de la Industria de la Radio y la Televisión* (CIRT), a private radio and television association representing television and radio station owners (*concesionarios*) tasked with allotting the free media time granted by law for election purposes, denied the IFE prime-time spots for its voter education and motivation campaign spots. CIRT stated that because the IFE was autonomous and independent of the government, it was not eligible to receive free time. IFE called on the Interior Ministry's *Dirección General de Radio, Televisión y Cinematografía* for help to make the *concesionarios* more responsive. It was slow to respond. The *concesionarios* countered that prime-time slots are expensive and too lucrative to be assigned to non-paid advertisements and that giving in to the IFE would adversely affect their bottom line. The dispute was ultimately resolved in the IFE's favor and the spots were allowed to run in May.

Overall, most analysts and observers agree that the conduct of the major media outlets has improved and that opposition candidates receive more and more favorable coverage than in the past. Recent electoral reforms provide more free opportunities for parties to make their messages heard and large amounts of public funding for parties give them more resources to purchase additional time. However, media fairness remains an important concern as television and radio stations continue to receive criticism for unequal treatment of candidates.

Vote Buying and the Use of Public Funds for Partisan Purposes

Perhaps the most contentious issue of this election cycle has been the allegations of vote buying. Under the Mexican electoral code, it is only illegal for candidates or parties to give handouts or gifts

to potential supporters if they are conditioned by a promise to vote a certain way. That is to say, so long as parties do not declare that the handout is being given in exchange for a vote or that it is given only to those who pledge to vote for them, it is permissible.

It is expressly illegal to distribute benefits of government programs in exchange for votes, but again, only if the exchange is clearly defined. There is no law to prevent local, state or federal governments from distributing services (*dispensas*), which can range from subsidized bags of rice and beans, to refrigerators and cement blocks during campaign periods—as long as they are not given in exchange for voting a certain way. This makes for a very murky distinction between conventional pork-barrel politics and illegal behavior and certainly contributed to the large number of accusations and complaints heard by IRI assessors and observers. The use of state resources for partisan purposes historically has been a major criticism of the dominant PRI party. As Mexico's political structures and systems have become more competitive and pluralistic in recent years, however, the PAN and PRD are also accused of improper use of state resources in those jurisdictions where they govern.

Two government programs in particular were subject to intense scrutiny during the lead up to July 2: The first, *PROGRESA* (*Programa de Educación, Salud, y Alimentación*), is a social/poverty alleviation programs that targets 2,600,000 families. The second, *PROCAMPO*, is a farmers' assistance program benefitting two million farmers. Beneficiaries of these programs live mostly in the poorer southern states, which have historically been PRI strongholds. Independent analyses have identified a strong correlation between program beneficiaries and PRI voting patterns. The PRI's critics are quick to say that these figures prove mishandling of government resources and a propensity of the PRI to condition government *dispensas* with votes. However, the PRI has polled very well in the rural, indigenous and poorer areas for

decades, making it difficult to establish a causal relationship based on votes alone. Although definitely not infallible, verification of citizen complaints is a more useful method to assess the impact of government handouts.

IRI assessors and observers received many such complaints. In general, the PAN and PRD expressed their view that the PRI was resorting to illicit or at least questionable practices to secure votes out of desperation because the elections were so highly competitive and there was a genuine possibility for an opposition victory. Although firm evidence is difficult to obtain, the opposition parties accused the PRI of giving cash handouts during the campaign period in exchange for votes on election day. On election day voters told IRI observers that they had witnessed the PRI transporting voters to the polls and in some cases offering free lunches to groups of voters. The opposition acknowledges, however, that many of the allegations cannot be verified with sufficient evidence to be presented to the authorities.

While the opposition parties tended to emphasize that less well developed areas are susceptible to improper influence in the form of handouts and that poor voters can be tricked into believing that votes in exchange for gifts can be verified, the PRI expressed its confidence that the Mexican electorate knows its vote is free and secret and is therefore less easily manipulated than alleged.

In response to increasing concerns over use of public funds for electoral purposes, there have been a series of significant advancements at the NGO and governmental level.

At the NGO level, local organizations FUNDAR and the Civic Alliance initiated a joint pilot project aimed at monitoring social expenditures to ensure that they are not used for partisan purposes. Their methodology is to review and analyze expenditures over time—particularly in the less-than-transparent social support

programs—to determine whether disbursement patterns change prior to the election. FUNDAR identified social infrastructure funds (*Fondos de Aportaciones para Infraestructura Social*), which are disbursed directly to the municipalities, as an area of concern. They also expressed concern over the disbursement of monies under *PROGRESA*.

Civic Alliance reported various anecdotal allegations of threats made by party members or local elected authorities to take away *PROGRESA* benefits from recipients who did not cast a certain vote, or if a certain candidate did not win.²⁹ In a case from Chiapas, a *PROGRESA* administrator allegedly pressured program beneficiaries into providing their voter credential number and signature, claiming that if his candidate did not win benefits would be taken away. Similarly, allegations received by Civic Alliance from four other states involve threats to condition *PROCAMPO* benefits with votes.

FUNDAR and Civic Alliance hope that their due diligence will further enable them to advocate improved transparency. According to FUNDAR officials, their work found that most governments—regardless of party affiliation—resorted to some form of pork-barrel tactics of this nature.

Congressional Committee to Monitor Misuse of Federal Funds for Campaign Purposes

At the governmental level, the Chamber of Deputies created a Congressional Oversight Committee on December 9, 1999, to ensure that public (federal) funds were not disbursed for partisan

²⁹ Allegations included in the Civic Alliance report came from nine different states.

purposes during the 2000 elections.³⁰ According to Committee Chairman, PAN Deputy Elodia Gutierrez Estrada, and PRD Ranking Member Deputy Armando Aguirre, the Committee's principal responsibility was to inform civil servants and the citizenry at large that it is illegal to disburse public funds for partisan purposes, and that offenders are subject to legal sanctions. The committee opened 32 field offices—one in each state and Mexico City—to make it easier for citizens to file complaints and expose such violations, as opposed to requiring them to travel to Mexico City to lodge complaints. IRI assessors attempted to visit field offices in several states. Most were very late in setting up if they were set up at all before July 2. For example, an IRI team visited the field office in Campeche in early June. It had not yet opened for operations and consisted of little more than one staffer with a desk and a copy of the legislation authorizing the creation of the Committee.

The committee members from the opposition PAN and PRD blamed the PRI faction in the Chamber of Deputies, as well as the PRI Executive, for dilatory tactics that delayed the setting up of the committee to carry out its mandate. In fairness, however, it appears that the opposition members of the committee also shoulder some responsibility for failing to act more swiftly and assertively.

Perhaps recognizing the immense task at hand, the Committee signed a cooperation agreement with eight non-governmental organizations including IRI's partner, the National Women's Civic Association (ANCIFEM) and the Civic Alliance, to secure their help in cataloging complaints. The PRI legislative bloc opposed the agreement, claiming that the NGOs were all inclined toward

³⁰ *Comisión Especial Encargada de Vigilar que no se Desvien Recursos Federales en el Proceso Electoral del Año 2000.*

opposition parties and were not qualified to monitor the use of federal funds. Ultimately, the NGOs' role was fairly limited. They solicited and received denouncements from the citizenry, but few of them are likely to be pursued or result in prosecution.

Most Mexicans interviewed by IRI assessors believed the creation of the special congressional committee to guard against diversion of state resources is a positive step, but also acknowledged its impact ultimately was very limited due to a late start date, relatively few resources, and a limited infrastructure.

While the effectiveness of this committee was undoubtedly limited, its underlying importance rests on its potential—the fact that it may prove to be the beginning of future congressional oversight of the use of public funds.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the July 2 elections prove that Mexico's electoral system has been sufficiently reformed to allow a peaceful transfer of power from the 71-year dominant PRI to an opposition alliance. The ability of opposition parties to compete has been strengthened and the autonomy of the electoral bodies has been consolidated. What remain to be accomplished are measures to improve the transparency and equity of the election environment, especially during the pre-election period as well as several election administration matters. In addition, some thought should be given to process innovations, e.g., congressional re-election, increased flexibility to allow party coalitions, absentee balloting, etc.

As regards the administration of the election, IRI's delegates noted many successes. Specifically:

- IFE officials deserve praise for their tireless efforts to ensure the broadest possible participation.
- The IFE's General Council was described by Mexicans from across the political spectrum as fair-minded and independent.
- The Registry of Voters appears to be in excellent condition.
- No regular polling station visited by IRI delegates lacked any crucial voting materials.
- The political parties issued only 122 challenges to the results, down from 194 in 1997 and about 1,200 in 1994.

However, IRI noted some areas that could be improved. To this end, IRI offers the following recommendations to improve election administration and the election environment in Mexico:

State Electoral Institutions

While making great strides since assessed by IRI in 1997, Mexico's State Electoral Institutions remain an enduring weakness. Reforms implemented at the national level have been slow to take hold in a number of state electoral systems, and the nonpartisan autonomy of several State Electoral Institutions has been questioned. State governments should take care to evaluate the performance of these institutions, with the assistance of the IFE if necessary.

Concurrent State and Federal Voting

IRI delegates witnessed confusion and unnecessary delays in polling places where state and federal voting was taking place concurrently. In polling places where both state and federal voting is organized, both state and federal poll workers should receive additional training on procedures to facilitate balloting and eliminate misunderstandings about what the law does or does not allow. Arrangements between state and federal electoral authorities are distinct and vary from state to state. However, those tasked with administering the process must be well trained in these specifics.

Pollworker Training

Although IRI observed a high level of training and dedication among Mexico's citizen pollworkers, many delegates noted that additional training may have alleviated confusion. A significant area of concern was the hour voting was to have begun. A large proportion of *casillas* visited by IRI delegates opened late and in many of them pollworkers explained that they were required only to begin setting up at 8:00 a.m.—not to be completely set up and begin receiving voters at 8:00 a.m.. In fact, IFE training manuals direct pollworkers simply to arrive by 8:00 a.m. and begin setting

up. Polling place preparations are time-consuming and complex. If voting is to begin at 8:00, pollworkers should be directed to arrive much earlier.

Also, pollworkers could benefit from additional training on consistently applying the same standards for allowing potential voters to cast ballots. IFE guidelines and pollworker training materials are specific about who may vote and who may not. In general, citizens must possess an IFE credential and appear on the polling place's voter list to vote. However, exceptions are possible for voters who do not possess an IFE credential but have received a favorable ruling on their case from the TEPJF. These individuals may vote if they present a copy of the ruling and appear on a special TEPJF list. Voters with credentials who do not appear on the regular list, or voters without credentials or a ruling from the TEPJF may not vote. IRI observers noted some confusion in the application of these regulations on July 2. Pollworkers could benefit from additional emphasis of these distinctions during training.

Special *Casillas*

Special *casillas* presented many problems on July 2, the most common of which was running out of ballots before all those who wished to vote could do so. This is a matter to be resolved by the political parties who have heretofore restricted the number of ballots available in special *casillas* in an effort to limit opportunities for fraud. Nonetheless, IRI suggests that the issue, as well as a national absentee balloting system, receive serious consideration by the incoming administration and the new Congress.

Party Representatives

Additional efforts should be made to distinguish between pollworkers and party representatives and to bar party observers or other accredited observers from becoming involved with the administration of the vote. As required under IFE regulations, *casilla* officials should be identified with IFE-supplied badges indicating their position, e.g. President, Secretary, Examiner, etc. Political party representatives should be similarly identified with party stickers or some other clearly visible designation. While party representatives have a legal right to observe the conduct of the vote at the *casilla* they should refrain from activity that may frighten or intimidate voters such as questioning voters, standing at the entrance asking voters' names, or hovering over ballot boxes.

Campaign Finance/Campaign Period

Political parties are required to submit detailed campaign expense reports for expenditures incurred after the registration of candidates. In the case of the office of President, candidates are registered in January of the election year. However, parties and potential candidates began the 2000 election campaign sooner than ever before, well-ahead of the official January campaign start date. As a result, campaign expenditures for party primaries and expensive media campaigns undertaken before January were not regulated by the IFE in the same way as activities during the "official" campaign. Mexican government and election authorities should consider making the start date of the official campaign period earlier, to require parties to more fully report their campaign expenditures.

In addition, the current system does not allow for independent auditing of party finances. Parties are required to submit their expense reports in September but it remains difficult to determine the accuracy of these reports. Because the majority of political

party funding now comes from public coffers, perhaps the public should have better information about how those funds are expended.

Special Attorney for Electoral Crimes (FEPADE)

The FEPADE should do more to win the confidence of voters. As a criminal investigatory body dedicated to the issue of electoral crimes, it must be seen as fair, independent, and efficient. Most Mexicans interviewed by IRI assessors and observers had little faith in the FEPADE's effectiveness at either preventing or prosecuting electoral crimes. The FEPADE's limited record supports this charge, having taken action on an extremely small proportion of reported infractions. Nonetheless, IRI assessors were impressed with the leadership's commitment to fairness and legal norms as well as improved public relations. IRI encourages the FEPADE to continue developing in these areas.

Congressional Commission to Monitor the Misuse of Public Funds for Electoral Purposes

IRI assessors were impressed by the efforts of the Special Congressional Commission to monitor and prevent the misuse of public funds. However, the initiative was plagued by political infighting at the start and under-funding in the end. Field offices had limited effect and, of the many complaints received, few are likely to receive due attention. The incorporation of non-governmental organizations into the effort was a positive step reflecting the reality that the Mexican legislature may not yet be equipped to conduct such oversight. IRI recommends continued strengthening of the Committee and a deeper commitment by all the political parties to monitor the inappropriate use of public funds.

CONCLUSIONS

The Mexican people made an enormous democratic stride on July 2, 2000. The PRI's defeat was not unexpected, but neither was it assured. Political analysts and pundits thought it *could* happen if the circumstances were right, but the voting citizens of Mexico *knew* it was possible and they made their own circumstances. They conducted an overwhelmingly free and fair process resulting in an historic alternation in power.

The confidence voters and political parties demonstrated in the electoral process is a true testament to the progress made in recent years. The electoral authorities have substantially consolidated their independence and gained a reputation for impartiality and professionalism. The Zedillo administration deserves credit for supporting this steady evolution that has significantly removed many election administrative matters from concern.

However, there is still work to be done. This report highlights some of the outstanding issues and areas that should be considered by elected authorities and electoral administrators in the coming months. Election environment issues such as voter coercion and misuse of public funds continue to plague the much-improved Mexican election system, while refinements to areas such as special polling stations and consideration of absentee balloting deserve additional attention. The incoming government will have to tackle these matters in a new context. Having successfully taken power, the opposition is now the incumbent and must fight the temptation to resist reform of the system that brought it in.

Expectations for the incoming administration will be high, as will the challenges to governing effectively. When Vicente Fox Quesada is sworn in on December 1, he will face a Congress in which neither the Chamber of Deputies nor the Senate has a majority party and segments of the other two major political forces

have been less than fully cooperative with Fox's transition team. Moreover, the main political parties are facing internal divisions as a result of the election—the PRI splintering as it struggles to recover from its unprecedented defeat, the PAN working to define its role in an age where groups like “*Amigos de Fox*” wield significant influence, and the PRD trying to strengthen a new generation of leaders to promote their agenda.

Mexico's relationship with the United States will almost certainly undergo a significant evolution after December 1, as Mexico assumes a greater role on the world stage. Issues such as the strengthening and possible expansion of the North American Free Trade Agreement as well as narcotics policy and immigration will continue to dominate cross-border relations, but the actors have changed and the internal politics are now more complicated. The United States will need to learn to work with a new Mexican leadership while the new Mexican leadership must quickly learn to relate to the United States and other international partners. As IRI stated in its 1997 election report, “Mexico is becoming more like its neighbor to the north.” This is even more true today. New opportunities as well as challenges will certainly shape the future of U.S.-Mexico cooperation.

In the post-election period, the International Republican Institute will remain engaged in Mexico's democratic development. IRI's election observation missions are but a small part of the overall programmatic efforts throughout the world, and serve to enrich our achievements in other vital areas. Work with the National Women's Civic Association (ANCIFEM) will continue and expand. Upcoming efforts will shift focus from campaign training and pre-election monitoring to promoting the constructive participation of citizens in government through the creation of citizen committees and oversight of local government.

APPENDICES

- Preliminary Statement, July 3, 2000
- Pre-Election Assessment Report #1, May 8, 2000
- Pre-Election Assessment Report #2, June 15, 2000
- Pre-Election Assessment Report #3, June 28, 2000
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**International Republican Institute
Preliminary Statement on Mexico's July 2, 2000 Elections**

July 3, 2000

The results of yesterday's election signify an historic opening of the Mexican political system. The event confirms the electoral freeness and fairness for which many Mexicans have worked over the years. The peaceful transfer of power via the ballot box is a hallmark of democracy. This opening, for which President Zedillo deserves much credit, will prove as important for Mexico as the liberalization of the country's economic system. With its economic freedoms and strengthened democracy, the country is poised to become an even more important player on the world stage.

The International Republican Institute has closely followed Mexico's political situation since 1987, and early this year began formal monitoring of the pre-election period of the July 2nd balloting. IRI was invited to monitor the elections by the IFE and by Mexico's two largest political parties. IRI deployed a 43-member delegation to observe the elections. The mission was led by former U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker, III with co-leaders U.S. Congressman David Dreier and San Diego Mayor Susan Golding.

The members of IRI's delegation monitored the vote in 12 states, including Campeche, Chiapas, the Federal District, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Mexico, Nayarit, Nuevo Leon, Oaxaca, Puebla, Tabasco, and Zacatecas. IRI witnessed local elections held in four of those states. The delegates visited several hundred polling stations and spoke with hundreds of voters about the election.

Few IRI observers witnessed consequential infractions of the electoral laws during Sunday's vote. Almost all of IRI's teams

witnessed late *casilla* openings, but this was due to unclear instructions and a thorough, complex voting setup well designed to discourage fraud. Special *casillas* were generally short of ballots for those wishing to vote. One IRI team witnessed voters being transported to the polls by PRI party members, a violation of the law.

IRI delegates were impressed by the often expressed desire of voters for democratic change. Voters also professed a high level of assurance that their candidate would win, a demonstration of confidence in the work of the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE). The consolidation of the IFE's autonomy and its nonpartisan efforts to involve citizens were among the most important of the 1996 reforms. Having witnessed its preparations and work on election day, IRI shares the confidence Mexicans have expressed in the IFE. IRI looks forward to the Federal Electoral Tribunal demonstrating, through its forthcoming work on electoral appeals, that it too merits the confidence of Mexico's voters and political parties.

This is IRI's preliminary statement on Mexico's July 2, 2000 elections. IRI will issue a more formal and detailed report in September.

**MEXICO
PRE-ELECTION ASSESSMENT MISSION
REPORT #1**

February 28-March 1, 2000

Issued May 8, 2000

INTRODUCTION

On July 2, 2000, Mexican voters will go to the polls to elect Mexico's president and that country's 58th Federal Congress—all 500 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and all 128 seats in the Senate. In addition to the federal elections, citizens in the states of Morelos and Guanajuato will cast votes to elect their governor. Citizens in nine states—Campeche, Colima, Guanajuato, Mexico State, Morelos, Nuevo Leon, Queretaro, San Luis Potosi, and Sonora—will cast votes in contests for state congresses, and municipal councils. Finally, in Mexico City, voters will elect the mayor (*jefe de gobierno*), the legislative assembly and—for the first time—all 16 city delegates. The election of Mexico City's delegates is yet another breakthrough toward providing representative, accountable government. The delegates formerly were appointed by the mayor.

These upcoming elections come at a decisive juncture in the country's transition to democracy, for the following reasons:

- Recent polls indicate that this upcoming contest is the most highly contested presidential election in the 71 years that the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) has been in power.

- For the first time, both major opposition political parties—the National Action Party (PAN) and the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD)—have formed separate alliances to enhance their respective electoral competitiveness. Although there are a total of 11 political parties registered with IFE to compete in the upcoming elections, the strategic alliances have reduced the actual number of presidential candidates to six.
- They will be the first presidential elections to be administered under the electoral reforms of 1996. These reforms have leveled the electoral playing field by a significant degree, providing opposition parties with far more money and media access than before.
- July's election will be the first presidential election to be administered by an autonomous Federal Electoral Institute (IFE). The electoral reforms of 1996 transformed that institution into an autonomous body, which is widely regarded as impartial.

With a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development, IRI is conducting a series of pre-election assessment missions throughout Mexico. Each of the missions will produce a report.

This report is based on information gathered during the first pre-election assessment mission during the week of February 28-March 1, 2000. The assessment team consisted of Michael Zarin, IRI Regional Program Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Washington; and Armand Peschard-Sverdrup, Director of the Mexico Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington.

The assessment team met with representatives of the three principal political parties; the President and various members of

IFE's General Council; the President and all six magistrates of the Federal Electoral Tribunal (TRIFE); representatives from non-governmental organizations; media; and private citizens.³¹

THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

IFE is responsible for administering the federal elections—the election of the president and the Federal Congress. The State Electoral Institutes in the nine states holding state-level elections in July are responsible for administering their respective elections. Although IFE administered the then unprecedented 1997 Mexico City mayoral election, it did so because Mexico City had not yet set up an Electoral Institute. Since then, Mexico City has established an Electoral Institute (*Instituto Electoral del Distrito Federal*), and it now has the responsibility for administering elections in Mexico City.

While IFE has undergone significant reforms and earned the respect of most political actors in Mexico, the same, unfortunately, cannot be said of all State Electoral Institutes. IFE officials are concerned that the questionable impartiality of some State Electoral Institutes will tarnish the image of IFE, even though they are separate entities.

During this first mission, the IRI team focused only on the Federal Electoral Institute. Future assessment teams will travel to other states to assess the preparedness of other Electoral Institutes.

³¹ The authors are indebted to all those in Mexico who gave generously of their time to meet with us and discuss the elections.

Electoral Reforms of 1996

Mexico has taken great strides in recent years toward building confidence in the administration of federal-level elections. The electoral reforms of 1996, in particular, are largely responsible for the substantial progress in the autonomy of IFE and the Federal Electoral Tribunal (TRIFE), campaign finance, and access to the media. Although the scope of this first assessment mission was to focus on the July 2000 elections, IRI strongly recommends a review of the 1996 electoral reforms, which remain highly relevant. For a detailed description of the 1996 electoral reforms, readers may refer to the IRI's 1997 IRI pre-election report, available on the Institute's web site, www.iri.org.³²

Election Administration

There is overwhelming confidence throughout Mexican society in IFE's ability to properly administer the upcoming federal elections. In a meeting with the assessment team, IFE president Jose Woldenberg affirmed the readiness of the voter registry, the organizational and logistical aspects of administering the election, the ballots, and the ability to compute the vote.³³

³² John Murphy and Armand Peschard-Sverdrup, *Mexico Pre-Election Assessment Mission Report*, Washington, D.C. International Republican Institute, 1997.

³³ The assessment team would also like to thank Carlos M. Navarro Fierro, Director of Electoral Studies of IFE's International Section, for his substantive support.

Voter Registry

IFE anticipates the voter registry will comprise approximately 60 million voters by the March 31 registration deadline—six million of them estimated to be first time voters.³⁴ IFE, along with all of Mexico's political parties, agree that the integrity of the voter registry is no longer a concern. IFE has in place ongoing programs for continually updating the voter registry and maintaining it as current as possible. Although political parties can continuously review the voter registry, IFE will present them with the final registry and give them until April 14, 2000 to raise any concerns. As an added measure, IFE will be selecting an independent committee, comprising five distinguished academics, to certify the integrity of the voter registry. Even though there is no official deadline for the IFE to approve the voter registry, it is likely to be approved by early May.

Polling Stations

On July 2, Mexicans will vote in an estimated 115,000 polling stations (*casillas*)—approximately 77,500 located in urban areas and 37,500 in rural areas. Some of the members of IFE's General Council expressed concern over their ability to select and adequately train polling station officials in time for the elections. Each polling station is presided over by seven individuals—a president, a secretary, two examiners (*escrutinadores*), and three substitutes (*suplentes*)—which means that to staff the 115,000 polling stations, IFE will need to select and train 805,000 individuals. Because the participation of the selected individuals

³⁴ Although the voter registry was closed on February 29, names could still be added to the voter registry until March 31, 2000, which is the deadline that citizens have to pick up their voter credentials.

is discretionary, IFE must overcompensate by drawing approximately five-and-a-half million Mexicans through a lottery system to obtain the 805,000 individuals needed. IFE informed the assessment team that the polling station lottery had been conducted on March 7, 2000.

IFE is relying on 18,000 people to train the polling station representatives by the April 30 deadline. The training of polling station representatives is vitally important because they represent the first line of election administration and are also responsible for conducting the first ballot count.

While polling station officials are not financially compensated for their time, IFE decided that for the 1997 mid-term elections, it would provide them with two box-meals each on election day. Polling station officials open the polls at 8a.m., close them at 6p.m., and then work until around 8p.m. tabulating the votes. Juan Molinar, member of IFE General Council, conceded that this presented IFE with a logistical problem, which resulted in the IFE's deciding that for the 2000 elections it instead would provide polling station officials with a stipend of 150 pesos each as a meal allowance.

Ballot Safeguards

Since the 1997 mid-term elections, IFE has introduced additional ballot safeguards including a total of seven distinct safeguards aimed at preventing the counterfeiting of ballots. The known safeguards include: various watermarks, visible and invisible fibers, microprinting, and inverted printing. While these safeguards are known to the public, there is one safeguard that only one anonymous IFE official is privy to. As an added precaution, IFE has also requested the Mexican military to guard the printing facilities where the ballots are being printed.

IFE officials informed the assessment team that they have made additional improvements to the quality of the indelible ink since the 1997 elections. IFE is confident that the ink that is used to mark each voter's finger after he or she votes is more difficult to wash off than it was in 1997.

Election Observation

IFE's General Council has agreed to allow national observers and international visitors for the upcoming elections. The national observers have until May 31 to get accredited. The Ministry of the Interior (*Secretaría de Gobernación*) has provided IFE with a fund of 40 million pesos (an estimated US\$4 million), for the national observer program. The fund is to be administered jointly by IFE and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The 40 million pesos is a significant increase from the 12 million pesos that the Ministry of the Interior provided IFE for the national observers program in the 1997 mid-term elections. International visitors have until June 21 to get accredited.

Resolving Electoral Disputes

The Federal Electoral Tribunal and the 32 State Electoral Tribunals—one per each of Mexico's 31 states, plus Mexico City—are the institutions that have been mandated to resolve electoral disputes in Mexico.

These institutions are likely to play a vitally important role once the last ballot is cast in the July 2000 elections. The elections are shaping up to be the most closely contested election in Mexico's contemporary history. Narrow margin victories could lead to heated disputes over the integrity of the electoral outcomes—be it in the presidential, congressional, gubernatorial, and/or municipal contests. The respective institutions will be called upon to adjudicate any disputes, and each verdict will unquestionably be

carefully scrutinized.

The assessment team is grateful for the opportunity to have met with the president and all six magistrates of the Federal Electoral Tribunal (TRIFE)—the supreme authority responsible for adjudicating federal electoral disputes.³⁵ TRIFE officials acknowledged that the process for resolving electoral disputes in Mexico has undergone a slow and measured evolution since the early 1800s. Yet, they also noted that the most far-reaching changes have taken place in the past 10 years.³⁶

Since the early-1800s and throughout most of the 1900s, Mexico's rubber-stamp Congress was principally responsible for resolving electoral disputes through a self-validating process (*autocalificación electoral*). This process consisted of the Electoral College of the Chamber of Deputies possessing the authority to validate the election of the country's president and the federal deputies, and the Senate's Electoral College possessing the authority to validate the election of federal senators. It was not until the 1940s that opposition parties began to voice their displeasure over the partisanship of the electoral dispute resolution process and demand that impartial parties assume these responsibilities. Opposition outcry resulted in the founding of the Federal Commission for Electoral Vigilance (*Comisión Federal*

³⁵ Under the 1996 reforms, TRIFE can also adjudicate state- and-municipal level electoral disputes, but only as an appeal from the ruling of the corresponding State Electoral Tribunal.

³⁶ The information provided in this section was obtained during the assessment team's meeting with TRIFE and complemented with a publication written by Dr. Flavio Galván Rivera, TRIFE's Secretary General of Agreements. Flavio Galván Rivera, *Derecho Procesal Electoral Mexicano*, McGraw-Hill, Mexico City, Mexico, 1997.

de Vigilancia Electoral) in 1946. This commission, however, was set up under the Ministry of the Interior, thus failing to diminish concerns over the lack of impartiality.

While the constitutional reforms of 1977 continued to give the federal congress supreme authority over electoral disputes, they did grant the Supreme Court the capacity to perform a judicial review as a recourse in electoral dispute resolution (*Recurso de Reclamación*). Although the Supreme Court was limited to rendering non-binding legal opinions, these reforms did open the door for the judiciary to assume a greater role in the future. Nine years later, the constitutional reforms of 1986 resulted in the creation of the Tribunal for Electoral Contentiousness (*Tribunal de lo Contencioso Electoral*). However, as had been the case with the 1977 reforms, the federal congress continued to be the supreme authority, with the Tribunal limited to issuing only non-binding legal opinions. In spite of the shortcomings, the creation of the Tribunal for Electoral Contentiousness did signal a staying of the course toward more judicial recourse in electoral dispute resolution.

It was not until the dramatic crisis of the 1988 presidential election—when the Federal Electoral Commission’s computer system crashed under curious circumstance while tabulating the vote—that political pressure climaxed, forcing the creation of IFE and TRIFE in 1990. While the reforms stipulated that it was mandatory for TRIFE to deliver resolutions, the resolutions could still be modified or revoked by the Electoral Colleges. In essence, this sustained the supremacy of the Electoral Colleges, in that their resolutions were definitive and beyond appeal. Given that TRIFE magistrates were to be nominated by the President of Mexico and confirmed by the Chamber of Deputies—which at the time continued to be under PRI majority—was viewed as lacking autonomy.

The constitutional reforms of 1993 instituted a judicial process for validating election results, a responsibility that previously lay with the Chamber of Deputies. Although these reforms transformed TRIFE into the supreme authority with electoral jurisdiction, TRIFE was mandated only to validate the election of deputies and senators. The Electoral College of the Chamber of Deputies would sustain the authority to validate the presidential election.

The boldest wide-sweeping reforms were undertaken during the Zedillo administration. In the continuum toward having electoral dispute resolution become a judicial process, TRIFE was shifted in 1996 to fall under the organizational structure of the judicial branch. The Electoral Colleges were disbanded, and TRIFE was given the authority to validate the presidential election, and IFE was given the authority to validate the election of federal deputies and senators. In an attempt to further instill the division of powers, the Supreme Court was made responsible for nominating the magistrates of the Tribunal, which then required a two-thirds Senate vote for their confirmation.

This synopsis of the historical evolution of electoral dispute resolution is invaluable in providing a broader context. TRIFE officials believe that the 1996 reforms give their institution an unprecedented level of impartiality. Some of the people with whom the assessment team met, however, are not as quick to come to the same conclusion. The slow and measured evolution of electoral dispute resolution over a 165-year period has contributed to an inherent Mexican cynicism over the autonomy and impartiality of electoral dispute resolution. In order to overcome such cynicism, TRIFE will have to prove its autonomy by the manner in which it adjudicates disputes. This will become increasingly difficult as Mexico embarks on a more closely contested political landscape.

Election Environment

The electoral reforms that have been implemented have succeeded in diminishing concerns over IFE's administration of federal elections. Current concerns consist of vote buying; the use of public funds for electoral purposes; and quantitative and qualitative access to the media.

Vote Buying

Members of IFE General Council, as well as a non-governmental organizations, identified vote buying or coercion (*compra y coacción de voto*) as currently the most overt way of improperly swaying electoral outcomes. IFE President, Jose Woldenberg, acknowledges that as long as there are dramatic economic disparities in Mexico, there will be fertile grounds for efforts to buy or coerce voters' support. Rural areas are more susceptible to these practices due to their more depressed socio-economic standards and generally lower levels of access to information regarding citizens' rights and protections. Woldenberg concedes that it is unknown how significant an impact vote buying will have on the electoral outcomes. Yet, he assumes that if voter turnout in July nears 40 million, it would be difficult to buy even 1 percent of the vote—which would be 400,000 of the votes cast.

IFE has attempted to counter vote buying through radio and television public awareness campaigns that condemn this practice. The advertisements inform citizens of their right to freely cast their votes, that their vote is genuinely secret, and that vote buying is illegal.

Mexico's Federal Penal Code stipulates that the buying and coercion of the vote is illegal. Such violations, however, fall under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Attorney General, as opposed to the more highly regarded IFE or TRIFE. Within the Office of

the Attorney General, it is the Specialized Office for Electoral Crimes (*Fiscalía Especial para Delitos Electorales – FEPADE*)—headed by Dr. Javier Patiño Camarena—that investigates allegations of buying and coercing of the vote. Many of the people interviewed during the first assessment mission expressed uncertainty over the FEPADE’s capacity and impartiality. On March 23—soon after the first assessment mission—IFE and the Office of the Attorney General (PGR) signed an agreement of collaboration and support for the prevention and awareness of electoral crimes. Subsequent assessment teams will follow up by requesting a meeting with Dr. Patiño to learn more about FEPADE and the details of this latest agreement.

Use of Public Funds for Partisan Purposes

Many people interviewed during the mission thought that vote buying and the use of public funds for partisan purposes are overlapping issues. Representatives of the PAN pointed to the July 4, 1999 Mexico State gubernatorial election as the most recent example of this duality. In that election, it is widely believed that the PRI resorted to vote buying and the use of public funds to ensure victory by its gubernatorial candidate. In response to increasing concerns over use of public funds for electoral purposes, there have been a series of significant advancements at the NGO and governmental level.

At the NGO level, local organizations FUNDAR and the Civic Alliance have initiated a joint pilot project aimed at monitoring social expenditures to ensure that they are not used for partisan purposes. Their methodology is to review and analyze expenditures over time—particularly in the less-than-transparent social support programs—to determine whether disbursement patterns change prior to the election. FUNDAR identified social infrastructure funds (*Fondos de Aportaciones para Infraestructura Social*), which are disbursed directly to the municipalities, as areas

of concern. They also expressed concern over the disbursement of monies under the federal government's poverty alleviation program—*PROGRESA*—to state governments or state-based *PROGRESA* offices. FUNDAR and Civic Alliance hope that their due diligence will further enable them to advocate improved transparency. According to FUNDAR officials, their work thus far has found that most governments—regardless of party affiliation—resort to some form of pork-barrel tactics of this nature.

At the governmental level, the Chamber of Deputies created a Congressional Oversight Committee on December 9, 1999, to ensure that public (federal) funds are not disbursed for partisan purposes during the 2000 elections.³⁷ According to Committee Chairman, PAN Deputy Eloida Gutierrez Estrada, and PRD Ranking Member Deputy Armando Aguirre, the Committee's principal responsibility is to inform civil servants and the citizenry at large that it is illegal to disburse public funds for partisan purposes, and that offenders are subject to legal sanctions. The committee hopes to open 32 field offices—one in each state and Mexico City—to make it easier for citizens to file complaints and expose such violations, as opposed to requiring them to travel to Mexico City to lodge complaints.

The PAN and PRD members of the committee expressed concern over the possible misuse of social/poverty alleviation programs such as *PROGRESA*, which targets 2,600,000 families; *PROCAMPO*, which benefits two million farmers; and a variety of temporary employment programs.

The assessment team applauds the unprecedented initiation of the

³⁷ *Comisión Especial Encargada de Vigilar que no se Desvían Recursos Federales en el Proceso Electoral del Año 2000.*

oversight committee, yet it also recognizes that election day is only months away, and that this short time period could prevent the committee from truly being effective. Compounding the already short time period, as of this first assessment mission, the committee had yet to receive funding from the approved five million peso budget, allegedly due to PRI-inspired dilatory tactics. These delays resulted in the committee's not yet having signed necessary agreements with the executive branch; reaching cooperative accords with the IFE; meeting with the Supreme Court to ensure cooperation from the judiciary; hiring and training the 93 individuals the committee estimates it would need to staff all 32 offices; clearly defining the procedures for the 32 field offices; and opening the field offices to the public.

The committee members from the opposition PAN and PRD blamed the PRI faction in the Chamber of Deputies, as well as the PRI Executive, for foot-dragging and hence delaying the setting up of the committee to carry out its mandate. In fairness, however, it appears that the opposition members of the committee also shoulder some responsibility for failing to act more swiftly and assertively.

While the effectiveness of this committee undoubtedly will be limited going into the July 2000 elections, its underlying importance rests on its potential—the fact that it may prove to be the beginning of future congressional oversight of the use of public funds. The opposition members of the committee, however, fear that the committee runs the risk of being disbanded if the majority in the Chamber of Deputies changes hands, (i.e. if the PRI regains control).

Access to the Media

There are three different forms in which political parties can have access to the media.

- 1) Official air time (*tiempos oficiales*) mandated by the Federal Electoral Code (COFIPE)

This form of access to the media consists of 15 minutes of free air time per party per month indefinitely even during non-election periods.

This is complemented during election periods by additional air time that IFE purchases (as per the COFIPE) and distributes free-of charge to the political parties. IFE distributes this additional free air time to the political parties through the 70/30 formula—70 percent based on the previous federal election results and 30 percent equally among all political parties;

- 2) Paid-for political advertisements or “spots”;
- 3) Daily news coverage.

In the past six years, there has been enormous progress in terms of political parties having access to the media. Aside from the fact that COFIPE mandated air time has helped level the playing field, the additional financial resources that all political parties now receive—as a result of the 1996 electoral reforms—have enabled the parties themselves to purchase additional air time.

According to Alonso Lujambio, member of IFE General Council, the improved *paid-for* access to the media by political parties is evidenced by the increases in spending over the past six years for

television and radio air time. In the 1994 presidential election, political parties allocated an estimated 25 percent of their expenditures toward media; that amount rose to an estimated 55 percent for the 1997 mid-term elections. IFE estimates the amount will increase to 65-70 percent for the July 2000 elections.

One of the benefits of allocating expenditures for media access is that this makes it possible for IFE to better monitor and quantify expenditures. Not all expenditures are as transparent and quantifiable.

Some members of opposition political parties contend that it is no longer quantity but quality of coverage that has become an issue. To address this concern regarding the quality of media coverage, non-governmental organizations such as the *Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos* and Mexico's major newspaper, *Reforma*, are monitoring press coverage to detect and report on imbalanced news coverage.³⁸

IFE has voiced concerns over the time-slots that television and radio stations are designating for the COFIPE mandated air time. IFE has asked the *Dirección General de Radio, Televisión y Cinematografía*, under the Ministry of the Interior, for help so that television and radio station owners (*concessionarios*) can be made to be more responsive to the specific time-slots that are being requested by IFE. The owners counter that prime-time slots are the most expensive and thus the most lucrative, and that assigning those time-slots to non-paid advertisements would adversely affect their bottom line.

³⁸ In the case of *Reforma*, it only monitors television coverage.

Campaign Finance

The 1996 electoral reforms introduced public funding for election campaigns. Like the television and radio time provided to the parties, 30 percent of these funds is distributed equally among the parties represented in Congress, and 70 percent is distributed according to the share of the vote each party won in the previous federal election. As a result, public funding for electoral campaigns has provided the opposition parties with more cash than they have ever had before.

The 1996 reforms also established a complex system of spending limits to constrain the use of private funds. Parties are required to provide detailed reports on their spending, and there are clearly defined penalties – parties may be fined or even stripped of their registration – if they cannot provide adequate documentation or if they exceed the spending limits. The difficulty arises from the fact that a party will only be penalized for exceeding spending limits if it delivers a report to the IFE indicating it has done so. There are no independent audits of party spending.

Another loophole in the campaign finance law concerns public collections (*colecta pública*), which ostensibly permits parties to raise funds through ad-hoc public collections. Parties need not specify the donor's name nor the quantity he or she gave when reporting funding under this heading. How forthcoming the parties will be in these reports probably will be difficult to determine.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION

In examining electoral outcomes over the last 39 years, for presidential as well as legislative elections, it is clear that the PRI has experienced a gradual decline in voter support. To a significant degree, the reforms that have led to Mexico's steady

democratization have been driven by popular demand and implemented by the PRI, largely at its own expense.

The July 2000 elections come at a decisive juncture politically, in light of the many electoral advances that Mexico has already achieved since 1994.

1994 The first nationally televised debate among the major presidential candidates took place during the 1994 presidential election.

1997 During the 1997 mid-term elections, the PRI lost its 68-year majority in the Chamber of Deputies, resulting in divided government.

Also in 1997, Mexico City held elections for the first time to elect not only the mayor (who had traditionally been appointed by the president), but also all 66 seats in the city legislature (*Asamblea*).

Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas, the PRD's candidate, won decisively, giving Mexico's political opposition yet another victory.

1998 The PRI held its first open primary in the state of Chihuahua to select the party's gubernatorial candidate, and simultaneously sent a message to the rest of the country that the PRI was not averse to greater internal democratic openness.

1999 The PRI became the first party to hold an open primary to select the party's candidates for president and mayor of Mexico City.

2000 Mexico's political landscape at the state-level has become increasingly pluralistic. Of Mexico's 32 states (including Mexico City), opposition governors govern 11. Four of these represent the recent trend toward opposition coalitions.³⁹

Of Mexico's 2,400 municipalities, 583 currently are governed by opposition governors—encompassing 46 percent of the population.

For the very first time, all 16 delegates for Mexico City will be elected in the July elections.

LOOKING AHEAD

IRI will conduct additional pre-electoral missions to Mexico. The future missions will be assigned to various states throughout Mexico, distributed among urban and rural areas and to states governed by each of the three major parties.

³⁹Aguascalientes (PAN); Baja California Sur (Coalition); Baja California Norte (PAN); Nuevo Leon (PAN); Zacatecas (Coalition); Nayarit (Coalition); Jalisco (PAN); Guanajuato (PAN); Mexico City (PRD); Tlaxcala (Coalition); Queretaro (PAN)

**MEXICO
PRE-ELECTION ASSESSMENT MISSION
REPORT #2**

**JALISCO, TABASCO: APRIL 3-7, 2000
NUEVO LEON: MAY 1-5, 2000**

Issued June 15, 2000

INTRODUCTION

With less than a month to go before Mexico's historic July 2 elections, the political atmosphere in the country is becoming increasingly tense. The vote promises to be among the closest in Mexican history and indications are that a presidential candidate representing a party other than the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) has a credible chance of winning, for the first time in 71 years. Furthermore, in state elections to be held both in July and later this year, opposition parties stand to increase their control of statehouses, local congresses and municipal councils.

Based on information gathered during IRI's second and third pre-election assessment missions to Jalisco, Nuevo Leon, and Tabasco, this report explores election administration and election environment issues from a state perspective. In addition to federal elections, the assessment team also focused on state contests and the independent state electoral institutions that administer them. Assessment sites were chosen to reflect a diversity of geographic location, level of development, and political party dominance.

The teams met with the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) representatives in each state; the state electoral bodies; representatives of the three principal political parties; representatives from non-governmental organizations; media; and

private citizens. The second team also met with the Special Prosecutor for Electoral Crimes in Mexico City to further examine the role of this institution.⁴⁰

The second assessment team visited Mexico City, Jalisco, and Tabasco during the week of April 3-7, 2000.⁴¹ The third assessment team visited the state of Nuevo Leon during the week of May 1-5, 2000.⁴²

This report is the second in a series of pre-election assessment reports to be produced by the International Republican Institute with a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development. IRI will conduct two additional pre-election missions and will field an international team of approximately 43 observers for the July 2 vote. In addition, IRI is supporting the activities of the National Women's Civic Association (ANCIFEM), a domestic organization working to increase the participation of women in the political processes of Mexico and, during the election period, to recruit and

⁴⁰ The authors wish to thank all those who gave generously of their time to meet with us in Mexico City; Guadalajara, Jalisco; Monterrey, Nuevo Leon; and Villahermosa, Tabasco.

⁴¹ The second team consisted of Larry Storrs, Specialist in Latin American Affairs, Congressional Research Service, Washington; George Grayson, Professor of Government, College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia; Mercedes Bravo Alvarez Malo, National Feminine Civic Association, Mexico City, Mexico; and Laura Mozeleski, IRI Program Officer for Latin America and the Caribbean, Washington.

⁴² The third team consisted of Laura Mozeleski, IRI Program Officer for Latin America and the Caribbean, Washington; and Michael Ferber, IRI Program Assistant for Latin America and the Caribbean.

train hundreds of domestic observers to monitor the elections in rural areas of the country.

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

Except for a few isolated comments to the contrary, there seems to be almost universal confidence in the ability of the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) and its state and district offices to administer a technically sound vote for the national offices to be contested on July 2. Mexican officials, political activists, and the general public appear to be satisfied that the general environment in the country is conducive to free and fair elections. Electoral reforms in the 1990s, most recently in 1996, made the Federal Election Institute (IFE) autonomous, established clear rules for vote counting, and established mechanisms to help ensure fair access to the media and campaign financing.

IFE officials interviewed in Mexico City and the states assured the delegations that the institution is functioning well at the national and state levels. The IFE officials are widely perceived as professional, independent, and neutral. Adding to the confidence, citizens who will serve as polling station (*casilla*) officials are chosen by lot and fairly well trained; political parties are increasingly able to supply poll watchers at each polling place; and there are a significant number of domestic and foreign observers. The well established voting and vote counting processes leave little room for fraud at these levels. Nevertheless, some parties conveyed dissatisfaction that further reforms had not been passed to address such issues as regulations governing the formation of coalitions; voting by Mexican citizens outside the country; labeling products for government social program handouts; and others. Several people conveyed a lack of complete confidence in the ability of the Federal Electoral Tribunal, the Special Attorney General for Electoral Crimes, and the Congressional Commission

to Monitor the Misuse of Public Funds for Electoral Purposes to adequately prevent potential abuses or mediate electoral disputes.

Significantly, political parties and citizens expressed less confidence in the state electoral authorities tasked with managing all aspects of elections for governors, local congresses, and municipal councils. Reforms to the Federal Electoral Code were largely duplicated at the state level, but the implementation of these reforms has been uneven and many State Electoral Institutes are relatively inexperienced and have yet to prove themselves. Thirteen states and the Federal District will cast votes in state contests this year—nine states and the Federal District in July and four states later in the year. Governors will be elected in five states—two in July and three later in the year.

2000 MEXICAN STATE ELECTIONS

State	Date	State Congress	Municipal Council	Governor
Campeche	July 2	✓	✓	
Colima	July 2	✓	✓	
Chiapas	August 20			✓
Federal District ⁴³	July 2	✓	✓	✓
Guanajuato	July 2	✓	✓	✓
Jalisco	November 12	✓	✓	✓

⁴³In this report, this position is referred to as the mayoralty of Mexico City. In Spanish, Mexico City's mayor is usually referred to as its chief of government (*jefe de gobierno*), though occasionally the title governor (*gobernador*) is used.

Mexico	July 2	✓	✓	
Morelos	July 2	✓	✓	✓
Nuevo Leon	July 2	✓	✓	
Querétaro	July 2	✓	✓	
San Luís Potosí	July 2	✓	✓	
Sonora	July 2	✓	✓	
Tabasco	October 15	✓	✓	✓
Veracruz	September 3	✓	✓	

THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

State Electoral Institutes

Independent electoral institutions function in parallel with the IFE in each of Mexico's 31 states and the Federal District. These bodies are called State Electoral Institutes, or State Electoral Commissions in some cases. In the same way that the IFE is responsible for all aspects of federal elections, these Institutes are charged with administering the elections for governorships, state congresses, and municipal councils. They are governed by individual state electoral law and not bound by the federal electoral code (*Código Federal de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales - COFIPE*). The IFE and other federal electoral institutions have no authority over them.

Most states have made the necessary changes to bring their electoral laws in line with the spirit of the 1996 federal electoral reforms. Since 1996, independent citizens, for example, have had

responsibility for the administration of elections previously conducted by state government officials. The number of citizen councillors in each state and the lengths of their terms vary. However, most have adopted a structure similar to that of the IFE, with subordinate district and municipal offices designated to manage various aspects of the process. All states rely on the federal voter registry and the federal electoral credential. Each state arranges to pay the IFE for the maintenance of the state registry and to accredit citizens to vote. Most state party representatives expressed confidence in the registry and many commented that citizens' unwillingness to update their own information or verify their inscription was the major impediment to a flawless list.

In the majority of cases, state polling places (*casillas*) are co-located with federal ones. In states where federal and state voting will take place on the same day, individual agreements are negotiated between each State Institute and the IFE about what level of coordination will exist between the two institutions. No level of coordination is mandated by law, and each state decides for itself how much of its election administration it will cede to the IFE. States that will hold elections after the federal vote tend not to negotiate coordination agreements with the IFE but do rely on the IFE's voter registry and maintain the same polling places wherever possible.

Public financing for state races is also administered by the State Electoral Institutes in the same way the IFE administers federal financing. The amounts of money available for state contests are significantly smaller than for the national races and vary, along with the calculations for dividing the money among the parties, from state to state. The reporting requirements imposed on parties to account for the use of these funds also depend on the state.

Jalisco

Jalisco residents will vote on November 12 for their governor, the state congress, and municipal councils. There are almost four million people in the Jalisco state voter registry and participation is expected to reach 70 percent at approximately 6,500 *casillas*.

The assessment team met with the President and the Executive Secretary of the State Electoral Council for Jalisco and was impressed with president's commitment to transparency and open operations. He welcomed the opportunity to publicize the work the Council is doing and to boost citizen confidence in the state election process. He seemed professional and impartial, having been proposed by a civic organization in which he participated in 1997. He commented that he was proud to have been accused of partisanship by both the PRI and the PAN. Political party participation in the electoral process through poll monitoring was cited as essential.

The Jalisco State Electoral Council is comprised of seven citizen councillors approved by the State Congress from proposals made by individuals and civic groups. To be eligible, candidates must not have held any government post in the preceding five years, must not be a member of any political party, and must not have any outstanding legal problems. The councillors now in place in Jalisco were named in June 1997. This is the second state election they have administered. President José Manuel Barceló Moreno commented that he expects things to run more smoothly in 2000 given the Council's experience and the ample time to prepare. Councillors arrived in 1997 with only four months to prepare and found the immense organizational task daunting.

The Jalisco State Electoral Council has not signed any agreements with IFE given that their voting follows the national elections by four months. However, councillors indicated that 90 percent of

polling places would be the same as the July federal polling places. The State Council is conducting its own program to select and train *casilla* officials. As in the federal process, *casilla* officials in Jalisco are chosen by a double lottery. Registered citizens born in the month chosen by lot are selected during the first round. The second round reduces this number by selecting of these only those voters whose last name begins with a letter drawn by lot. In the case of Jalisco, state electoral officials sought to avoid the possibility that the same citizens would serve during the federal elections in July and again for the state contests in November, thus they removed April (the month randomly chosen by the IFE) from the lottery. As of our meeting, the training program for *casilla* officials was ready and the State Council was preparing to train more than 30,000 citizens.

The State Electoral Council is responsible for distributing public financing for state races as well as ordinary state party operations. During election years parties are required to submit quarterly expenditure reports. During non-election years the reports are due every six months. This stands in contrast to the federal reporting requirement, which obligates parties to submit only one report—60 days after the official end of the campaign period (June 28 this year). The State Council also reviews a final reporting at the end of the campaign period as well as conducting random audits of bank statements and receipts. Sanctions for exceeding set spending limits can include reduction of future public financing or the loss of party registration.

Nuevo Leon

In 1997, the IFE administered the state elections in Nuevo Leon under a special arrangement between the IFE and the State Electoral Council. The State Electoral Council had recently been elected and did not have time or resources to adequately address

the task. This year represents the Nuevo Leon State Electoral Council's first attempt to organize and administer elections.

The state and federal electoral authorities in Nuevo Leon will conduct parallel programs to select and train *casilla* workers. The IFE will train approximately 30,000 citizens, and the State Electoral Council will train 33,000. The State Electoral Council was quick to explain that these parallel efforts, although seemingly duplicative, are necessary to maintain the State's independence from the federal authorities and represent the cost citizens must pay for autonomy. They also emphasized that the 1997 arrangement that authorized the IFE to manage both state and federal processes in the state was precarious. One set of *casilla* functionaries counted the ballots for every contest, the counting went on late into the night, and the probability for mistakes by tired citizen officials was high.

The agreement between the IFE and State Electoral Council, signed in February 2000, calls for the federal and state *casillas* to be co-located but administered at separate voting tables. Voters will form one line and proceed from one table to the next. Voters will have their finger inked twice, once on each hand. The approximately 4,400 *casilla* locations will be chosen by the IFE and the State Electoral Council will contribute a share of resources to cover the overall expense. Nuevo Leon's voter registry of approximately 2.5 million citizens is estimated to be 99 percent accurate. Voter participation is expected to exceed the 64 percent recorded in 1997.

Some political party representatives commented that they would prefer that the IFE continue to administer the state races, as they expressed more confidence in the IFE than the State Council. These party representatives didn't appear concerned about the implied loss of state independence. Only the PRD lodged complaints against the IFE, accusing them of being pro-PAN.

Otherwise, the IFE received praise from a wide-range of groups and individuals in Nuevo Leon.

The PRI's misgivings about the State Electoral Council may stem from a recent decision taken against them by the Council. On May 5, 2000, the State Electoral Commission of Nuevo Leon imposed the harshest sanction ever handed down to a political party in that state when it fined the PRI 46 million pesos for allegedly having received funds from the state government between 1996 and 1997. This sanction amounted to the denial of eight years of public financing for the party. The PRI fought the decision and appealed to the State Electoral Tribunal, which ultimately reversed the sanction on June 4. The Tribunal ruled that although certain individuals may have improperly appropriated government funds, there was not enough evidence to prove that the money made its way into the official party coffers. From the outset, the PRI criticized the timing of this sanction—several years after the fact and during an election period—as politically motivated. They cite this case as evidence that the head of the State Electoral Institute is linked with its major rival in this state, the National Action Party (PAN), now in the statehouse.

The PAN also had complaints about the State Electoral Institute citing an extension given for registration of certain candidates which they claim favored the PRI. The PAN insisted that all its candidates had fulfilled all the registration requirements by the deadlines established by law and that in order to uphold the rule of law, no party may be granted exceptions. Excepting this complaint, however, the PAN indicated its view that the State Electoral Institute was improving and that the party had confidence in the Institute's ability to administer the election. Even though it is the Institute's first independently administered election, the PAN wants to bolster confidence in the institution and not discredit it over relatively minor issues.

Tabasco

The battle ground of intense intra-party PRI rivalries, Tabasco's state elections will be held on October 15, 2000. Citizens of this southern state will elect their governor, state congress, and municipal councils. Although IRI assessors found the IFE and the Tabasco state electoral institute (*Instituto Electoral de Tabasco*) to be largely well-regarded in the state, the PRD expressed skepticism regarding the fairness and professionalism of the institutions operating the electoral machinery. While most people with whom the IRI assessors met have confidence in the secrecy of the vote and expect a fair administration of the process on election day, there were serious concerns in non-PRI circles regarding the party's huge mobilization of resources in the state, which some contend unfairly prejudices the outcome.

The PRI, for its part, praises the federal and state election authorities in Tabasco and expresses solid confidence in the state of democracy there. The PRI emphasized the "cleansing" process of the party's primaries and assured IRI assessors that the divisions within the party have been repaired.

There appears to be only a minimal PAN presence in Tabasco.

Specialized Office for Attention to Electoral Crimes

(Fiscalía Especial para la Atención a Delitos Electorales - FEPADE)

Mexico has three institutions dedicated to the issue of elections, the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) which is public, autonomous, and organizes elections; the Federal Electoral Tribunal (TRIFE) which resolves electoral disputes at the federal level or appeals of State Electoral Tribunal rulings; and the Specialized Office for Electoral Crimes (*Fiscalía Especial para la Atención de Delitos Electorales, also known as FEPADE*), an independent arm of the

Attorney General's office. In contrast to the other two electoral bodies, the FEPADE is governed by specific chapters of the penal code dealing with elections, and not the Federal Electoral Code (COFIPE). The assessment team met with the head of the FEPADE, Dr. Javier Patiño Camarena.

Reforms to the Mexican electoral system consolidated electoral crimes under the federal penal code as opposed to the electoral law.⁴⁴ Dr. Patiño stressed that this distinction demonstrates the seriousness with which these crimes are to be dealt. Historically, electoral law issues have been more politicized than criminal issues and, according to Dr. Patiño, treating electoral violations as crimes elevates the public's faith in their prosecution. In addition, the inclusion of electoral crimes in the penal code allows for more severe sanctions and penalties, up to and including imprisonment.

By the early 1990s, it had become clear that the existing structure of the Attorney General's office was not equipped to deal with the additional mandate, so in 1994, it created the FEPADE. A large part of the FEPADE's mandate, as described by Dr. Patiño, was not only to prosecute electoral crimes, but to prevent them. The FEPADE has technical autonomy from the Attorney General, but is part of their overall budget. The FEPADE does not submit its opinions for the Attorney General's clearance. However, the institution is criticized for a perceived lack of independence from the administration.

Electoral offenses can be committed any time, not just during a campaign period or on voting day, and the number of people capable of committing electoral crimes is great. There are approximately 57 million people in the federal voter registry and

⁴⁴ Electoral crimes are treated in Articles 403 to 413 of the Federal Penal Code.

approximately 840,000 people involved in the administration of the election.⁴⁵ In addition, each party and each candidate can appoint up to two representatives to each *casilla*. The numbers add up very quickly. There are different categories of offenses corresponding to each kind of individual or entity. The FEPADE has published specialized educational materials for each universe and has printed easy-to-read brochures that are being distributed in cooperation with the IFE.

In general, there are four possible responses to each complaint FEPADE receives: penal action, no penal action, reserve judgment, or claim of no jurisdiction on the matter. For each complaint, FEPADE first decides if it has jurisdiction. If not, FEPADE is supposed to forward the complaint to the proper authorities. Second, it determines if there is sufficient evidence to proceed. Finally, if there is sufficient evidence, FEPADE determines if there was a violation of the law.

FEPADE reports each month to the IFE and Attorney General describing the complaints it received, the evidence uncovered about each, and what decisions it took. Additionally, FEPADE compiles and publicly disseminates quarterly and annual reports on these issues.

Between 1997 and 1999 the FEPADE received a total of 1,341 complaints—453 in 1997, 339 in 1998, and 549 in 1999. Of these 1,341 complaints, the FEPADE had resolved 1,007 (76%) by the end of 1999, leaving 24 percent still in process. Of the 1,007 resolved complaints, 230 were decided to be outside the FEPADE's jurisdiction; 367 were put on hold for lack of information or other questions; 252 were ruled as not violations of

⁴⁵ Seven *casilla* officials at each of approximately 120,000 *casillas* in 300 federal districts.

the law; and 140 were ruled violations of the law. Of the 140 violations, the FEPADE obtained 135 indictments. Of the 135, 73 were for falsifying elector credentials; 19 were for the misuse of public funds; and 43 were for stealing electoral documents. The majority of indicted individuals were private citizens as opposed to public office holders or election authorities. The comparatively low number of cases ruled to be violations of the law has fueled criticism that the FEPADE has been less than vigorous in prosecuting alleged violations.

Of the 20 percent of the complaints that go before a judge, 95 percent of judicial rulings uphold the FEPADE indictments. For the cases it tries, FEPADE has a good success rate, but critics assert that overall, it spends a lot of time and money for relatively few prosecutions. One possible reason for the small number of overall cases is the requirement that people submitting complaints of potential violations are required to appear in person to ratify their charges. Dr. Patiño explains that this requirement is intended to prevent frivolous or politically-motivated charges from being brought, but that it may discourage potential whistle-blowers.

Overall, the impact of the FEPADE appears to be limited. The general population seems not to know about this institution, and most of those who know it exists cannot explain its role vis a vis the IFE and other public institutions focused on electoral matters.

THE ELECTORAL ENVIRONMENT

While concurring in the absence of major concerns about the technical administration of the federal or state elections, political parties in each state covered in this report echoed the national concern that the vote buying, the use of public funds for electoral purposes, and inequitable media access were the main obstacles to a more fully democratic election process.

In general, the PAN and PRD expressed their view that the PRI is resorting to illicit or at least questionable practices to secure votes because these elections are so highly competitive and there is a genuine possibility for an opposition victory. Although firm evidence is hard to come by, the opposition parties accuse the PRI of cash handouts in exchange for votes on election day. The opposition acknowledges, however, that many of the allegations cannot be verified with sufficient evidence to be presented to IFE, FEPADE, or the Congressional Commission of Vigilance.

While the opposition parties tend to emphasize that less well developed areas are susceptible to improper influence in the form of handouts and that poor voters can be tricked into believing that votes in exchange for gifts can be verified, the PRI expresses its confidence that the Mexican electorate knows its vote is free and secret and is therefore less easily manipulated than alleged.

The use of state resources for partisan purposes historically has been a major criticism of the governing party, and it remains a contentious issue in these elections. As Mexico's political structures and systems have become more competitive and pluralistic in recent years, however, the PAN and PRD are also accused of improper use of state resources in those jurisdictions where they govern. Most Mexicans interviewed for this series of pre-election assessments believe the creation of the special congressional committee⁴⁶ to guard against diversion of state resources was a positive step, but also acknowledge its impact ultimately will be very limited due to a late start date, relatively few resources, and a limited infrastructure.

⁴⁶ *Comisión Especial Encargada de Vigilar que no se Desvien Recursos Federales en el Proceso Electoral del Año 2000.*

Equitable access to the media and balanced coverage of the various campaigns by the media persist as potent criticisms in the pre-electoral process, notwithstanding considerable advances in the monitoring and reporting on these issues. As noted in IRI's first pre-election assessment report, there are three different forms in which political parties can have access to the media: official air time (*tiempos oficiales*) mandated by the Federal Electoral Code (COFIPE), consisting of 15 minutes of free air time per party per month indefinitely even during non-election periods, complemented during election period by additional air time that IFE purchases and distributes free-of charge to the political parties based on the 70/30 formula—70 percent based on the previous federal election results and 30 percent equally among all political parties; paid-for political advertisements or “spots”; and daily news coverage.

All parties theoretically have equal access to paid advertisements, although the PRD, particularly in the Federal District, asserted that the prices charged to political organizations are prohibitively high, allegedly higher than those charged to corporate advertisers. Complaints abound that the PRI unfairly benefits from biased media coverage. The IFE, which is monitoring media coverage, shows the PRI benefitting disproportionately from the majority of television and radio coverage. The most recent set of IFE reports, released May 6, show the PRI with 39.6 percent of the national combined television and radio coverage, the Alliance for Change (PAN coalition) with 26.1 percent, and the Alliance for Mexico (PRD coalition) with 20.5 percent. The PRI takes issue with the IFE results, explaining that the nature and air time of the coverage are not taken into account by these figures, and that the amount of prime time, high-quality television and radio exposure has benefitted the opposition coalitions equally.

LOOKING AHEAD

The July 2 vote will be a critical one for Mexico’s democratic future. Several weeks before the election, the outcome is still very uncertain and it is not known how the government, political parties and Mexican electorate will react to a victory by either of the two front-runners, particularly if the final results are extremely close or are not released as promptly as anticipated. The potential for problems due to electoral administration issues remains low, whereas concerns about election environment issues persist and have been amplified as the election looms closer.

IRI will conduct two additional pre-electoral missions to Mexico. The future missions will highlight federal and state election preparedness in Zacatecas and Campeche. In July, former Secretary of State James A. Baker, III will lead IRI’s 43-member international mission to observe the elections in 10 states—including the Federal District and six of the ten states where local elections will be held.

APPENDIX

Candidates for President

Political Forces	Presidential Candidate
Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)	Francisco Labastida Ochoa
Alliance for Change National Action Party (PAN) Mexico’s Green Party (PVEM)	Vicente Fox Quesada
Alliance for Mexico Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD) Labor Party (PT) Social Alliance Party (PAS) Convergence for Democracy (CD) Nationalist Society Party (PSN)	Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas

Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution (PARM)	Porfirio Muñoz Ledo
Democratic Center Party (PCD)	Manuel Camacho Solís
Social Democracy Party (DS)	Gilberto Rincón Gallardo

Candidates for Mexico City *Jefe de Gobierno*

Political Force	Candidate
Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)	Jesús Silva Herzog Flores
Alliance for Change National Action Party (PAN) Mexico's Green Party (PVEM)	Santiago Creel Miranda
Alliance for Mexico City Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD) Democratic Center Party (PCD) Labor Party (PT) Social Alliance Party (PAS) Convergence for Democracy (CD) Nationalist Society Party (PSN)	Andrés Manuel López Obrador
Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution (PARM)	Alejandro Ordorico
Social Democracy (DS)	Teresa Guadalupe Vale Castilla

**MEXICO
PRE-ELECTION ASSESSMENT MISSION
REPORT #3**

MEXICO CITY, ZACATECAS: (May 29 - June 2, 2000)⁴⁷

Issued June 28, 2000

INTRODUCTION

With less than one week to go before Mexico's historic July 2 elections, the campaign is reaching its final stages. The most recent polls consistently indicate a very close race at the presidential level between Francisco Labastida of the long-governing Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI) and Vicente Fox of the National Action Party (PAN). In his third consecutive run for the presidency, Cuauhtémoc Cardenas of the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) remains in third place, although his poll ratings have been inching upwards in recent weeks.

In broader terms, the political environment in Mexico has greatly evolved in recent years, becoming substantially more competitive at all levels. President Ernesto Zedillo deserves much credit for guiding the delicate process of opening up the political system and moving away from Mexico's seven decade history of one-party dominance. This progressive opening of the political system has been accompanied by steady gains by the major opposition parties at all levels of government.

At the presidential level, although chosen by an unprecedented national primary process, which gave him an initial boost of public

⁴⁷ The assessment team consisted of William Perry, President of William Perry and Associates, Washington, DC; and Veronica Gallardo, National Feminine Civic Association, Mexico City.

support, PRI standard bearer Francisco Labastida has faced serious challenges from the beginning of the campaign. He has had to convince an increasingly restive public that the PRI can and should be trusted with continued stewardship of the country's affairs, and at the same time, compete with ever-fewer of the often less-than-democratic electoral advantages the PRI enjoyed in the past. The opposition has clearly benefitted from these circumstances, and collectively is sure to out-poll the PRI on July 2.

The opposition is mainly divided between the left-leaning PRD, which boasts most its electoral strength in Mexico City and the poorer areas of the south; and the center-right PAN, which has its greatest strengths in the northern states and among the country's growing middle classes. For its part, the PRI continues to hold solid positions among large segments of Mexican society, particularly in the more rural areas of the country, where a substantial portion of the population lives. Given Mexico's first-past-the-post electoral system at the presidential level, the PRI can credibly compete for a winning plurality over a divided opposition.

NATIONAL ELECTORAL ENVIRONMENT

Despite major advances in the competitiveness of Mexico's political processes and the significant reforms that have contributed to those advances, concerns persist regarding the fairness of the country's electoral system. This is not unexpected given past history and the closeness of this year's elections. Rendering a balanced and informed judgment will be an important duty for both domestic and international observers.

Across the political spectrum, there is virtually unanimous confidence in the administration of the federal-level elections, the responsibility for which lies with the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE). Still, there are concerns mostly in terms of equitable access to the media and balanced coverage by it; overspending legally

established limits on the campaigns; use of state resources for partisan purposes; and vote-buying or coercion of voters.

Large increases in public campaign financing have significantly leveled the playing field in terms of paid political advertising, with substantial portions of the public funding reportedly going to paid advertising. Parties generally do not complain about paid access to the media. The quantity and quality of news coverage, however, are other matters. Although not totally equitable according to recent analyses, quantitative news coverage of the major parties and candidates is now substantially more equal than ever before. The quality of the coverage, however, is an area where the opposition parties continue to claim the coverage they receive is more often negative, whereas that of the PRI and its presidential candidate is substantially more positive. IFE's own analyses tend to confirm this general trend toward proportionally more positive coverage afforded the PRI and more negative coverage of the PAN.

The question of the extent to which Mexico's political parties are abiding by legally stipulated spending limits is difficult to ascertain. By law, the parties receive substantial public funding in large measure based on their performance in previous elections. Parties also can and do receive voluntary private contributions. At this stage in the process, because a relatively comprehensive accounting is not required until after the elections, charges of excess spending are as common as they are difficult to verify. For example, all of the opposition parties routinely accuse PRI candidates of having access to government funds, money raised clandestinely from powerful groups, and their own (often allegedly ill-gotten) private resources. And the PRI appears to believe that PAN presidential candidate Fox enjoys secret business support and that Fox and the PRD's Cardenas raise campaign donations abroad (which would be illegal). Prior to the elections, it will be impossible for international and domestic observers to render a definitive and independent judgement on these matters. IRI urges,

however, that substantiated cases be adequately and impartially investigated by competent judicial authorities.

Regarding the use of public funds, it was once standard procedure for the PRI/government to employ public funds and resources for partisan purposes at election time – almost openly and on a massive scale. Such practices are now acknowledged to be illegal and have been publicly foresworn by all parties. Although the practice does not appear to be as openly used as in the past, it is not likely to be completely eliminated in the near-term. As the political system has become more competitive and more opposition candidates have won at the state and local levels, the charges now fly both ways between the PRI and its challengers.

Vote buying and coercion of voters are also matters of concern frequently raised by candidates, in the media, and during conversations with private individuals. These accusations run a wide gamut – from the possibility of modest payments of cash, food or goods on election day to much grander schemes. For example, it is sometimes alleged that distribution of considerable quantities of construction materials, foodstuffs or household furnishings (presumably from government stores) are offered to residents of particular areas for producing a desired outcome from the polls there. Public works projects are purportedly offered to localities in exchange for electoral cooperation. Poor people are said to be threatened with the loss of government welfare programs to which they are legally entitled or government/union jobs menaced in similar fashion. Although still problematic, such practices are undoubtedly less common than formerly – as well as harder to carry out within a pluralistic political system and given great improvements in the inviolability of the voting booth. Vicente Fox, for his part, has urged citizens to accept whatever the PRI or the government offers them and then vote for the PAN on July 2.

Vote buying and coercion almost certainly still occur to a certain extent, more likely in the less well developed areas of the country. The issue could take on greater significance if serious controversies result from an extremely close election. At the same time, it is important to maintain a sense of objectivity and realism in the midst of a highly charged election atmosphere where past abuses understandably could influence one's perception. As IFE President Jose Woldenberg often notes, with an expected voter turnout of approximately 40 million citizens, influencing just one percent of the electorate via these means would require buying or coercing the vote of 400,000 individuals, and probably many more because no one will know for whom any individual voter actually votes.

Zacatecas

In Zacatecas, IRI assessors met with election and other local officials, party leaders, media representatives, local citizens, and others. As in previous IRI pre-election assessment missions to Mexico City, Jalisco, Tabasco, and Nuevo Leon, IRI seeks to devote attention to areas of the country where major local/international media scrutiny and the balance of power among contending forces tends to be less well self-regulating than in major urban areas.

The state of Zacatecas covers a large and relatively remote area of north-central Mexico with a sparse population amounting to some 1.5 million. Once a prosperous silver-producing center, it fell on ever harder times as mines closed due to lower mineral prices and lack of investment capital for more modern extractive technologies. An arid climate limits agricultural potential; there is little in the way of a manufacturing base; and Zacatecas is too far away from the border with the United States and the central valley of Mexico to have significantly benefitted yet from the *maquiladora* boom or the emergence of the "new" Mexican economy. Under these circumstances, the state of Zacatecas has been heavily dependent

upon income from the federal government, and a great many of its inhabitants have migrated to the United States – from where they provide a significant source of remittance support to their remaining family members.

In the past, these circumstances have constituted the classic formula for maintenance of one-party dominance by the PRI. But the situation in Zacatecas has been evolving rapidly over the course of recent years. The defection by one of the PRI's most popular local leaders led to his election as governor in 1998 under the PRD banner. And the PAN is now showing surprising signs of political life there – despite the absence of many of the characteristics normally associated with its strength, such as a large middle class, significant church influence, and a vibrant business community.

Especially given Vicente Fox's rise in the polls nationally, the prospects are good for a surprisingly competitive presidential race in Zacatecas this weekend, with corresponding impact on contests for the Senate and Chamber of Deputies. In other respects, the political environment there has become increasingly like that of other, more developed parts of the country. The IFE, for example, is widely respected across the spectrum and there are no serious concerns about election day administration.

Other concerns persist, however, with respect to issues such as local media fairness. Although not accused of political bias, according to numerous individuals with whom IRI assessors met, local media appear to routinely charge fees for adequate coverage of candidacies. This would seem to affect the PAN mostly given its more limited financial resources in this state. For its part, the PRD complains of federal support for PRI standard-bearers as well as their purportedly high levels of spending individually. The PRI expresses its suspicions that the state government's resources are being put to the service of PRD candidates, and the PAN agrees with them both.

Interestingly enough, however, as best as IRI assessors could determine, no documented complaints have been filed with judicial authorities. In conclusion, there are many reasons to expect a competitive and honest election in Zacatecas on July 2. But suspicions are reasonably wide spread that abuses of the law – beyond the voting system itself – could occur (or might already be occurring). This is a matter that might conceivably give rise to controversy and merits monitoring in a balanced, responsible fashion in the days leading up to the balloting and on election day.

SCHEDULE OF 2000 STATE AND LOCAL ELECTIONS

State	Date	State Congress	Municipal Council	Governor
Campeche	July 2	✓	✓	
Colima	July 2	✓	✓	
Chiapas	August 20			✓
Federal District ⁴⁸	July 2	✓	✓	✓
Guanajuato	July 2	✓	✓	✓
Jalisco	November 12	✓	✓	✓
Mexico	July 2	✓	✓	
Morelos	July 2	✓	✓	✓
Nuevo Leon	July 2	✓	✓	
Querétaro	July 2	✓	✓	
San Luis Potosí	July 2	✓	✓	
Sonora	July 2	✓	✓	
Tabasco	October 15	✓	✓	✓
Veracruz	September 3	✓	✓	

⁴⁸In this report, this position is referred to as the mayoralty of Mexico City. In Spanish, Mexico City's mayor is usually referred to as its chief of government (*jefe de gobierno*), though occasionally the title governor (*gobernador*) is used.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Electoral Authorities

Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE)

Federal Electoral Institute. The IFE is charged with organizing Mexico's federal elections.

Mesa Directiva de Casilla

Polling Station Board of Directors. Selected and trained by the IFE, nonpartisan citizens staff the Polling Station Boards of Directors. Each consists of a president (*presidente*), a secretary (*secretario*), two examiners (*escrutinadores*), and three substitutes (*suplentes*) who stand ready to fill any vacancy. Also known as *funcionarios de casilla*.

Junta Local Electoral

Local Electoral Board. This IFE body is charged with overseeing federal elections in each of Mexico's 31 states. Each state's Local Electoral Board has offices in the state capital.

Junta Distrital Electoral

District Electoral Board. This IFE body is charged with overseeing federal elections in each of Mexico's 300 electoral districts. Vote tallies and ballots are delivered from the polling stations to the offices of the District Electoral Boards.

Instituto Estatal Electoral

State Electoral Institute. Each of Mexico's 31 states has a State Electoral Institute charged with overseeing state elections. The IFE has no jurisdiction over state elections. Known as the *Comisión Estatal Electoral* in some states.

Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación

Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judiciary. When representatives of political parties or other citizens issue a challenge (*impugnación*) against electoral results, this institution judges the case. The states have electoral tribunals that play the same role in state elections.

Polling Stations

Casilla

Polling station. Approximately 115,000 polling stations were set up on July 2.

Sección

Precinct. In most cases, a single polling station will be established in each precinct.

Lista nominal

Voter list. Each polling station will have a voter list with the names and photographs of up to 750 registered voters. The voter lists are drawn directly from the registry of voters (*padrón electoral*).

Casilla contigua

Adjacent polling station. In precincts where more than 750 registered voters live, these supplementary polling stations will be set up at the same location as the main polling station. Most will be in urban areas. Also known as a *casilla bis*.

Casilla extraordinaria

Extraordinary polling station. A small number of large rural precincts have been subdivided to allow polling stations to be set up closer to the voters. In these cases, the precinct's voter list is also subdivided.

Casilla especial

Special polling station. Up to five special polling stations will be established in each of Mexico's 300 electoral districts to allow people who are away from home on election day to vote. Each special polling stations will have 750 ballots.

Credencial para votar

Voter credential. The voter credential integrates numerous different security measures to prevent forgeries.

Boleta

Ballot. Voters will be given three different ballots to choose candidates for federal offices. Voters in some states will be given additional, different ballots to elect state officials.

Mampara

Voting booth. The protective screen around each booth is emblazoned with the words "Your vote is secret" (*Tu voto es secreto*).

Urna

Ballot box. The sides of Mexican ballot boxes are made of transparent plastic to prevent the distribution of "pregnant ballot boxes" (*urnas embarazadas*) stuffed with pre-marked ballots.

Tinta indelible

Indelible ink. Upon voting, each citizen's thumb is marked with this ink as an anti-fraud measure.

Vote Counting

Programa de Resultados Electorales Preliminares (PREP)

Program for Preliminary Election Results. This is the IFE's program to quickly gather election returns as they are delivered to the District Electoral Boards, compile them, and present them to the citizenry, the media, and the parties. PREP should make election results public around midnight on election night. The CEDATs and the CENARREP (see below) are the key institutions of this program.

Centro de Acopio y Transmisión de Datos (CEDAT)

Center for the Compilation and Transmission of Data. These are based in the offices of each District Electoral Board in each of the 300 election districts. After the vote count is completed at each polling station, the president of each Polling Station Board of Directors delivers a tally form directly to the CEDAT so that the returns can be compiled and transmitted to the CENARREP (see below).

Centro Nacional de Recepción de los Resultados Electorales Preliminares (CENARREP)

National Center for the Reception of Preliminary Electoral Results. Data from the CEDATs are transmitted to and compiled at the CENARREP, which is based at the IFE headquarters in Mexico City.

Elected Offices

Senador

Senator. The full 128-seat federal Senate will be elected on July 2. These senators will be elected from national party lists according to proportional representation. Voters choose a party but can neither change the ranking

of candidates on the list nor mix candidates of different parties. These 128 senators will serve six-year terms.

Diputado uninominal

Deputy representing a single-member district. Three hundred members of the federal Chamber of Deputies are elected to represent single-member districts. For this purpose, Mexico is divided into 300 electoral districts of more or less equal population. These deputies are elected by a simple plurality, and all serve three-year terms.

Diputado plurinominal

Deputy representing a multi-member district. The remaining 200 members of the federal Chamber of Deputies are elected to represent multi-member districts. These deputies will be elected from national party lists according to proportional representation. Voters choose a party but can neither change the ranking of candidates on the list nor mix candidates of different parties. For this purpose, Mexico is divided into five regions (*circunscripciones*) of more or less equal population; each region is represented by 40 deputies.

Gobernador

Governor. Two states – Guanajuato and Morelos – elected governors on July 2. The Federal District elected its chief of government (*jefe de gobierno*).

Congreso estatal

State Congress. Nine states—Campeche, Colima, Guanajuato, Mexico State, Morelos, Nuevo León, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, and Sonora—elected deputies for their state Congresses on July 2. The Federal District elected its Legislative Assembly (*Asamblea Legislativa*).

Ayuntamientos

Municipal councils. The same nine states and the Federal District elected municipal councils on July 2.

**International Republican Institute
Schedule of Activities
June 29-30, 2000**

Thursday, June 29

- 9:00-10:15am: IRI Staff Briefing on Election Weekend Activities (IRI Only)
- 10:15-10:30am: Break
- 10:30-11:30am: Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD)
Carlos Heredia, Federal Deputy
- 11:30am-1:00pm: Mexican Civic Organizations/Domestic Election Observers
- National Women's Civic Organization (IRI partner organization)
 - Civic Alliance (NDI partner organization)
 - Comparmex (Mexican business association)
- 1:00-2:00pm: Lunch (IRI Only)
- 2:00-3:00pm: National Action Party (PAN)
- Carlos Salazar, International Affairs
 - Pedro Pinzon, Advisor
- 3:00-4:00pm: Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)
- Amb. Sandra Fuentes, International Affairs
 - Felipe Solis Acero
 - Senator José G. Márquez

- 4:00-6:00pm Panel Discussion on Issue of the Use of Government Resources for Partisan Purposes
- Federal Deputy Eloida Gutierrez, Chairman of Congressional Committee to Guard Against the Diversion of Public Funds
 - Froyan Hernandez, General Coordinator of Government's Social Services Programs
 - Felipe Soliz Ocerro, PRI
 - Helena Hofbauer, FUNDAR (civic organization researching the matter)

Friday, June 30

- 8:00-9:00am: Electoral Dispute Resolution; Prosecution of Electoral Law Violations
- Prof. Todd Eisenstadt, University of New Hampshire
- 9:00-11:15am: Detailed Review of Election Day Processes and Procedures
- Marco Antonio Baños, Federal Electoral Institute
- 11:15-11:30am: Break
- 11:30am-12:30pm: Polling and Political Analysis
- Rossana Fuentes, *Reforma* newspaper
 - Guillermo Valdez, GEA (Mexican polling organization)

- 12:45-1:45pm: Lunch with U.S. Ambassador Jeffrey Davidow (IRI Only)
Location: Plaza Señoriales, across street
- 2:00-4:00pm: Access to Media and Media Objectivity
- Jacqueline Peschard, Federal Electoral Institute
 - Sergio Sarmiento, *Reforma* newspaper
 - Leonardo Kurchenko, Televisa television network
 - Gabriela Galaviz, Mexican Academy of Human Rights
- 4:00-5:00pm: PAN Presidential Candidate Vicente Fox (IRI, NDI, and a group of European observers)
Location: Fiestas Americanas
- 5:00-6:00pm: Final Pre-Departure Briefings (IRI Only)

YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S VOTE

According to the COFIPE, the IFE is granted the broad responsibility of promoting democratic culture and citizen understanding of electoral rights. By law, this responsibility extends not only to voting-age adults, but to children and young people as well. It is the IFE's belief that in addition to traditional civic education, effective democratic development of children and young people must include practical experience. For these reasons, the IFE conducted a youth and children's vote concurrent with the July 2 national elections.

All Mexican children between the ages of six and 17 were eligible to participate. Approximately four million did so. Three separate ballots were cast—one for ages six to nine, one for ages 10-13, and one for ages 14-17. The ballot for the youngest group was written in very simple language with only a few "yes or no" questions. The middle age group's ballot was a little longer and more complex, while the adolescent ballot was even longer and included some short answer questions. All of the ballots incorporated cartoons and bright colors to interest and guide the young voters.

Participation was highest among the six to nine age group and lowest for the 14-17 age group. Notably, girls participated more than boys in every age group and in every state. Young volunteers set up approximately 14,000 *casillas* nationwide and conducted the balloting based on rules established by the IFE. They received the ballots of their peers, and processed the results in the same way as their adult counterparts.

Ballot questions were designed to help young people think practically about democratic values in their lives. For example, the six to nine age group was asked to answer "yes" or "no" to questions such as: "Does everyone respect the rules in your family, and in your school?" and "Are boys and girls treated equally in your family, and in your school?" Questions for the 14 to 17 ages

group included: “Do you receive sufficient information about alcohol and drugs in your family, your school, your neighborhood?” and “Do you feel that your opinion matters in your family, your school, your neighborhood?”

IRI supports this effort as a means to developing democratic culture among young Mexicans. The exercise gives the participants ownership of their own process and provides a opportunity to express important opinions, while reinforcing the language and concepts of electoral democracy.

THE INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE

IRI conducts programs outside the United States to promote democracy and strengthen free markets and the rule of law. The programs are tailored to the needs of pro-democracy activists in over 30 countries and include, for example, local political organizing, campaign management, polling, parliamentary training, judicial reform, and election monitoring.

By aiding emerging democracies, IRI plays a valuable role in helping bring greater stability to the world. Stable democracies not only further the cause of peace, but also enhance American opportunities for business investment and trade.

Political Affiliation

IRI is not part of the Republican Party of the United States. Its programs are nonpartisan and adhere to fundamental American principles such as individual liberty, the rule of law, and the entrepreneurial spirit that promotes economic development.

Funding

Established as a private, nonprofit organization, IRI receives contributions from individuals, corporations, foundations and the U.S. government. It is designated by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions are tax-deductible.

IRI Priorities

In deciding where to conduct programs, IRI considers current and historical U.S. national interests, and weighs whether it can make a difference and achieve a result over a period of time.

Management and Staff

IRI is managed by a Board of Directors, chaired by U.S. Senator John McCain of Arizona. The Board and officers of IRI are assisted by a Congressional Advisory Committee and Working Groups comprised of experts in international relations, business, government, and politics. IRI's President, Lorne Craner, worked at the National Security Council, State Department, and the U.S. Senate before joining the Institute.

About 50 staff members work at IRI in Washington D.C., and approximately 20 others work in field offices in Albania, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, China, Croatia, Georgia, Guatemala, Hungary, Indonesia, Mongolia, Nigeria, Peru, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, South Africa, Ukraine, and Venezuela.

Most important, IRI uses the expert talents of hundreds of volunteers annually as trainers and election observers. Without these dedicated volunteers, our vital work would be impossible.

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**INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE
MEXICO**

**Fostering Participation and Accountability
in
The Political Process
and Conducting Pre-election Assessments**

**USAID Cooperative Agreement
No. AEP -54-A-00-5038-00/4677**

Project Dates: September 8, 1999 - September 7, 2000

I. SUMMARY

On September 8, 1999 the International Republican Institute's (IRI) proposal for a project with the *Asociación Nacional Cívica Femenina* (ANCIFEM) to foster participation and accountability in the democratic process among women in Mexico was approved. The objectives of this program are:

- To increase women's participation in the Mexican political process by training them to be effective, professional, and politically viable candidates and campaign staff;
- To hold Mexican elected officials accountable for the way they discharge their public duties through citizen observation;
- To promote informed, responsible participation in the electoral process prior to and during the July 2000 national elections through civic awareness training at the local level; and,
- To strengthen voter confidence and promote a free and fair democratic electoral process in the 2000 Mexico national elections.

Under this project, CEPPS/IRI/ANCIFEM will conduct political leadership training in Mexico for female candidates or campaign staff, citizen oversight of public officials, and local civic awareness. The political leadership training will consist of three parallel tracks — basic, advanced, and specialized. The program is being implemented via a sub-grant to the *Asociación Nacional Cívica Femenina* (ANCIFEM), a Mexico City-based, non-profit, nonpartisan civic organization, founded in 1975. Additionally, IRI will conduct a series of pre-election assessment missions. The purpose of these missions is to lend international support to the elections, assess the electoral environment, evaluate preparations for election day, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and make recommendations for improvements. IRI will give emphasis to state-level electoral issues. To multiply coverage and effectiveness, IRI will collaborate closely with ANCIFEM, which has conducted several previous election observations.