



## Mexico's 2018 Elections: What is at Stake?

Thursday, November 2, 2017 | UC San Diego  
*Co-sponsored by Tijuana Innovadora*

### Agenda

- 9 a.m. Registration and breakfast
- 9:30 a.m. **Keynote on "Mexico's National Electoral Institute: The Role of the Arbiter"**  
Lorenzo Cordova, President, Mexico's National Electoral Institute
- 10:30 a.m. **Panel on "Elections in Divided Times"**  
David R. Ayón, Senior Strategist and Advisor, Latino Decisions  
Eric Magar, Professor of Political Science, ITAM  
Maria Marvan, Professor, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, UNAM  
Arturo Sanchez, Professor, Tecnológico de Monterrey

### The Mexican General Elections of 2018

In light of Mexican political parties' recent decision to consolidate the electoral calendar, Mexicans will head to the polls on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 to elect 629 federal officials -- including the president, 500 representatives, and 128 senators -- and close to 2,800 local officials, including 9 governors. In addition to the extraordinary number of offices on next year's ballot, the coming elections will be unique due to a number of unprecedented factors.

#### Independent Candidates

For the first time in Mexico, independent candidates will be able to run for the Presidency and for Congress. In order to register as an independent candidate for the Presidency, it is required to collect signatures equivalent to 1% of the total electoral rolls in at least 17 states in the country. Citizens wishing to run independently for Congress will need to gather signatures equivalent to 2% of the electoral roll of the state they wish to represent. Independent candidates will receive public financing and will be considered as a new registered party. The most popular contenders are career politicians including former Representative and first lady Margarita Zavala, Senator Armando Ríos Piter, and Governor Jaime Rodríguez Calderón (el Bronco). There are also businesspeople, journalists, and activists gathering signatures to register their candidacies, for example journalist Pedro Ferriz and the Nacional Indígena Congress nominee María de Jesús (Marichuy).

#### Vote of Mexicans Abroad

Mexicans abroad will be able to participate in the Presidential Elections for the third time, and in the Senate and Gubernatorial elections for the first time. With the goal of increasing the



turnout of Mexicans abroad, the Political-Electoral Reform of 2014 allowed for the issuance of voter IDs in the voter's place of residence. Consequently, since 2016, Mexicans abroad can obtain their IDs in any Embassy or Consulate. The Reform also added new voting methods: now Mexicans in foreign countries will be able to vote not only via mail, but also electronically, or by personally submitting their ballots at officially authorized modules.

Mexican voters living outside of the country are likely to have a significant influence on the election results. The National Electoral Institute (INE) is expecting more registrations and turnout abroad than ever before. According to their estimates, over 500 thousand Mexicans abroad could vote in 2018 (in contrast with only 41,067 in 2012). The majority of these voters reside in the United States (mostly in California and Texas).

### **Reelection**

For the first time in Mexico, local representatives, city council members and mayors will be able to run for reelection. However, senators and federal representatives will have to wait until 2024 and 2021, respectively, to run for a consecutive term.

Candidates who want to run for a second term will have to be nominated by the same party that nominated them for their first term, or run independently again if they did so the first time. Some critics claim that this incentivizes elected officials to prioritize party accountability over accountability to constituents. Moreover, it further increases the administrative burden for INE. Reelection stands as a significant regulatory challenge for the electoral authorities, and the guidelines for the 2018 process (regulation for Article 134) are still not fully defined.

### **Public Financing and Institutional Legitimacy**

The National Electoral Institute approved a record budget of 6.7 billion pesos (350 million USD) for political parties and independent candidates competing at the Federal level and almost 6 billion pesos (310 million USD) for those competing at the local level. The number of contended offices and the Constitutional formula used to determine the total budget per party largely explain this record amount. While many argue public funding is essential to prevent campaign irregularities, evidence of parties' corruption calls for a revision of the current legal framework and its enforcement. INE's audits of political parties have revealed unknown or unreported sources of financing, which is illegal in Mexico. Moreover, the autonomy and legitimacy of electoral institutions is at stake, as the Attorney General removed the Electoral Crimes Prosecutor from his position after accusing a former campaign coordinator of President Peña Nieto of corruption.