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President Salinas Introduces Legislation On Political Autonomy For Mexico City

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On June 23, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari sent a bill to Congress proposing direct elections and greater legislative powers for Mexico City’s 66-member Representative Assembly (Asamblea de Representantes del Distrito Federal, ARDF). Under terms of the legislation, political autonomy for Mexico City would take effect in 1997. The bill also proposes that Mexico’s president select the mayor from the ranks of whichever party receives the most votes in the ARDF elections, rather than only from the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which has been the most recent practice. Under the plan, the ARDF would be allowed to veto the president’s choice for mayor. The legislation formalizes a plan presented by Mexico City Mayor Manuel Camacho Solis to the ARDF on April 16 (see SourceMex, 04/21/93). Members of the ruling PRI advanced the reform proposals after a plebiscite on March 21. The plebiscite indicated widespread support for direct elections and political reform for Mexico City (see SourceMex, 03/24/93). The Salinas plan was quickly criticized by members of the opposition parties. In an interview with La Jornada newspaper, National Action Party (PAN) spokesperson Hiram Escudero accused the PRI of unilaterally presenting the plan without having first reached consensus with other parties. Meantime, representatives from the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) which won the most votes in Mexico City during the 1988 presidential elections reiterated their position that the proposed political reforms do not go far enough. The PRD is pushing for complete ARDF independence from the federal government. Under the PRI’s proposal, the federal executive would retain jurisdiction over matters where decisions made by the ARDF could have repercussions at the federal level. Because the proposed reforms imply constitutional changes, they must be approved by all 31 state legislatures in Mexico. Political observers assert that the PRI’s majority in all state legislatures means passage is virtually assured. (Sources: Associated Press, 06/23/93; La Jornada, 06/23/93, 06/24/93)