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Opposition Parties in Congress Seek to Oust Three PRI Governors

by LADB Staff

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The two major opposition parties have taken steps to oust the governors of Morelos, Tabasco, and Yucatan states on charges of corruption or violation of the Mexican Constitution. The three governors Jorge Carrillo Olea of Morelos, Victor Cervera Pacheco of Yucatan, and Roberto Madrazo Pintado of Tabasco are members of the governing Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI).

A subcommittee in the Chamber of Deputies voted 7-0 to support impeachment proceedings against Cervera and Madrazo. Only members of the center-left Partido de la Revolucion Democratica (PRD) and the conservative Partido Accion Nacional (PAN) participated in the vote. The six PRI members in the subcommittee walked out before the vote. The subcommittee's only member of the Partido Verde Ecologista Mexicano (PVEM) was not present because of other commitments. The subcommittee is part of the constitutional-issues committee (Comision de Gobernacion y Puntos Constitucionales), both chaired by PAN Deputy Santiago Creel Miranda.

Two governors charged with constitutional violations

The subcommittee has charged Madrazo with violating three clauses in the Mexican Constitution through actions to block investigations into a campaign-financing scandal for his 1994 gubernatorial election in Tabasco state. The investigations were initiated by then attorney general Antonio Lozano Gracia, a member of the PAN. Madrazo refused to cooperate with the investigations and even filed a lawsuit against Lozano in August 1995, charging the attorney general with overstepping his authority when he agreed to investigate the charges of vote fraud (see SourceMex, 08/30/95).

The motion to investigate Madrazo was based on complaints by Deputies Juan Jose Rodriguez Prats of the PAN and Octavio Romero Oropeza of PRD and members of the electoral watchdog group Alianza Civica. The subcommittee has accused Cervera of violating a constitutional clause that prohibits any chief executive from serving more than six years in office. In 1995, Cervera was appointed to complete the unexpired term of former governor Dulce Maria Sauri, who resigned because of differences with the PRI (see SourceMex, 06/14/95). Cervera was later elected to serve a six-year term.

The impeachment resolutions are not expected to result in any legal actions against Cervera and Madrazo, since they require approval in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The PRI holds a majority in the Senate, which is likely to vote down any bill to impeach the two governors. Prominent columnist Miguel Angel Granados Chapa said the seven members of the subcommittee who participated in the vote acted within the letter of the law. "Until now, no request for political trial had never gotten this far," said Granados. But PRI members in the Chamber of Deputies vowed to block any effort to bring the matter before the full chamber. PRI legislative leader Arturo Nunez questioned whether the subcommittee vote was valid because the outcome was decided by half or fewer members.

PRI members have threatened to file formal complaints against Creel for abusing his power as committee and subcommittee chair to conduct "illegal," politically motivated actions against Cervera and Madrazo. Nunez accused Creel of bowing to the wishes of the PRD leadership. "Creel is nothing more than a puppet for PRD leader Munoz Ledo," said Nunez. The Tabasco state legislature has also threatened legal action against the PAN legislator. "We will make some move against Creel, either through a constitutional complaint, a civil lawsuit, or a political trial," said Manuel Andrade Diaz of the PRI and also speaker in the Tabasco state legislature.

Madrazo has taken matters into his own hands by filing a complaint with the Procuraduria General de la Republica (PGR), charging Creel with "violations against the Federal Code." The Tabasco governor traveled to PGR headquarters in Mexico City to personally file the complaint against Creel. Morelos governor facing investigation in state legislature Creel's subcommittee also considered a complaint filed against Carrillo Olea by a citizens group, but decided against taking any immediate action. But the Morelos state legislature has initiated an investigation of Carrillo on charges of human rights violations and corruption.

Several citizens' groups in Morelos state, led by Coordinadora Ciudadana and Coordinadora de Asociaciones Politicas del Estado de Morelos, have accused Carrillo of allowing state agencies to violate the rights of private citizens. In particular, the citizens' groups have pointed to actions taken by the state's elite anti-kidnapping squad, whose members are accused of killing and torturing suspects. In a case in late January, three Morelos state police officers, including the commander of the anti-kidnapping unit, were caught dumping a body in nearby Guerrero state. According to press reports, the victim was a criminal tortured and slain during a dispute with police over a ransom.

Critics say the January incident is not isolated, but a clear reflection of practices prevalent during Carrillo's tenure in office. For instance, federal authorities recently detained former Morelos state judicial police chief Jesus Miyazawa Alvarez for his role in coordinating prisoner torture. The complaints by the citizens' groups have received support from the federal Comision Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH). In mid-March, the CNDH recommended that the Morelos state legislature conduct a thorough investigation on the charges against Carrillo. At the request of the CNDH, PAN and PRD members in the state legislature launched a two-month investigation to determine whether to begin impeachment procedures against Carrillo.

In addition to the charges of human rights violations, the legislators will investigate other charges of corruption against the governor, including accusations that he protected drug traffickers and violated the state and federal constitutions in nominating candidates to high posts. "According to evidence compiled thus far, we believe Carrillo will have to resign within two months," said PAN state legislative leader Adrian Rivera Paz. The vote to launch a formal investigation of Carrillo was taken without participation from PRI members in the Morelos state legislature. Rivera said this action was legal, since the vote involved more than half the 30 members of the legislature. PRD state leader Julian Vences said the opposition parties have more than enough votes to force Carrillo from power if an impeachment vote is taken, as expected, sometime during June.

PRI members in Morelos state continue to staunchly defend their governor, even though public opinion is against them. In an informal referendum organized by opposition parties, more than

96,000 participants voted to support Carrillo's resignation. Carrillo's actions have significantly embarrassed the PRI at the national level. In mid-March, President Zedillo acknowledged the public discontent in Morelos in a speech at a celebration of the anniversary of the founding of the PRI. "Governments that have not cared at all times for the state of law have done much damage to our party," Zedillo said, in a remark that Carrillo Olea later acknowledged was directed at him, among others. (Sources: The New York Times, 03/11/98; The News, 03/23/98, 04/01/98, 04/02/98; Los Angeles Times, 04/14/98; Associated Press, 04/15/98; Notimex, 04/02/98, 04/14/98, 04/15/98; La Jornada, 03/02/98, 03/13/98, 04/16/98; El Economista, 03/12/98, 04/17/98; Novedades, 03/24/98, 04/01/98, 04/03/98, 04/16/98, 04/17/98; Excelsior, 04/16/98, 04/17/98; El Nacional, 04/17/98; Proceso, 03/15/98, 04/12/98, 04/19/98; El Universal, 03/24/98, 04/01/98, 04/03/98, 04/16/98, 04/20/98, 04/21/98; El Diario de Yucatan, 04/03/98, 04/17/98, 04/21/98)

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