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## **PRI Wins Gubernatorial Elections in Hidalgo, Quintana Roo States**

by LADB Staff

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The governing Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) won gubernatorial elections in Hidalgo and Quintana Roo on Feb. 21. With the two victories, the governing party has won three of the four gubernatorial elections held this year. Earlier this month, the PRI won a disputed race in Guerrero state but lost the seat in Baja California Sur to a coalition candidate (see SourceMex, 1999-02-10). Elections are scheduled in Nayarit and Mexico states in July and in Coahuila in October. Participation was strong in Quintana Roo, where more than 60% of the registered voters went to the polls. In contrast, only about 40% of the registered voters in Hidalgo participated in the election.

### *PRI wins big in Hidalgo, but opposition makes some gains*

In the Hidalgo election, PRI candidate Manuel Angel Nunez Soto took more than 53% of the vote, compared with 32% for Francisco Xavier Berganza, who was representing a coalition formed by the center-right Partido Accion Nacional (PAN) and the environment-oriented Partido Verde Ecologista Mexicano (PVEM). Miguel Angel Granados Chapa, the coalition candidate for the center-left Partido de la Revolucion Democratica (PRD) and the Partido del Trabajo (PT) came in a distant third with about 14% of the vote.

Both opposition candidates accused the PRI of buying votes to win the election. However, the PRI's strong performance in Hidalgo was also attributed to its ability to unite supporters. The PRI entered the race without the internal divisions that may have cost it recent elections in Baja California Sur, Tlaxcala, and Zacatecas. Nunez Soto was selected through an open process rather than appointed by national or state party leaders through the traditional "dedazo." Still, the PRI received a much lower percentage of the vote in Hidalgo than during the 1993 election, when Jesus Murillo Karam was swept into power in a landslide. In that election, the PRD and PAN each received 6% of the vote, compared with a combined 46% for the opposition coalitions in this year's race.

The gain in support by the opposition parties will become evident in the next state legislature. The PAN, which won two of the 18 directly elected seats for the state legislature, will receive another four at-large seats based on the percentage of the vote the party received. The PRD did not win any direct seats but will receive five at-large posts in the legislature.

### *PRI wins easily in rural Quintana Roo, has tight race in Cancun*

In Quintana Roo, PRI candidate Joaquin Hendricks Diaz won the election with 43% of the vote, compared with 34% for Gaston Alegre Lopez of the PRD, 17% for Francisco Lopez Mena of the PAN, and about 6% for other parties. The PRI has held the gubernatorial seat since Quintana Roo was admitted as a state in 1974. But the margin of Hendricks' victory was surprising, since many public-opinion polls had projected a strong anti-PRI vote because of allegations linking outgoing governor Mario Villanueva Madrid to drug traffickers (see SourceMex, 1999-01-06).

Much of Hendricks' support came from rural areas, where many farmers have long depended on assistance from PRI- affiliated local governments. PRD candidate Alegre Lopez and other party officials accused the PRI of resorting to its common tactic of buying votes by offering food packages, clothing, and building materials to voters in rural areas for their support. "It was totally dirty, with vote-buying and financial handouts on the part of the PRI," Alegre Lopez told Reuters.

For its part, the PRI accused Alegre Lopez of illegally using his Cancun-based Radio Turquesa network to defy an election-day ban on campaign broadcasts. Not surprisingly, much of the anti-PRI vote came in the heavily populated municipalities of Cozumel and Benito Juarez, which includes the resort city of Cancun. The election in this municipality featured very tight races between the PRD and the PRI for the mayoral and state legislative posts.

The four seats the PRD won in the state legislature were in the Benito Juarez and Cozumel municipalities. But PRD gains in this area were not sufficient to overcome the PRI's strength elsewhere in the state. The governing party won eleven seats in the Quintana Roo state legislature and eight mayoral races. (Sources: Spanish news service EFE, 02/19/99; El Economista, 02/15/99, 02/19/99, 02/22/99; Reuters, 02/18/99, 02/22/99; Associated Press, 02/22/99; La Jornada, 01/29/99, 02/15/99, 02/21-23/99; Novedades, 02/15/99, 02/21-23/99; The News, 02/15/99, 02/23/99; El Universal, 02/21-23/99; El Sol de Hidalgo, Novedades de Quintana Roo, 02/22/99, 02/23/99; The Dallas Morning News, 02/23/99; El Diario de Yucatan, 02/22- 24/99)

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