

3-2-2005

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### Recommended Citation

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## **PRI Sweeps Elections in Hidalgo; Colima Governor Dies in Plane Crash**

*by LADB Staff*

*Category/Department: Mexico*

*Published: 2005-03-02*

On Feb. 20, the former governing Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) swept the gubernatorial and legislative elections in the central state of Hidalgo, recovering from stunning losses in two other states earlier in the month. The PRI victory was marred, however, by the death of Colima Gov. Gustavo Vazquez Montes, who died in a plane crash just four days after the Hidalgo election.

Statistics from the Instituto Electoral Estatal de Hidalgo (IEEH) indicate that Miguel Angel Osorio Chong, who was representing the PRI and its coalition partner the Partido Verde Ecologista Mexicano (PVEM), obtained 52% of the vote, easily outdistancing Jose Guadarrama Marquez of the center-left Partido de la Revolucion Democratica (PRD), who received 30% of the vote.

President Vicente Fox's conservative Partido Accion Nacional (PAN) turned in another disappointing performance, with its candidate Jose Antonio Haghhenback Camara receiving a mere 12% of the vote.

The PRI-PVEM coalition, known as the Alianza por Hidalgo, also took all 18 seats in the state legislature. Abstentionism was very high, however, with only 45% of registered voters casting a ballot. The PRI's sweeping victory in Hidalgo was attributed in large measure to the immense popularity of outgoing Gov. Manuel Angel Nunez Soto, who is one of several candidates challenging PRI president Roberto Madrazo for the PRI presidential nomination in 2006. Osorio was Nunez's government secretary.

The PRD's relatively poor performance was attributed to divisions within the party, with many members angry with the national leadership for imposing Guadarrama as the candidate for the center-left party. Even party president Leonel Godoy initially opposed Guadarrama, but was overruled by the rest of the PRD executive committee (comite ejecutivo nacional, CEN).

Furthermore, there were rumors that Guadarrama had participated in the murder of fellow PRD members in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Guadarrama disputed these rumors as fabrications by his opponents.

Still, the PRD improved on its performance from the previous election, surpassing the PAN as the second-most-important party in Hidalgo. In 1999, the PAN received 32% of the vote, compared with 14% for the PRD (see SourceMex, 1999-02-024).

Fomer Tula mayor Ricardo Baptista, who had also sought the PRD nomination, said Guadarrama had little impact on the PRD's improved performance. "We cannot attribute this trend to

Guadarrama," said Baptista, who noted that the PRD had strong momentum from sweeping victories in Guerrero and Baja California earlier in the month (see SourceMex, 2005-02-16).

### *Colima governor dies in airplane crash*

Four days after the Hidalgo election, the PRI lost Colima Gov. Vazquez Montes after his 12-seat Westwind 1124 aircraft went down in a rainstorm over Michoacan state. Vazquez was returning from a trip to Mexico City to meet with President Vicente Fox and members of his Cabinet. The accident also claimed the lives of six other people: state tourism secretary Roberto Preciado Cuevas and finance secretary Luis Ramon Barreda, Colima entrepreneurs Alejandro Davila and Guillermo Diaz Zamorano, and pilots Gerardo Ascensio and Mario Torres.

Vazquez had served since Jan. 1, 2004, having won election twice. He was first elected in July 2003, but that vote was overturned when a federal electoral court threw out the results because of the illegal and unfair participation of outgoing Gov. Fernando Moreno Pena in the campaign (see SourceMex, 2003-07-02 and 2003-11-05). Vazquez then won a special election in December 2003.

The Colima state legislature appointed Arnoldo Ochoa Gonzalez, who had been serving as government secretary, to replace Vazquez on an interim basis. Legislators are expected to set a date for a special election, probably sometime in early May. This would be the third gubernatorial election in Colima in less than two years.

Several PRI members, including Moreno Pena, had pushed to have the interim governor serve out the remainder of Vazquez's term, which concludes in 2009. Moreno had argued that the state's citizens are tired of costly special elections. Opposition legislators shot down those efforts, pointing out that the Colima state constitution requires that a special election be held if a governor dies during his first two years in office. (Sources: Spanish news service EFE, 02/20/05; Agence France-Presse, 02/21/05; The Financial Times-London, 02/22/05; La Crisis, 02/16/05, 02/21/05, 02/25/05; The Herald-Mexico City, 02/21/05, 02/22/05, 02/25/05; Notimex, 02/15/05, 02/22/05, 02/24/05, 03/01/05; Agencia de noticias Proceso, 02/21/05, 02/24/05, 02/28/05, 03/01/05; La Cronica de Hoy, 02/21/05, 03/01/05; El Universal, 02/15/05, 02/16/05, 02/21/05, 02/22/05, 02/24/05, 02/25/05, 02/28/05, 03/01/05, 03/02/05; La Jornada, 02/15-17/05, 02/21-23/05, 02/28/05, 03/01/05, 03/02/05)

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