

3-7-2007

Michoacan Approves Legislation to Give Expatriates Vote in 2007 Elections

LADB Staff

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex>

Recommended Citation

LADB Staff. "Michoacan Approves Legislation to Give Expatriates Vote in 2007 Elections." (2007).
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex/5079>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in SourceMex by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

Michoacan Approves Legislation to Give Expatriates Vote in 2007 Elections

by LADB Staff

Category/Department: Mexico

Published: 2007-03-07

The Michoacan state government has approved an initiative allowing expatriates living in the US to vote in mayoral and state legislative elections in November of this year. The state legislature approved the initiative in February, but a final decision was delayed pending a review from Gov. Lazaro Cardenas Batel and the Instituto Electoral de Michoacan (IEM) to determine if the plan was technically and financially viable.

In early March, Cardenas and the IEM gave the plan their blessing, making Michoacan the second Mexican state to give voting rights to expatriates. In 2003, Zacatecas amended the state Constitution to give expatriates the right to vote for candidates in state and municipal elections (See SourceMex, 2003-08-27).

In addition to Michoacan and Zacatecas, the federal government has also implemented a plan to allow expatriates to vote. In 2005, the federal Congress approved a proposal to allow Mexicans residing overseas to participate in the 2006 presidential elections (see SourceMex, 2005-02-23).

Participation in the federal election was low because of strict identification requirements and a cumbersome mail-in vote (see SourceMex, 2005-04-04 and 2006-01-25). Under the Michoacan initiative, expatriates will be allowed to vote in the gubernatorial, state legislative, and mayoral elections on Nov. 11. The initiative also gives expatriates the right to run for any congressional or mayoral race if they are qualified.

The legislation contemplates a mail-in vote similar to the one the federal government used for the 2006 presidential election. But the Mexico City daily newspaper Reforma said there is a proposal to offer expatriates other options to cast ballots, including electronic mail. Regardless of which method is chosen, voters would have to follow registration procedures to participate in the election. The Michoacan state legislature has proposed to increase the total budget for the IEM by 10 million pesos (US\$897,000) in 2007, partly to cover the costs of promoting the expatriate vote, said IEM president Javier Valdespino.

Michoacan organizations in US lobbied for vote

Cardenas Batel, a member of the center-left Partido de la Revolucion Democratica (PRD), said the initiative was approved because of strong lobbying by several organizations comprising former Michoacan residents in four US states. The organizations, in Illinois, California, Nevada, and Texas, came together as the Frente Binacional Michoacano. Despite the heavy lobbying from the Michoacan expatriates, political observers expect a very low turnout in November.

Jaime Quintero Gomez, a representative of the Registro Federal Electoral (RFE), said he anticipates only about 165,000 of the estimated 2.5 million Michoacan expatriates to cast ballots. He based the

projection on estimates that 10% of the 1.6 million expatriates who are eligible to vote would actually cast a ballot.

Quintero justified his projections by pointing to the 2006 presidential election, in which only 2,560 of the 40,876 ballots cast came from former residents of Michoacan. "We are well aware that the total participation will not be as large as we'd like," said Cardenas. "What is important is that we have opened the door for the vote to take place."

Even with the low projections for participation and uncertainty about the costs of the process, some political observers say the Michoacan government was right in extending the vote to expatriates. Michoacan residents accounted for US\$2.57 billion in remittances in 2006 out of the US \$23 billion sent by all expatriates during the year, said analyst Heliodoro Gil Corona of the Colegio de Economistas. The total remittances were even higher than the US\$21.3 billion the Banco de Mexico (central bank) had anticipated (see SourceMex, 2007-01-17). Gil Corona said, however, that remittances from Michoacan expatriates in 2006 were down about 1% from 2005, roughly US\$19 million.

In other election-related actions, the Michoacan state government approved changes to the state Constitution that would align the state elections with the federal midterm elections in 2015. This means that Michoacan will have two gubernatorial elections in the next eight years, with each governor serving four years rather than the normal six years. Proponents said consolidating elections could help reduce "voter fatigue" and increase participation. [Note: Peso-dollar conversions in this article are based on the Interbank rate in effect on March 7, reported at 11.18 pesos per US\$1.00] (Sources: Consulta Mitofsky, www.consulta.com.mx; Milenio Diario, 01/25/07; El Financiero, El Universal, Reforma, 01/26/07; La Jornada, 02/02/07, 02/11/07, 02/14/07; Spanish news service EFE, 02/18/07; Radio Formula, 02/19/07; La Cronica de Hoy, 02/13/07, 02/21/07; Notimex, 02/26/07; Cambio de Michoacan, 01/26/07, 02/13/07, 02/15/07, 03/02/07; Excelsior, 02/01/07, 03/05/07)

-- End --