

1-4-2012

Federal Electoral Court Annuls Results of November Mayoral Race in Morelia, Orders State Authorities to Hold New Election

Carlos Navarro

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

Recommended Citation

Navarro, Carlos. "Federal Electoral Court Annuls Results of November Mayoral Race in Morelia, Orders State Authorities to Hold New Election." (2012). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex/5850>

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.

Federal Electoral Court Annuls Results of November Mayoral Race in Morelia, Orders State Authorities to Hold New Election

by Carlos Navarro

Category/Department: Elections and Politics

Published: 2012-01-04

In a setback to the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), a regional division of the federal electoral court (Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación, TEPJF) annulled the recent mayoral election in Morelia, the capital city of Michoacán, because of campaign violations. PRI candidate Wilfrido Lázaro Medina won the Nov. 13 election by a narrow margin of 2,317 votes, out of 250,000 ballots cast, over Marko Cortés Mendoza of the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN).

The TEPJF regional division based in Toluca, which based its decision on a complaint filed by Cortés Mendoza, voted by a 2-1 margin to annul the election results because of campaign-advertisement violations. Two TEPJF magistrates agreed with Cortés that the decision by Mexican boxer Juan Manuel Márquez to wear the emblem of the PRI before the Michoacán election might have influenced the results of the Morelia race. Mexican electoral laws prohibit any political party from campaigning three days before an election. Although the match between Márquez and Manny Pacquiao of the Philippines took place in Las Vegas, Nevada, the contest was broadcast globally.

The TEPJF said the PRI also violated electoral laws by having Lázaro Medina appear with outgoing Morelia Mayor Fausto Vallejo at a rally broadcast on pay television just before the election. Vallejo was at the rally representing the PRI and two other parties in the gubernatorial race.

Electoral institute to schedule new vote in next five months

The TEPJF ordered the Michoacán state electoral institute (Instituto Electoral de Michoacán, IEM) to schedule a new election as soon as possible. In late December, shortly after the TEPJF issued its ruling, IEM president María de los Ángeles Llanderal said the institute planned to decide on a new election in Morelia by late January. The court gave the IEM a deadline of 150 days to hold the election. If the balloting is held near the end of the five-month period, it would come just weeks before the federal presidential and congressional election on July 1.

Many analysts considered the Michoacán election crucial because it offered the major political parties the last opportunity to measure their strength before the July elections.

Both Lázaro Medina and Cortés Mendoza have said they intend to participate in the new election, which Llanderal said could cost the state's taxpayers about 22 million pesos (US\$1.6 million). The center-left Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) has not decided whether Genovevo Figueroa Zamudio, who represented the party in the November election, would again be its candidate in a new vote.

Llanderal said the IEM plans to make a special request to the state legislature to allocate funds for the new election. But PAN officials suggested that the PRI should pay for the new vote because the TEPJF decision was based on violations committed by the party. "Our party will file a formal

request that the PRI pay a fine to cover the cost of a new election," said Hugo Servín, the PAN leader in Morelia.

The PRD has suggested that the Morelia election be held on July 1, along with all other federal elections, which would save the taxpayers a considerable amount of money.

PAN also urging court to annul gubernatorial election

The TEPJF decision was based only on the complaint about the Morelia race and not about the Michoacán gubernatorial election, which the PRI and its partner the Partido Verde Ecologista de México (PVEM) won narrowly but with a more comfortable margin than the race in the capital (SourceMex, Nov. 16, 2011). In the gubernatorial election, Vallejo defeated Sen. Luisa María Calderón, sister of President Felipe Calderón. Calderón was representing both the PAN and the Partido Nueva Alianza (PANAL).

The PAN has since filed a separate motion with the TEPJF about the gubernatorial election, based on the same complaints used for Morelia. "Several incidents that we cited in our complaint are applicable to the rest of the state," said PAN state official Marco Tulio Chacón.

PRI officials see little chance that the TEPJF will grant the PAN's request to annul the gubernatorial election. "There is no risk that the court will apply the same criteria to the gubernatorial race," said Antonio Guzmán, head of the PRI in Michoacán. "Both the national and the state executive committees are working to prevent this outcome."

The PRI's national executive committee (Comité Ejecutivo Nacional, CEN) said the TEPJF electoral court made an "unjust and erroneous" decision in the Morelia case, suggesting there was "insufficient evidence on which to base the decision."

The party leadership was careful, however, not to portray the PRI as a rogue party. "The PRI...being respectful of the law and electoral institutions, confirms that it will abide by the ruling," the CEN said.

PRI presidential candidate Enrique Peña Nieto also weighed in on the court decision. "No one is convinced by the arguments that led to the annulment of the election," Peña Nieto told a group of supporters in early January. Some of those supporters carried signs suggesting that President Calderón pressured the TEPJF to make the ruling.

Peña Nieto told the crowd that he was confident that the PRI would win the new election. "We are going to score another victory in Morelia," said the candidate. "And we will also win the presidency."

But at least one political observer believes there might have been negotiations behind the scenes in which the PRI accepted a new election in exchange for a PAN concession not to press too strongly for an annulment of the gubernatorial election. "Could this be the result of a hidden negotiation in which members of the PRI convinced members of the PAN not to object too strongly to the results that gave the victory to Vallejo?" said Armando Catón in a column published in the daily newspaper *El Diario de Yucatán*.

The controversy about the Morelia mayoral and the Michoacán gubernatorial races overshadowed a couple other decisions pertaining to the Nov. 13 elections. The TEPJF reversed decisions by the Tribunal Electoral de Michoacán (TEEM), in which the state electoral court had overturned victories

by the PRD in the mayoral races in the communities of Cojumatlán de Régules and Jiquilpan. In Cojumatlán de Régules, the TEEM had awarded the victory to the PRI after the party complained that the PRD candidate had violated electoral regulations by not leaving her post as city treasurer 90 days ahead of the election. In Jiquilpan, the TEEM had given the victory to the PAN after finding irregularities in six polling places. The TEPJF ruled that the TEEM decision was erroneous and restored the victory to the PRD. [Peso-dollar conversions in this article are based on the Interbank rate in effect on Jan. 4, 2012, reported at 13.69 pesos per US\$1.00.]

-- End --