

2-8-2012

# Field Set for 2012 Election; Josefina Vázquez Mota Becomes First Woman to Represent Major Party in Presidential Race

Carlos Navarro

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

---

## Recommended Citation

Navarro, Carlos. "Field Set for 2012 Election; Josefina Vázquez Mota Becomes First Woman to Represent Major Party in Presidential Race." (2012). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex/5860>

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](mailto:amywinter@unm.edu).

## **Field Set for 2012 Election; Josefina Vázquez Mota Becomes First Woman to Represent Major Party in Presidential Race**

by Carlos Navarro

Category/Department: Politics and Elections

Published: 2012-02-08

The field is set for the 2012 presidential election, with the incumbent Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) making history by selecting the first woman to represent a major party in the race. PAN voters selected Deputy Josefina Vázquez Mota to lead the party in the July 1 election, defeating her closest rival, Finance Secretary Ernesto Cordero, by a wide margin. Sen. Santiago Creel, who lost the nomination to Felipe Calderón in 2006, came in a distant third. Vázquez Mota will face former México state Gov. Enrique Peña Nieto of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) and veteran politician Andrés Manuel López Obrador of a center-left coalition led by the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD).

In an election where only about 29% of voters registered with the PAN cast a ballot, Vázquez Mota obtained about 54% of the vote, compared with about 39% for Cordero, and 6% for Creel.

The PAN made another bold choice for the Mexico City mayoral election, which will also be held on July 1, selecting a citizen activist instead of a politician. The party will be represented by Isabel Miranda de Wallace, who has led a crusade against violence.

The center-left coalition also appears to have made a prudent selection in the mayoral race, choosing former Mexico City prosecutor Miguel Ángel Mancera, who is made from the same mold as outgoing Mayor Marcelo Ebrard. Mancera defeated Alejandra Barrales, a member of the Mexico City legislature (Asamblea Legislativa del Distrito Federal, ALDF), to gain the nomination.

And in a year where new faces are expected to carry weight with the electorate, which has become more independent, the PRI selected veteran former party president and ex-Tlaxcala governor Beatriz Paredes Rangel. Paredes represented the PRI in the 2006 mayoral election, which was won by Ebrard.

### ***Vázquez Mota overcomes establishment support for Cordero***

Even though President Felipe Calderón did not publicly endorse any of the three candidates, it was no secret that Cordero was the president's choice. A large share of the PAN establishment also endorsed Cordero, including several Cabinet members and six of the eight governors affiliated with the party: Guillermo Padrés Elías of Sonora, Marcos Covarrubias of Baja California Sur, Rafael Moreno Valle of Puebla, Juan Manuel Oliva of Guanajuato, José Guadalupe Osuna Millán of Baja California, and Mario López Valdez of Sinaloa. Two other governors—Emilio González Márquez of Jalisco and Marco Antonio Adame of Morelos—supported Vázquez Mota.

Analysts said Vázquez Mota's experience as a legislator and Cabinet member and her sympathetic personality helped sway voters throughout the country. The PAN candidate served in the Chamber of Deputies in 2000 and again in 2009. She was elected president of the lower house in 2010. She also served as social development secretary under President Vicente Fox and as education secretary in the first three years of the Calderón administration.

In contrast, many PAN rank-and-file members were suspicious of Cordero, a political novice. "His quick rise through the ranks and his lack of experience made him a less desirable candidate for many PAN members," columnist Rodrigo Sandoval wrote in the daily newspaper *Reforma*. "Cordero was also the choice of the opposition parties because he would be a candidate who could be easily beaten."

Cordero's defeat, along with the recent loss by Calderón's sister, Luisa María Calderón, in the Michoacán gubernatorial election ([SourceMex, Nov. 16, 2011](#)), represents a major blow to the president. Some observers said the administration put a lot of effort into trying to influence the results but in the end failed miserably. "One of the tactics employed was to filter false information about their main rivals through the media," said Leo Zuckermann, a columnist for the daily newspaper *Excélsior*, who also pointed to attempts by the administration to cast doubts among voters that Vázquez Mota and PRI gubernatorial candidate Fausto Vallejo could win their respective races.

There were some charges that the campaigns of all three PAN candidates resorted to the same unscrupulous tactics that have been common in Mexican elections. "The supposedly happy ending for [Vázquez Mota] cannot erase the clear evidence that voters were taken to the polls en masse, bribed, and promised goods and services in exchange for their support," columnist Julio Hernández López wrote in the daily newspaper *La Jornada*.

### *Not clear social conservative*

For the PAN, the selection of Vázquez Mota and Miranda de Wallace is a departure from the party's traditional social-conservative roots. Both candidates reject a hard-line position on abortion that is supported by the more conservative sectors of the party and endorsed by the Catholic bishops conference (Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, CEM). Miranda makes no secret of her pro-choice stance, while Vázquez Mota rejects any move to criminalize women who have the procedure.

"I share my party's vision regarding life...but I also want to make it clear that I will never agree with the criminalization of women who have an abortion. That is unacceptable," Vázquez Mota said recently.

Vázquez Mota also adopted a less hard line about gay marriage than some of the more conservative factions of the PAN. While expressing her belief that marriage as an institution should be between a man and a woman, she also emphasized that gay couples deserve respect.

Analysts say Vázquez Mota's flexible position on these issues could win her a share of the votes from women and young people. Before her selection, many analysts thought a large share of those votes would go to Peña Nieto.

"We have to recognize that Josefina Vázquez Mota is one of the prominent PAN women who has the most sympathy for causes that are embraced by the left," columnist Yurira Sierra wrote in *Excélsior*.

In a recent interview with *El Universal*, Vázquez Mota endorsed liberation theology, which advocates activism on behalf of the poor, and expressed admiration for the late Roman Catholic Archbishop Óscar Romero, who was assassinated in 1980 for standing up for the marginalized in El Salvador.

Still, the PAN candidate is viewed as an economic conservative, much in the mold of President Calderón and ex-President Fox. Before launching her career in politics, she was a business

consultant for organizations like the Confederación de Cámaras Nacionales de Comercio, Servicios y Turismo (CONCANACO) and the Confederación Patronal de la República Mexicana (COPARMEX) and a columnist for the daily newspapers *El Economista* and *El Financiero*.

### *An uphill battle*

Analysts said Vázquez Mota gives the PAN a fighting chance in the 2012 presidential election, especially with her appeal to independents, women, and young voters. Her resounding victory in the PAN primary gives her candidacy legitimacy. "A victory by a broad margin would help her project the image of someone who can win the presidential race and generate enthusiasm among undecided voters," Jorge Chabat, an expert on politics at the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE), said on the eve of the election.

Furthermore, Vázquez Mota's candidacy is historic because she is the first woman to represent a major party in the presidential elections. Cecilia Soto and Patricia Mercado represented small parties in the presidential elections in 1994 and 2006, respectively,

"Her political positions have wide appeal, which gives her a real possibility of reaching her goal of winning the presidency or at least making it a close race," said Sierra.

Still, Vázquez Mota faces an uphill battle, with recent polls showing her still trailing Peña Nieto by double digits. Although the polls were conducted before her primary victory, she was already favored to win the nomination. A poll released by the Ipsos-Bimsa organization showed Peña Nieto with 36% support, compared with 24% for Vázquez Mota and 16% for López Obrador. A separate poll by Consulta Mitofsky showed 41% support for Peña Nieto, 23% for Vázquez Mota, and 18% for López Obrador.

But the Ipsos-Bimsa poll shows a large decline for Peña Nieto since October 2011, when support for the PRI candidate stood at 54%. At that time, 15% of respondents to the poll said they would support López Obrador and 13% would support Vázquez Mota.

Peña Nieto's fall in the polls might have been the candidate's own fault. In recent public appearances, the former México state governor has appeared unpolished and uninformed, raising some doubts among the electorate ([SourceMex, Dec. 7, 2011](#)).

### *PRD on target to win Mexico City mayoral election*

In contrast to Vázquez Mota's broad political experience, the PAN selected political novice Miranda de Wallace to represent the party in the 2012 mayoral election in Mexico City. The PAN candidate is primarily known for her role in leading campaigns against crime ([SourceMex, Feb. 16, 2011](#)).

Several PAN members, including potential candidates like Demetrio Sodi, were not pleased that the party had chosen an outsider to lead the PAN in the mayoral election. "Miranda de Wallace has accomplished great things, and I don't want to detract from those accomplishments," said Sodi. "The problem is that this is not enough to govern the most difficult city in the world."

But party officials explained that Miranda de Wallace's selection was in keeping with the party's commitment to citizen candidacies, which are part of the electoral reforms Congress approved in 2011 ([SourceMex, Nov. 2, 2011](#)).

Fellow anti-crime advocates Javier Sicilia and Alejandro Martí welcomed Miranda de Wallace's presence in the Mexico City race. But Sicilia also questioned the PAN's electoral motives, suggesting that the party was using Miranda de Wallace simply to boost the total number of votes for the center-right party in the 2012 federal election.

While Miranda de Wallace represents a contrast to Paredes Rangel, an establishment candidate for the PRI, neither is expected to provide much competition for the PRD, which overcame divisions within the party to select a fairly attractive candidate in Mancera.

A poll in mid-January by the daily newspaper El Universal showed Mancera with 36% support, compared with 23% each for Miranda de Wallace and Paredes. "It is not surprising that the former Mexico City prosecutor is leading the polls," said Leo Zuckermann. "After all, he belongs to the incumbent party in Mexico City and is perceived as the candidate of outgoing Mayor Marcelo Ebrard, who has presided over a successful administration."

But others pointed to Mancera's own attributes, including his success as Mexico City attorney general. "Mancera's broad public acceptance is the perception that he is not a politician who is tied to a party, but a candidate who is closer to civil society," said Ricardo Alemán.

For Mancera to gain the nomination, however, a divided party had to come together. The PRD faction that supports López Obrador was pushing for Barrales to represent the center-left coalition in the Mexico City race. And Mancera, while close to Ebrard, was not the mayor's first choice. Ebrard was thought to prefer his education secretary Mario Delgado. In the end, it was the voters of Mexico City who decided on the candidate through a poll developed by three major polling organizations. The poll was open to all voters, not just members of the center-left parties.

-- End --