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## Center-Left Morena Favored in Some Mexican Gubernatorial Elections in 2018

by Carlos Navarro

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Presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the center-left Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (Morena) leads all the public opinion surveys that have been conducted to date, with the percentage of the lead depending on the individual poll. López Obrador's standing in the polls is not surprising, because voters considered him the candidate most likely to stand up to US President Donald Trump's anti-Mexico policies ([SourceMex, Feb. 22, 2017](#)).

López Obrador has also seized on the growing resentment against the governing party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), because of a string of corruption scandals involving the PRI ([SourceMex, April 29, 2015](#), and [April 19, 2017](#)) and the party's inability to curb seemingly out-of-control violence and insecurity ([SourceMex, Dec. 3, 2014](#), [Aug. 30, 2017](#), [Dec. 6, 2017](#)).

In 2018, López Obrador has taken a different approach relative to his two unsuccessful runs for the presidency in 2006 and 2012, when he represented a fractured left ([SourceMex, March 26, 2008](#), [Jan. 28, 2009](#), [Nov. 7, 2012](#)). In earlier campaigns, he did not have the full support of the left, and dirty maneuvers on the part of the establishment parties resulted in narrow losses ([SourceMex, July 12, 2006](#), and [July 11, 2012](#)).

### *Nine gubernatorial seats in play*

As part of his strategy for 2018, López Obrador constructed a solid grassroots political network through Morena, a party he helped create ([SourceMex, Sept. 19, 2012](#), and [July 30, 2014](#)).

The strong grassroots efforts have put Morena and its two coalition partners, the Partido del Trabajo (PT) and the Partido Encuentro Social (PES) in a very good position not only to win the presidency but to take a handful of the gubernatorial seats that will be contested on July 1. According to public opinion polls, the Morena-PT-PES alliance has a good chance to win gubernatorial elections in Mexico City, Tabasco, Chiapas, and Morelos, and would run competitive races in Puebla and Veracruz, two states now governed by the center-right Partido Acción Nacional (PAN).

One factor working in favor of Morena—and to a certain extent, the PAN—is the strong anti-PRI sentiment, with none of the candidates from the governing party favored in nine elections scheduled on July 1. There is also strong sentiment against the incumbent party in Morelos and Tabasco states because of the poor performances of the outgoing governors. Those two states are governed by the other major center-left party, the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD).

### *A changing of the guard in Mexico City?*

A public opinion poll commissioned by the daily business newspaper El Economista and conducted by the respected polling organization Consulta Mitofsky showed Claudia Sheinbaum, the candidate for the Morena-PT-PES coalition, with slightly more than 38% of voter preferences. The candidate polling second is Alejandra Barrales, a member of the PRD, who is representing a coalition formed by her party with the PAN and Movimiento Ciudadano (MC). Barrales has about 27% support.

Running a distant third with 10% was Mikel Arriola, representing the coalition formed by the PRI, the Partido Verde Ecologista de México (PVEM), and the Partido Nueva Alianza (PANAL).

A separate public-opinion survey conducted by Massive Caller had Sheinbaum with about 36% of support, compared with about 19% for Barrales.

Mexico City has leaned left since 1997, when Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas was elected mayor in 1997 ([SourceMex, July 9, 1997](#)). Cárdenas and his successors—Rosario Robles, López Obrador, Alejandro Encinas, Marcelo Ebrard, and Miguel Ángel Mancera—have all represented the PRD. Robles and Encinas held the post on an interim basis.

Sheinbaum would be the first leader of the capital affiliated with Morena, while a victory by Barrales would keep the string of PRD victories intact. Regardless, the winner would be the first leader to gain election under the new political structure of the capital, which gained statehood in 2016 ([SourceMex, March 9, 2016](#), and [Feb. 8, 2017](#)).

### *Morena heavily favored in three other states*

There are two factors working in Morena's favor in Tabasco, the home state of López Obrador. In addition to the unpopularity of outgoing Gov. Arturo Núñez, the PRD, PAN and MC were unable to reach agreement on a common candidate, which leaves the PRD running on its own in the race. According to a poll conducted by Grupo Cantón, Adán Augusto López Hernández of Morena-PT-PES, who is close to López Obrador, is leading the voter preferences with about 25% support, followed by Gerardo Gaudiano Roviroso of the PRD with about 12%, and Georgina Trujillo Zentella of the PRI with about 9% support.

In Morelos, the unpopularity of outgoing Gov. Graco Ramírez has created a major disadvantage for the PRD candidate Rodrigo Gayosso, who is Ramírez's stepson. According to a poll conducted by Gabinete de Comunicación Estratégica, Ramírez has a 70% disapproval rate. A poll conducted by Massive Caller in January showed the Morena-PT-PES candidate, former soccer star and Cuernavaca mayor Cuauhtémoc Blanco with 36% support, compared with 11% for Víctor Caballero of the PAN-MC, 10% for Gayosso, and 8% for Alejandro Vera of the PRI. Blanco maintained a massive lead in a poll conducted in February, with 34% of respondents picking the Morena-PT-PES candidate, compared with 14% for Caballero and 6% for Gayosso.

In Chiapas, Rutilio Escandón of Morena-PT-PES is leading the polls with 33% support, followed by José Antonio Aguilar Bodegas of the PAN-PRD-MC with 16%, and Roberto Albores Gleason of the PRI-PVEM-PANAL with 12%. The PRD, in principle, is part of the coalition with the PAN and the MC, but was considering whether to stay in and support Aguilar Bodegas or find its own candidate.

### *Tight races in Puebla, Veracruz*

The gubernatorial races in Puebla and Veracruz appear to be a contest between the PAN and its allies and Morena and its coalition. The race in Veracruz is especially interesting, since the current governor, Miguel Ángel Yunes Linares of the PAN, replaced the highly unpopular Javier Duarte de Ochoa (2010-2016) of the PRI, who is facing charges of corruption ([SourceMex, April 19, 2017](#), and [July 19, 2017](#)). Yunes Linares, who won a special election to serve out Duarte's term, has been accused of acts of corruption, including personal enrichment while in office, and this could affect the race. Yunes Linares' son, Miguel Ángel Yunes Márquez, is representing the PAN-PRD-MC in the

election, and the allegations against his father and questions about nepotism could ultimately have a great impact on the race.

According to a recent public opinion poll conducted by Massive Caller, Yunes Márquez and Cuitlahuac García of Morena-PT-PES are running a close race. A poll conducted in January showed García with a lead of two percentage points. A February poll showed the PAN-PRD-MC candidate had turned the tables and was now leading García by two percentage points. In both instances, José Yunes Zorrilla of the PRI-PVEM-PANAL was running a distant third. Yunes Zorrilla and Yunes Márquez are cousins. The situation is similar to the special election that brought Yunes Linares to the governor's seat. His rival was his cousin, Héctor Yunes Landa of the PRI.

In Puebla, polls show a tight race between Sen. Miguel Barbosa of Morena-PT-PES, with 22%, and Martha Erika Alonso Hidalgo of the PAN-PRD-MC, with slightly over 21%. A survey conducted by Massive Caller had Barbosa, a recent defector from the PRD, with a lead of less than one point over Alonso, who is the wife of former Gov. Rafael Moreno Valle (2011-2017). Juan Carlos Lastiri, representing the PRI-PVEM-PANAL, was running a close third at just under 19%.

"Even though recent polls favor Barbosa slightly, the political weight of Moreno Valle could be the determining factor to define this election," said Huffington Post México

In Jalisco state, the MC could win its first governorship without forming an alliance with the PAN and the PRD. The party already governs the cities of Guadalajara, Zapopan, Tlajomulco, and Zapotlanejo. According to a public opinion poll conducted by Massive Caller, Enrique Alfaro of the MC, the outgoing mayor of Guadalajara, had 36% support, followed by Miguel Castro Reynoso of the PRI with 18%, Carlos Lomelí of Morena with 15%, and César Madrigal of the PAN with 13%.

The PAN candidate, Diego Sinhué, is expected to win easily in Guanajuato, a state where the party has dominated for years. A poll by Massive Caller in February showed Sinhué, running without an alliance, leading with 37%, compared with 18% for Gerardo Sánchez of the PRI and 17% for Antares Vázquez of Morena.

In Yucatán, the PAN's Mauricio Vila was running a similarly strong race, receiving slightly more than 35% support, compared with about 26% for Mauricio Sahuí of the PRI and 11% for Rogerio Castro Vázquez of Morena.

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