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July Vote in Mexico to Feature Re-election of Some Mayors, State Legislators

by Carlos Navarro

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For the first time in nearly a century, some mayors and state legislators will have the opportunity to seek re-election in the upcoming July 1 election in Mexico. Nearly two-thirds of the candidates who have qualified to run in mayoral elections this year are incumbents. Similarly, more than 900 legislators in more than two dozen states are eligible to run to retain their post.

The move ends a policy enacted with the revolution that toppled dictator Porfirio Díaz, who held the Mexican presidency from 1877 to 1880 and then again for seven consecutive terms from 1884 to 1911. The Mexican Revolution implemented, among other changes, reforms that intended to usher in a more democratic government by prohibiting politicians from serving consecutive terms.

The change that allowed re-election occurred in 2013, when the Mexican Congress approved electoral reforms designed to make the legislative branch more effective and open the country's political institutions to more democratic participation and scrutiny. The reforms allowed citizen consultations, independent candidacies, and re-election for all positions but president and governor ([SourceMex, Dec. 11, 2013](#)).

Big-city mayors seeking new mandate

According to the Mexican mayors' organization, Alcaldes de México, at least 270 mayors are seeking re-election. Of those, 120 are from the governing Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), 70 from the center-right Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), and 20 from the center-left Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD). Others are members of the Partido Verde Ecologista de México (PVEM), Movimiento Ciudadano (MC), and Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (Morena), or do not have a party affiliation.

The states of Aguascalientes, Durango, Hidalgo, Tlaxcala, and Veracruz do not have mayoral elections this year.

Among those seeking re-election are mayors from large cities, including María Eugenia Campos Galván (Chihuahua), Manolo Jiménez Salinas (Saltillo), Jorge Zermeño Infante (Torreón), Fernando Zamora Morales (Toluca), Héctor López Santillana (León), José Ricardo Ortiz Gutiérrez (Irapuato), Adrián de la Garza Santos (Monterrey), Alfonso Martínez Alcázar (Morelia), Jesús Valdés Palazuelos (Culiacán), and Ricardo Gallardo (San Luis Potosí).

Enrique Alfaro of Guadalajara considered running for re-election, but decided instead to seek the post of governor of Jalisco state ([SourceMex, Feb. 28, 2018](#)). In Querétaro City, Mayor Marcos Aguilar Vega registered to run in two races—one for his current post as mayor and another for an at-large seat in the Mexican Senate. Aguilar Vega said he would let his party, the PAN, decide in which race they want him to run. Evodio Velázquez Aguirre of Acapulco declined to run for re-election.

The vast majority of the mayors seeking to remain in their post, however, are leading small and medium-sized cities. Each of them has already served a three-year term, and is eligible to run for re-election three times, meaning they could serve in their posts for 12 consecutive years.

The re-election of mayors has created some dilemmas for state electoral authorities, which are seeking to prevent situations where the mayors would use their incumbency to gain an electoral advantage over potential rivals.

In some states—including Tamaulipas, Sinaloa, Querétaro, and Michoacán—the mayors are required to request a leave of absence from their posts on April 1, or 90 days before the end of their term, in order to run their campaigns. In Guanajuato, the leave of absence must come on the day before the official campaign kick-off, which is April 29. In other states, including Coahuila and Chihuahua, authorities are allowing the mayors to remain on the job, but campaign activities must be conducted outside of regular work hours.

According to Alberto Uribe Camacho, mayor of Tlajomulco de Zúñiga in Jalisco state, a major challenge is to ensure that re-election efforts do not affect the day-to-day activities, thus benefiting an incumbent's political party.

"We don't want this to become an electoral tool for political parties," Uribe Camacho, a member of the center-left Movimiento Ciudadano (MC) said in an interview on [alcaldes.com](#), a news site published by Alcaldes de México.

Mexico City (CDMX) will hold its first-ever mayoral elections for 16 municipalities. The transformation of the Mexican capital from a federal district to a state also included turning the existing boroughs into full municipalities ([SourceMex, March 9, 2016](#), and [Feb. 8, 2017](#)). In the past, citizens of the 16 entities in the capital were able to vote for borough president, but on July 1, they will be voting for mayors as well as for members of city councils. Each of the elected officials will be able to seek re-election in the next round of voting in 2021.

"Mexico City's new Constitution creates new positions, and it is important to communicate the changes to the citizens, so that they are aware that we are no longer electing borough presidents, but a different type of political leader," said Mario Velázquez Miranda, president of the CDMX electoral institute (Instituto Electoral de la Ciudad de México, IECM).

Velázquez Miranda pointed out that voters in Mexico City will also be electing 33 representatives to a state legislature, not to a legislative assembly, as was the case under the previous structure. Another 33 at-large legislators will be selected based on the proportion of votes received by each party.

A setback for gender equity?

Some observers suggest that re-election could initially represent a setback for the effort to increase gender equity in the political arena ([SourceMex, Aug. 8, 2012](#), and [July 1, 2015](#)).

"In the last three years, we set a record in the percentage of women elected to legislative bodies and municipalities," columnist Javier Aparicio noted in the daily newspaper *Excélsior*. Citing statistics from the non-governmental organization Observatorio de Participación Política de las Mujeres en México, he noted that 393 municipalities were led by women as of October 2017.

“That is a very low figure, since this represents only 16% of the municipalities in the country,” he said. “If the majority of the mayors or legislators—of any party—are men, which is the case in most states, then the move to re-election could represent a setback for gender equity, even when each party tries to attain proportional representation in its list of candidates.”

State legislators also up for re-election

While residents of Mexico City will be picking a state legislature for the first time in history, voters in 24 other states will have the opportunity to vote for a handful of incumbent state legislators who are seeking to retain their posts.

The electoral reforms approved in 2013 and enacted in 2014 gave states a lot of leeway in determining the number of times that state legislators could run for re-election. Twenty-four states allow legislators to serve four consecutive three-year terms: Baja California, Baja California Sur, Campeche, Chiapas, Coahuila, CDMX, Durango, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Jalisco, México state, Michoacán, Morelos, Nayarit, Nuevo León, Puebla, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tabasco, Tlaxcala, Veracruz, and Yucatán.

Eight other states—Aguascalientes, Chihuahua, Colima, Hidalgo, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Tamaulipas, and Zacatecas—allow state legislators to run for re-election just once for a total of six years of service.

Baja California, Coahuila, Nayarit, Tamaulipas, and Quintana Roo are not scheduled to hold state legislative elections this year.

The right to re-election will eventually apply to legislators serving in the federal Chamber of Deputies and Senate. Voters will select 500 new members of the Chamber of Deputies and 64 of the 128-member Senate, and these legislators will be eligible for re-election during the next cycle, which begins in 2021.

Each legislator would be eligible to serve for 12 consecutive years, which means that, after 2021, deputies could run for re-election again in 2024. Under the system that is being phased out, deputies served for a single three-year term and senators for a single six-year term.

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