

MEXICO

Date of Elections: 6 July 1988

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament on the normal expiry of the members' term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of Mexico, the National Congress, consists of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.

The Chamber of Deputies currently has 500 members, of whom 300 are elected by majority vote and 200 according to proportional representation. All Deputies have 3-year terms of office.

The Senate comprises 64 members elected for 6 years. Two members represent each of the country's 31 States and the Federal District.

Electoral System

All Mexican citizens who are at least 18 years of age and registered in their constituency of residence are entitled to vote. Excluded from this right are the insane, interned drug addicts, persons convicted of a crime involving liability to imprisonment and persons serving a prison sentence.

Electoral registers are continually kept up to date. Voting is compulsory, abstention leading to a fine or imprisonment.

All citizens by birth at least 21 years of age and in full possession of their political rights may stand for election to the Chamber of Deputies from their State or territory of origin or that in which they have resided for at least six months; the age requirement for Senators is 30. Neither Senators nor Deputies may be re-elected for a second consecutive term, but both may stand again for subsequent terms.

Ministers of religion, members of the federal army on active duty, police officers of a commanding rank within the district concerned, Secretaries or Under-Secretaries of State, Justices of the Supreme Court and Governors of the States are not eligible for the Congress; apart from ministers of religion, such disqualification can be overridden if the officials concerned resign from their positions 90 days before the election. Governors cannot be elected in the districts of their jurisdiction during their term of office, even if they resign their position.

Of the 500 Deputies, 300 are elected by simple majority vote within single-member electoral districts, and 200 are elected by a system of proportional representation from regional party lists within multi-member constituencies; the latter are restricted to parties which have won fewer than 60 majority seats. Senators are all elected by simple majority vote.

A political party may be registered if it has at least 3,000 members in each one of at least half the States in Mexico or at least 300 members in each of at least half of the single-member constituencies. In either case, the total number of members must be not less than 65,000. A party can also obtain conditional registration if it has been active for at least four years. Registration is confirmed if the party obtains at least 1.5% of the popular vote.

When a vacancy occurs among members of the Congress elected by majority vote, a by-election is called by the Chamber in question; when a vacancy occurs among members of the Chamber of Deputies elected by proportional representation, it is filled by the candidate of the same party who received the next highest number of votes at the last ordinary election.

Background **and** Outcome of the Elections

The 1988 congressional elections coincided with those for President of the Republic. Leading contenders in the latter race were Mr. Carlos Salinas de Gortari of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), Mr. Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, supported by the centre-left National Democratic Front (FDN), and Mr. Manuel Clouthier of the traditional opposition National Action Party (PAN). Mr. Salinas campaigned on a platform of reform, promising political and economic modernization, while Mr. Cardenas, the son of a former President, took populist and nationalistic stands.

Polling day was generally peaceful and marked by a large turnout. Delay in the release of final results led to opposition allegations of vote fraud. On 13 July, Mr. Salinas was reported to have won by 50.36% of the vote - the lowest on record for a candidate of the PRI, which has governed the country since 1929. In late August, the newly-elected Congress, sitting as an electoral college, certified the legislative results. These gave the centrist PRI a total of 260 seats in the enlarged Chamber of Deputies to the coalition FDN's 139 and the conservative PAN's 101. The FDN also captured four Senate seats, ending PRI's complete dominance of the Upper House. This unprecedented success by opposition groups was attributed by some observers to skillful exploitation of widespread disenchantment with the long-governing PRI.

Mr. Salinas was sworn in as President on 1 December 1988.

Mexico

Statistics

*1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats
in the Chamber of Deputies*

Number of registered electors. 38,000,000 (approx.)

| Political Group | % of Votes obtained | Majority Seats obtained | Proportional Representation Seats obtained | Total Number of Seats |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) | | 233 | 27 | 260 |
| National Democratic Front (FDN) | | 24 | IK) | 139 |
| National Action Party (PAN) . . . | | 38 | 63 | 101 |
| | | 300 | 200 | 500 |

2. Distribution of Seats in the Senate

| Political Group | Number of Seats |
|---|-----------------|
| Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) | 60 |
| National Democratic Front (FDN) | 64 |