

MEXICO

Date of Elections: 18 August 1991

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in the Chamber of Deputies and one-half (32) of those in the Senate 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. There is one Deputy for every 250,000 citizens and for every fraction of over 125,000. All Deputies have 3-year terms of office.

The Senate comprises 64 members elected for 6 years; one-half of the membership is renewed alternately every third year. Two Senators 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. Prior to the 1991 poll, a new nationwide electoral register was compiled. 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 religions, members of the federal army on active duty, police officers of a commanding rank within the district concerned. Secretaries and 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 at least 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 regional proportional representation from closed

party lists within multi-member constituencies. An absolute majority (251) of Deputies' seats is awarded to any party winning at least 35% of the popular vote. 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 of 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 1991 "mid-term" congressional elections came halfway through the six-year mandate of President of the Republic Carlos Salinas de Gortari. They were held simultaneously with polling for six of the country's 31 state governors.

As three years earlier, the governing Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) was opposed mainly by the conservative, somewhat divided National Action Party (PAN) and the center-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (**PRD**), which had won congressional seats at the previous elections under the National Democratic Front banner. Economic issues dominated the campaign debate. Some commentators in fact characterized the upcoming vote as a plebiscite on the reform policies of President Salinas, which had led to growth in the economic sector and had involved liberalization, privatization of government-owned businesses, moves to establish a free-trade agreement with the USA, and heavy investment in a public works programme known as Solidarity. Seven other smaller parties contested the seats at stake.

On polling day, PRI swept to victory in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Despite pre-election government steps to enhance voting transparency and the presence of international observers, PAN, led by Mr. Luis Alvarez, and PRD, headed by Mr. Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, alleged fraud and irregularities in the voting procedures. Following the allocation of Deputies' seats through the proportional representation vote-sharing system, PRI totalled 320 seats in the Chamber. It also won all but one of the 32 Senate seats.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors. 36,000,000 (approx.)

Political Group	% of Votes obtained	Majority Seats obtained ¹	Representation Seats obtained	Total Number of Seats
Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)	61.5	290	30	320 (+60)
National Action Party (PAN)	17.7	10	7)	89 (-12)
Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD)	8.3	-	41	41 (+41)
Cardenista National Reconstruction Party (PFCRN)	4.4	-	23	23 (+23)
Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution (PARM)	2.2	-	15	15(*)
Popular Socialist Party (PPS)	1.8		12	12 (*)
		300	200	5(X)

Won seats at the 1988 poll under the National Democratic Front banner.

2. Distribution of Seats in the Senate

Political Group	Number of Seats won at 1991 Elections	Total Number of Seats
PRI	31	61
PRD		2
PAN		1
	32	64