

*Hemisphere Insider***Election Guide****Sunday's Presidential
Vote in Mexico**

With debates and campaigns over for the July 1 vote, the choices are as follows.



Andrés Manuel López Obrador, of the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD), once headed the Federal District of Mexico and narrowly lost the 2006 presidential election. He promises to unify local, state, and federal police and stress human rights in Mexico's drug wars. He would make few changes to the state oil monopoly Pemex or to labor laws.



Enrique Peña Nieto, of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), served as governor of Mexico State. Like López Obrador, he would consolidate Mexico's police forces, but has asked Colombia's former national police chief to advise him. He would allow private investment in Pemex and pursue shale gas development. He favors greater access to credit for small businesses. (*more*→)

In Depth

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USAID Lowers Support for Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Bolivia

Congressional critics have long complained about U.S. assistance going to countries that actively oppose U.S. foreign policy. So while announcing the closure of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) mission in Panama, Mark Feierstein, assistant administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean, added that the agency has also reduced support to Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Ecuador. Feierstein said that despite a decrease in funding, USAID would continue to invest in democracy building and assistance for civic groups dedicated to human rights and civil liberties in developing nations. Despite declining support from the United States, these three countries have found other friends willing to take up the slack—namely Venezuela and Iran. Venezuela continues to supply discounted oil to Nicaragua and other regional allies in Central America and the Caribbean. Ecuadoran president Rafael Correa has signed some 25 agreements to promote trade and fund joint projects with Iran. For its part, Iran has pledged agricultural and manufacturing investments in Nicaragua, as well as over \$1.1 billion in investments in Bolivia's energy sector over the course of the next five years. Given those prospects, members of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) responded to the announcement by promising to expel their USAID missions. Still, Venezuela and Iran are weak reeds on which to lean. Many of their pledges remain unrealized. Venezuela could face an imminent leadership struggle while Iran could be squeezed by further sanctions. Thus, countries giving USAID missions the boot may find themselves looking elsewhere—such as China—or even returning to the United States for development money.—**Janae Edwards**

In the News*Caribbean: Barbados*

June 15, the Barbados Defense Force opened Exercise Tradewinds 2012, a U.S.-backed multilateral exercise aimed at building partner capacity among regional military and law enforcement agencies. Attended by 17 Caribbean countries as well as the United States and Canada, the exercise should strengthen cooperation in counternarcotics and counterterrorism.—*The Barbados Advocate* (Barbados)

Haiti

Haitian prime minister Laurent Lamothe proposed major changes to binational markets located on the border with the Dominican Republic, arguing that the state loses some US\$300–\$500 million in revenue annually from products



Gabriel Quadri de la Torre, of the New Alliance Party (PANAL), is an environmentalist and free marketeer. Quadri believes the army is still needed to fight drug cartels until police are reformed. He would privatize a minority stake in Pemex and eliminate fossil fuel subsidies.



Josefina Vázquez Mota, of the ruling National Action Party (PAN), was President Calderón’s education minister, until quitting when he allied with the leader of Mexico’s controversial teachers’ union. She would allow Pemex to sell stock, strengthen the rule of law, and direct government purchases toward small businesses.

Latest polling:

- Peña Nieto—40 percent
- López Obrador—24 percent
- Vázquez Mota—19 percent
- Quadri—2 percent

Source: Milenio-GEA-ISA, June 25–27.

Photo credits: David Agren (López Obrador); World Economic Forum (Peña Nieto); World Economic Forum (Quadri); Ads.gm (Vázquez Mota).

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entering Haiti duty free. Lamothe also mentioned the need for better border security to eliminate illegal trafficking and smuggling to increase state revenue.—*Listin Diario (Haiti)*

Central America: Costa Rica

A new study by Costa Rica’s Chamber of Commerce revealed that local businesses have increased their investments in security personnel, equipment, and technology by nearly 18 percent between 2010 and this year. The study found that nearly one-third of companies surveyed had been the victim of some type of crime in the past 12 months.—*El Financiero (Costa Rica)*

North America: Mexico

Grupo Televisa accepted conditions imposed by Mexico’s antitrust commission, the Federal Competition Commission (CFC), for purchasing 50 percent of Iusacell, a mobile phone company. Among new measures are safeguards promoting competitive content sales over the air and cable TV. One industry trade monitor argued that the measures won’t stem market concentration because the CFC lacks enforcement tools.—*El Universal (Mexico)*

South America: Bolivia

During his June visit to South America, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Bolivian president Evo Morales signed an agreement to cooperate on counternarcotics. Iran will send military experts to provide intelligence and planning training for jungle operations. In return, Morales expressed support for Iran’s nuclear energy program.—*Los Tiempos (Bolivia)*

Brazil

In an effort to increase cooperation among BRICs countries and withstand global economic turmoil, Brazil and China have agreed to a currency swap valued at US\$30 billion. Brazil expects that deepening cooperation with China will lead to more business opportunities for Brazilian companies, including increased sales of Brazilian Embraer jets as well as other industrial products.—*Merco Press (Brazil)*

Uruguay

Panacea or Pandora’s Box? Uruguayan president José Mujica is crafting a bill to legalize the sale, consumption, and possession of marijuana, as a way to minimize illegal trafficking and wean users off heavier drugs such as cocaine. The state will manage sales through a country-wide distribution network. Under the new bill, marijuana consumers will be monitored by the state to minimize addictive behavior.—*El País (Uruguay)*

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