

*Hemisphere Insider***Program News**
Americas Program
Welcomes Adjunct
Fellow

The Americas Program is pleased to announce the appointment of Gabriel Sánchez Zinny as adjunct fellow. Sánchez Zinny is currently managing director of Blue Star Strategies, LLC, where he focuses on the Latin America practice, including infrastructure, education, energy, and international relations. Previously, he coordinated the Human Trafficking Program at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, where he organized Hispanic civil society groups in 17 states to develop health services for trafficking victims. He also served at the Inter-American Development Bank, where he worked on implementing new technologies for the education sector. (continued→)

In Depth

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Nicaraguan Municipal Elections: More of the Same?

The campaign for Nicaragua's November 4 municipal elections reached a fever pitch this week, marred by the murder of an opposition candidate for Managua's city council. With recent elections characterized by violence and accusations of fraud, it appears this year's contest will continue a troubling trend. Past instances include municipal elections in 2008 and the 2011 general election, both marked by voting irregularities, according to European Union and Organization of American States observers. President Daniel Ortega's reelection last year occurred following a controversial 2009 Supreme Court ruling that declared constitutional term limits "inapplicable." To be sure, election officials assert that the vote this weekend will be free and fair. But the shaky facade of an impartial election commission populated by Sandinista and Liberal party insiders that are part of a Sandinista-dominated pact has diminished trust in an honest outcome. Similar questions involve the makeup of regional and departmental electoral commissions. Despite questionable democratic practices, Nicaragua's economy has started to hum, with steady 4 percent growth and increasing inflows of foreign direct investment. Nicaragua's apparel factories have used the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) to boost trade with the United States, and the Ortega government has used subsidized oil from Venezuela to soften the blow of high oil prices. Still, equitable economic growth and good governance often go hand in hand. If Nicaragua's leaders would like to lay the foundation for sustained prosperity, a good first step would be to start holding impeccably honest elections.—**Alek Suni**

In the News*Caribbean: Haiti*

One of Haiti's most prominent businessmen, Clifford Brandt, has been taken into custody on kidnapping charges. Brandt was arrested for the abduction of siblings Coralie and Nicolas Moscoso (ages 23 and 24) in Port-au-Prince, and he was reportedly found to be a member of a kidnapping network. Nine other persons have been arrested, and four police officers have been brought in for questioning. Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe praised Haiti's police for their efforts in the investigation and arrest.—*Haiti Libre* (Haiti)

Central America: Guatemala

Guatemala has passed a law against illicit enrichment, thereby bringing the nation into compliance with a mandate issued by the Inter-American

Sánchez Zinny also worked as director of the Argentina Program at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars. He is the coauthor of four books on education policy and is the founder of Edunexo.com, a software company dedicated to providing services for schools and universities and digital solutions to governments. Sánchez Zinny studied economics at the University of San Andrés in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and received his master's in public policy from Georgetown University.

Americas Calendar

November 4: Nicaragua
Municipal Elections
November 6: Puerto Rico
Statehood Referendum
November 16–17: Ibero-
American Summit (Cadiz)
December 1: Inauguration of
Enrique Peña Nieto
(Mexico)
December 16: Venezuela
Gubernatorial Elections

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Convention against Corruption a decade ago. The law establishes a maximum punishment for embezzlement of 10 years in prison and up to 500,000 *quetzales* in fines. However, the law's impact was softened when four amendments, including one on tax evasion, were cut from the final version.—[Siglo 21 \(Guatemala\)](#)

North America: Mexico

Mexico's labor reform bill lost its fast-track status in Congress and will be processed at a normal pace because of differences over union transparency. PRI Chamber of Deputies leader Manlio Fabio Beltrones said his party rejected articles increasing union oversight, as well as one requiring secret ballots to elect union leaders, but he assured that the Chamber of Deputies will support labor reforms under incoming President Enrique Peña Nieto, who takes office December 1.—[El Universal \(Mexico\)](#)

South America: Argentina

Argentina's Congress passed a bill this week lowering the nation's voting age in hopes of boosting President Cristina Fernández's approval ratings, which have plummeted in recent months because of flat economic growth and high inflation. The bill allows young people to cast ballots at 16. Fernández has appealed to younger voters since coming into office, and some of her youthful supporters are even calling for a constitutional amendment to let her seek a third term in 2015.—[Bloomberg \(United States\)](#)

Chile

Chile's Concertación coalition raced ahead of President Sebastian Piñera's Alianza bloc in Sunday's municipal elections, increasing chances of a comeback in next year's presidential elections. The left won 43 percent of votes in the race for mayor and city council positions, compared to the right's nearly 38 percent, and gained control of Santiago and Concepción. Though still a victory for the left, the elections saw low voter turnout, and it has been alleged that 1 million votes may have gone uncounted.—[Reuters \(United Kingdom\)](#)

Colombia

President Juan Manuel Santos approved a \$5.7 billion increase in the 2013 national defense budget last week. The increase comes just as Colombia's peace talks with the FARC are set to progress toward the implementation of a peace accord. President Santos justified the defense budget increase, asserting that "the strength of our armed forces" has made it possible to speak of peace. The increase will likely fund new equipment and upkeep for 500,000 soldiers and police.—[Colombia Reports \(Colombia\)](#)

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