



**Email this article**  
**Print this article**  
**Most popular pages**

**Click to send**  
**Click to print**  
**Today | This Week**

## Mexican politicians to court migrants

*Absentees can vote for president*

**Chris Hawley**

Republic Mexico City Bureau  
Sept. 4, 2005 12:00 AM

MEXICO CITY - Hoping for a bonanza of new voters, Mexican political parties are rushing to the United States to prepare for the 2006 presidential election, the first in which migrants will be able to vote by absentee ballot.

"Are you a Mexican living abroad? Sign up!" urges the Web site of President Vicente Fox's National Action Party, known as the PAN.

At the rival Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, organizers are holding meetings in places like Chicago and McAllen, Texas. And the Democratic Revolutionary Party, PRD, is sending its candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, to New York and Los Angeles in October.

They're all trying to stake their claims in the wake of an absentee-voter law passed in June.

"There are 4 million Mexicans with their voter-registration cards up here, and all the parties want those votes," said Florencio Zaragoza, the Arizona representative for the Coalition for the Political Rights of Mexicans Abroad, which lobbied for the new law.

The law allows Mexicans living abroad to cast mail-in ballots in the July 2 election, but only for president.

"We are one people, and no border can divide us and never will," Fox said during an event on Wednesday celebrating the new law. "You (expatriates) were never absent from our hearts, and today . . . we guarantee that you will never again be absent from the democratic life of Mexico."

On Sept. 15, the elections institute will send a coordinator to Phoenix and Tucson as part of a nationwide effort to brief civic groups and consular officials on the election process.

The agency will begin distributing ballot request forms through consulates and on the Internet on Oct. 1. Mexicans abroad must fill out the forms and send them in before Feb. 15.

The elections agency will send out ballots by May 20. Completed ballots must be received by July 1, the day before the election, to be counted. Only people who previously registered at an elections office in Mexico will be able to vote.

Mexican law prohibits campaign donations from anyone who lives or works abroad. In addition, the new law bars candidates and parties from campaigning outside Mexico.

But there's a loophole: until the registration deadline on Jan. 15, the presidential hopefuls are not considered official candidates. They're free to do what they want until then.

"I think all of the candidates are going to try to go (to the United States) before the deadline," said Jorge Montaño, a political analyst and former Mexican ambassador to Washington.

Most analysts say the migrant turnout likely will be low because of the cumbersome mail-in system. Zaragoza said he would be happy with a 10 percent turnout.

Little is known about the political preferences of migrants.

Some may want to "punish" the PAN or the PRI, the two largest parties, for the lack of jobs that drove them to the United States, Montaño said. Others may vote the same way as people in their home states.

"It's going to take some analysis," said Fernando Vázquez, a press aide for the López Obrador campaign. "But we're all out there anyway, building our bases."

New York has many migrants from the PRI strongholds of Puebla, Oaxaca and Chiapas. The PAN is believed to be strong in Texas, while the PRD has pockets of support in California and Chicago.

Arizona promises to be a battleground, Zaragoza said.

Tucson and southern Arizona have many people from Sonora state, which tends to be split between the center-left PRI and the conservative PAN, he said.

Phoenix is more of a melting pot, with people from all over Mexico, he said.

**Email this article**  
**Print this article**  
**Most popular pages**

**Click to send**  
**Click to print**  
**Today | This Week**