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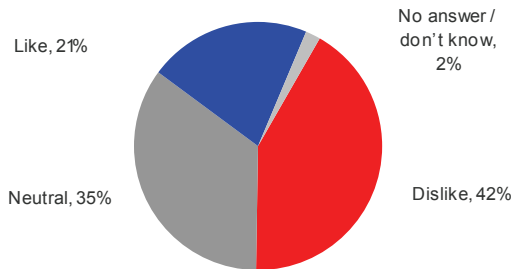
**Polls**

**Manipulation of political ads annoy Mexicans**

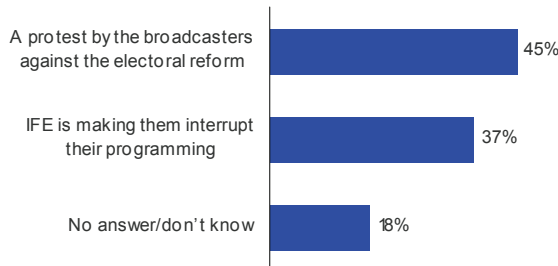
Parametría (2/13) surveyed the reaction of TV viewers to the way in which the broadcasters were lumping all the political-electoral ads together and broadcasting them in a bloc in the middle of sports programs.

By a 2:1 margin, respondents disliked the way that the ads were being shown, and a plurality blamed the broadcasters. However, Parametría also reports that 52% of those who disliked the ads thought that the IFE forced the TV companies to broadcast the ads in a bloc.

**If you've seen any TV programs that were interrupted by political ads, did you like or dislike seeing the ads?**



**Do you think the IFE is making the broadcasters interrupt their programming, or are they doing it to protest the electoral reform?**



**Key Dates**

- 1/31-3/11:** Federal 'pre-campaign' period
- 3/14-29:** Major parties select candidates for Congress
- 4/6:** Start of state election campaigns \*
- 4/30:** End of regular Congressional session

- 4/29-5/2:** Deadline for registering candidates for Chamber of Deputies
- 5/5:** Start of federal election campaigns
- 7/5:** National congressional, 6 gubernatorial, and 5 other local elections.

\* May vary by state

**President to give workers greater access to benefits**

President **Felipe Calderón** signed two legislative proposals to give workers greater access to their retirement accounts. Flanked by Economy Secretary **Gerardo Ruiz**, Labor Secretary **Javier Lozano**, and Social Security chief **Juan Molinar**, the President outlined measures that are intended to implement the Economic Pact announced January 7<sup>th</sup>. Workers will be able to take money from their retirement accounts under more flexible terms, and the government will increase its contribution to the accounts of workers making up to 15 times the minimum wage. In addition, unemployment benefits will be increased. (Presidencia 2/9, Reforma 2/10)

**Broadcasters get a pass from IFE**

By a 5-4 vote, the IFE board set aside the recommendation of the staff and IFE president **Leonardo Valdés** to fine broadcasters Ps. 11 million for their "atypical" manipulation of political ads during sporting events starting Jan. 31. The resolution that passed hinges on a "collaboration" agreement signed by the IFE and the radio and TV chamber to "normalize" the broadcasting of the political ads. Noted columnist **Miguel Ángel Granados Chapa**, "The electoral body surrendered and was captured by those it regulates. ... The decision of the IFE Board is ... a victory for the insolent 'tele-ocracy' of the broadcasters." PAN Senator **Santiago Creel** said, "It seems to me that [the IFE Board] did not meet its responsibilities. ... My congratulations to those who voted in favor of the sanctions, but I also want to say that we must be respectful of the decision." IFE spokesperson **Nestor Martínez** announced his resignation after the vote. (Reforma 2/12-16)

**Narco protesters in Monterrey block traffic, kill commander**

For at least four days, scores of masked protestors armed with clubs blocked the main streets of downtown Monterrey and chanted "Army go home" to demand an end to army operations in the city. A police commander was gunned down in a hail of bullets (97 cartridges were found), and gangs shot up government offices near the military headquarters. Governor **Natividad González** said the actions were the work of organized crime. (Reforma 2/12, 16)

**Transport strikes hit 16 states**

Truck drivers and municipal and intercity bus drivers in 16 states staged protests or suspended service to protest the continued increases in diesel prices, even after the government froze gasoline prices. Governor José de Jesús Aguilar Padilla of Sinaloa, one of the states most affected by the protests, made a direct plea to President Calderon to freeze prices. The President did not respond directly, but later said he would meet with the local transport union head. (Universal 2/17)

**Téllez leaked tapes embarrass government**

Journalist **Carmen Aristegui** played leaked audio tapes of private conversations of Communications and Transportation Secretary **Luis Téllez** with his staff discussing disputes with Cofetel commissioners and the claim that former President **Carlos Salinas** stole hundreds of millions from secret government accounts. The PRD and some PRIistas demanded that Téllez resign. The SCT Secretary, who served in the Salinas government, said there should be an investigation of the illegal taping, but did not address the substance of the claims. Columnist **Ricardo Alemán** called the scandal "a missile strike below the waterline of the government," noting that the 'factic powers' (the broadcasters and telephone companies) would go to any lengths to preserve their power and force Tellez out, and that the government was again showing "dangerous weaknesses" in its inability to manage the scandal. (Universal 2/17)