

Main Topics

- *Senate debates electoral law changes; broadcasters warn of censorship*
- *Fast track selection of new IFE President begins*
- *Violence in the cathedral*
- *Cordial meeting between new PRD governor and Calderón*

Key Dates

12/8-9/07: PAN elects new party leadership

2nd half of December: Minimum wage announcement for 2008

02/03/08: Baja California Sur and Quintana Roo state elections

02/17/08: Hidalgo state elections

03/08: PRD elects party president

The Senate began debating the new secondary laws of the Federal Electoral Code (Cofipe) that are needed to implement the electoral reform. Specifically, they are elaborating the powers of the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) to establish **guidelines for news programs** in all electronic media and to administer the **allocation of radio and TV air time** to the different parties. The new laws will also establish guidelines for party spending, transparency of accounts, and sanctions for violations. The Radio and Television Industry Chamber (CIRT) opposes the draft laws. "If the Cofipe reform is approved as presented, we will take it to the Supreme Court where it will surely be declared unconstitutional for violating freedom of expression," said a CIRT spokesman. Santiago Creel and Carlos Navarrete, the PAN and PRD leaders in the Senate, both rejected the charge of censorship. "The new guidelines do not imply censorship, nor anything that could reduce, limit, or suppress expression, criticism or press freedom," said Creel. (Reforma 11/23, Universal 11/23)

The Chamber of Deputies launched a fast track **process to select the new IFE President** and two new IFE board members by December 15. Any citizen who is at least 30 years old, is a college graduate, enjoys a good reputation, and is willing to submit a 10-page essay on the electoral reform just enacted may put themselves forward. On December 3, the Government Ministry will present Congress with the list of candidates who fulfill the requirements. From December 4-7 candidates will be interviewed on public television. On December 14, the Chamber of Deputies will vote by secret ballot; candidates must receive a two-thirds majority to be elected. In an op-ed published in Reforma, former IFE President José Woldenberg recommended that the selection should be "the result of a concurrent political operation of all the groups that make up the Chamber of Deputies." He cautioned that it would be undesirable if the positions were to be divided among parties. The Chamber must also designate which three of the current IFE board will have their terms shortened to 2009. (Reforma 11/21-22)

Mexico City's cathedral reopened for mass on Sunday, under heavy security provided by the Mexico City government, after being closed for one week. The previous Sunday, the long simmering **conflict between the Church and the PRD** erupted. A group of some 150 persons rushed into the cathedral as the main mass was beginning carrying banners of the PRD's so-called National Democratic Convention, which was taking place in the Zócalo outside the cathedral. The demonstrators chanted slogans against the Church and priests and overturned pews. The invasion happened after PRD stalwart Rosario Ibarra addressed the rally and demanded, "Are the [cathedral] bells greeting this convention, or are they trying to drown out the voice of the people. We must investigate!" Cardinal Norberto Rivera condemned the incident and ordered the cathedral closed until appropriate security could be provided. The PRD sought to distance itself from the invaders, and promised to expel any party members involved. The last time the cathedral was closed was 1926, when the Church was protesting the passage of Article 130 of the Constitution that restricted Church activities. (Universal 11/20, Reforma 11/19, 20, 25)

President Calderón and the PRD governor-elect of Michoacán, Leonel Godoy, met privately in the state house in Morelia. The meeting was arranged by outgoing PRD governor Lázaro Cárdenas Batel. Calderón praised Godoy in a press release issued by Presidencia that pledged a "fluid and constructive" relationship, while the governor-elect said that the state and federal governments "must work together in order to achieve a higher level of economic and social development in the state." Meetings between PRD officials and Calderón have been a subject of great controversy within the PRD, and no official photos were taken of the meeting. (Universal 11/25-26)