

Main Topics

- *Federal pension reform clears final hurdle*
- *Other pension reforms passed*
- *Senate agrees on framework for negotiating political reform*
- *New TV and radio licenses to be auctioned*
- *Top cop gives up command*
- *PAN chief Espino cries "betrayal"*

Key Dates

- 05/20/07:** *Yucatan gubernatorial election*
- 06/2-3/07:** *PAN National Assembly meets*
- 08/05/07:** *Baja California gubernatorial election*
- 11/11/07:** *Michoacan gubernatorial election*
- 03/08:** *PAN elects new party president*

The **Senate approved the federal pension reform law by a vote of 73 to 28**, the week after the Chamber of Deputies acted. As in the lower house, PAN, PRI, PVEM, and Alternativa voted in favor and PRD, PT, and Convergencia voted against. The Senate rejected a series of amendments offered by the PRD, and endured street protests by radical labor unions opposing the measure. President Calderón applauded the passage of the ISSSTE law in a televised message, calling it "a transcendental moment in the life of the country." He said it was a triumph for politics, democracy, and the economy: "It is a fundamental advance for Mexico, made possible thanks to the responsibility and patriotism of the legislators, as well as the principal union leaders." Columnist Luis F. Aguilar noted, "Even more than the ISSSTE reform [itself], it is important to highlight that the building of legislative majorities has become the strategic issue in national politics." In a complementary move, **the Senate also approved by a vote of 77-22 amendments to the general pension law** to prevent union leaders or politicians from participating in the management of retirement funds. (Reforma 3/28-29)

The Senate unanimously approved a Reform of the State law that **establishes a framework for legislative negotiation on fundamental political reforms** through a commission made up of the leadership of both chambers. The goal is to produce legislation over the coming twelve months on the themes of the State and government, democracy and the electoral system, federalism, judicial reform, and social guarantees. "The first fruit of this law should be an electoral reform," said PRI senator Pedro Joaquín Coldwell. (Universal 3/29)

The Federal Telecommunications Commission, Cofetel, announced that it will **auction new regional and local TV and radio concessions** in September-October 2007. One of the commissioners said the new concessions "will allow the entry of new players in the marketplace...to augment the plurality of cultural, information, and entertainment content." According to Cofetel, the existing law does not allow the creation of a third national TV network, and unused frequencies available in all cities except Mexico City, Guadalajara, Monterrey, and border cities. (Reforma 3/30)

The country's top police official, Gen. Ardelio Vargas gave up his command. Vargas, who headed both the Federal Preventive Police (PFP) and the Federal Investigations Agency (AFI), was transferred to head a new center for the study of organized crime. No explanation was given, and no replacement was named. (Proceso 3/30, www.ssp.gob.mx)

PAN intramurals continued, with party leader **Manuel Espino accusing the Ministry of Government of "betrayal"** for allegedly "interfering" in the ongoing election of PAN national assembly members. A pro-Calderón senator, Federico Döring, said that Espino did not have the "moral stature" to complain, since he was imposed on the party by then-President Vicente Fox. The national assembly meets in June 2007 to elect a new central committee, or CEN. (Universal 3/31).

Opinion Polls

The next newsletter will be published on April 16, after the Easter break.

Reforma published a national survey on confidence in institutions. As in previous surveys, the Church, Universities, and the Military rated at the top, and the Congress and political parties are ranked at the bottom.

In addition, 49% said democracy was preferable to any other form of government, 5% said that in some circumstances authoritarian government or dictatorship was preferable, while 32% chose the answer 'for persons like me, either type of regime gives the same results.'

How much confidence do you have in the following?

