

Public Affairs Chatter

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Registration Phase Ends for Judicial candidates

The judicial election process has reached a pivotal milestone as the registration phase closes. With over 49,000 contenders vying for nearly 900 federal judicial positions, including district judges, circuit magistrates, electoral magistrates, members of the Judicial Discipline Tribunal, and Supreme Court justices, the race starts.

After screening by Evaluation Committees and a subsequent lottery to narrow the field, over 5,300 candidates will appear on the ballots. Despite concerns about logistical challenges raised by the National Electoral Institute (INE), President Sheinbaum has ruled out delaying the vote. “The INE, in coordination with the Interior Ministry, has indicated that the timeline is tight but feasible,” she stated.

Each branch of government—the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial—has established its own Evaluation Committee to oversee candidate submissions. These committees have acted as gateways, evaluating applicants and preparing the final candidate lists. The distribution of applicants across the three committees reflects the differing dynamics within each branch:

- **Executive Branch:** 18,447 applications received. Former Chief Justice Arturo Zaldívar, the coordinator of Policy and Government for the Presidency, noted that registrations surged dramatically in the final days, rising from just 1,000 midweek to the final total.
- **Legislative Branch:** The Legislative Evaluation Committee received the largest share of applications—27,146. A significant portion (15,242) arrived via email over the weekend, and their eligibility will be determined in the coming weeks.
- **Judicial Branch:** The Judicial Evaluation Committee registered the fewest applicants, with 3,805 submissions. This disparity highlights the stringent criteria for advancing through the judiciary’s selection process. Unlike the Executive and Legislative branches, where Morena, the ruling party, holds significant sway, the judiciary requires the approval of eight out of eleven Supreme Court justices to advance candidates to the ballot.

As the June 2025 vote approaches, the nation will witness an experiment in popular participation within the judiciary, with open questions about the long-term implications for justice, independence, and governance.

Canada Pushes Back Against Tariff Threats Amid Growing Tensions in North America

While Canada works to deflect looming tariff threats, Mexico faces its own challenging dynamic with the incoming U.S. administration. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum and President-elect Donald Trump recently engaged in a phone conversation centered on migration and security issues. Trump's characterization of the exchange—claiming Mexico agreed to "close its southern border"—sparked immediate controversy, with Sheinbaum swiftly refuting the statement. She reiterated Mexico's commitment to a migration strategy grounded in human rights, rejecting isolationist approaches.

As Trump prepares for office, his tariff proposals and border security agenda greatly overshadow North American diplomacy. Canada's strategy of leveraging data and proposing targeted investments in border security underscores its intent to safeguard a robust bilateral relationship. However, Trump's lack of concessions or reassurances during his recent Mar-a-Lago dinner with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau highlights the inherent uncertainty in dealing with Trump. Similarly, Mexico's challenges in protecting its sovereignty while engaging with a combative U.S. administration underscore the complexities of the current political climate.

At Mar-a-Lago, Trudeau sought to differentiate Canada's border issues from those of Mexico, presenting evidence to counter the justification for sweeping tariffs. Canadian Ambassador Kirsten Hillman emphasized that fentanyl smuggling from Canada is negligible, with just 43 pounds intercepted at the northern border in 2024, compared to over 21,000 pounds at the southern border. Hillman also pointed out that nearly all northern border drug seizures involve individuals rather than organized criminal networks. On immigration, she highlighted that Canada accounts for less than 1% of U.S.-bound migrant detentions.

While these statistics clearly show Canada's unique border dynamics, they may fall short of Trump's broader narrative, which conflates trade and security concerns. Hillman's offer of increased investments in drones, helicopters, and border personnel could bolster Canada's argument but risks reinforcing Trump's transactional approach without securing meaningful policy shifts.

Legislative Reforms in Mexico Spark Debate on Human Rights and Justice

The reform to Article 19 of the Mexican Constitution, aimed at expanding the list of offenses warranting automatic pretrial detention, has completed its legislative process. Approved so far by 17 state legislatures, the reform is set to proceed to formal constitutional declarations by the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate next Tuesday, followed by its publication in the Official Gazette of the Federation.

The reform adds extortion, the production and distribution of fentanyl and other synthetic drugs, and activities involving counterfeit tax receipts to the list of offenses requiring mandatory pretrial detention. Morena argues that this measure is crucial to address impunity and prevent the exploitation of legal loopholes that allow suspects to evade justice through the so-called “revolving door” phenomenon.

Despite securing the necessary votes, the reform has faced fierce opposition from human rights advocates. Critics, including international bodies such as the United Nations and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, argue that automatic pretrial detention violates fundamental principles, including the presumption of innocence. Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, emphasized that pretrial detention should be a last resort, determined on a case-by-case basis by judicial authorities.

IFT and Cofece respond to their elimination

The Federal Telecommunications Institute (IFT) and Cofece responded to their imminent elimination: *it's a terrible idea, but we will (have to) respect the law.*

The reform divides the IFT's current powers among several government entities, and eliminates its constitutional autonomy.

The IFT highlights critical aspects of the reform that it says should be addressed in secondary legislation to ensure proper regulation:

1. **Impartiality and Independence:** The reform must ensure technical and budgetary independence, as well as collegiate decision-making, for the new regulatory body to act impartially in regulating telecommunications and broadcasting.
2. **Integrated Regulation and Competition:** Fragmenting regulatory powers risks inconsistencies and inefficiencies. Maintaining an integrated approach is vital for effective policies.
3. **Specialized Expertise:** The reform must preserve the highly specialized human capital developed over years of investment by the Mexican State. This expertise has been essential to the IFT's success in regulating complex sectors.

Cofece was a little more cautious and risk-averse in its comments, perhaps reflecting that unlike the IFT it won't be fully disbanded, but moved to the Economy Ministry, while losing its constitutional autonomy.

1. **Commitment to Competition Policy:** Cofece has consistently emphasized the need for mechanisms that uphold a robust economic competition policy, ensuring tangible benefits for Mexicans by investigating and sanctioning illegal business practices.
2. **Respect for Congressional Decisions:** Cofece respects Congress's decision to reform the constitutional framework related to competition policy.

3. **Preservation of Core Principles:** Although the reform removes constitutional autonomy, it retains a competition authority with technical and operational independence, legal personality, and its own assets—key elements of a strong competition policy.
4. **Collaboration on Secondary Legislation:** Cofece is ready to work with Congress to shape secondary legislation, ensuring the competition authority has the tools to combat anticompetitive practices effectively and to maintain transparent, efficient processes that benefit Mexican consumers.
5. **Continued Action by Cofece:** Until the reform is fully enacted, Cofece will continue to use its full powers to investigate and penalize violations, promote collective actions, and advocate for competition to deliver tangible benefits to the public.

Contact:

Laura Camacho

Executive Director Miranda Public Affairs

laura.camacho@miranda-partners.com