

Public Affairs Chatter

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One Election, Two Agendas

Mexico's Chamber of Deputies is reviewing a proposal to modify the timing of the presidential recall referendum so that it aligns with the 2027 midterm elections. The initiative, introduced by Morena Deputy Alfonso Ramírez Cuéllar, seeks to amend Article 35 of the Constitution, allowing the recall vote to take place on the same day voters elect members of Congress and other public officials.

According to the proposal, holding both votes simultaneously would reduce costs and increase participation. If approved, the recall would coincide with elections for all 500 federal deputies, 15 governorships—12 of which are currently held by Morena and its allies—as well as 31 local legislatures and hundreds of municipal governments.

Supporters of the electoral reform argue that synchronizing the presidential recall vote with midterms could boost turnout. Available evidence is more nuanced. Data from past direct democracy exercises in Mexico, such as the 2021 popular consultation (7.1% turnout) and the 2022 recall referendum (17.7%), suggest low participation had more to do with limited funding, poor logistics, and low voter familiarity, than with scheduling. In fact, turnout increased by over 10 percentage points between the two events, hinting at growing civic engagement. By contrast, judicial elections held concurrently with local votes in Durango and Veracruz, averaged just 12.96% nationally, but surpassed 20% in those states. While these cases differ in design and context, they suggest that aligning votes does not automatically guarantee a high level of participation.

The reform reflects a renewed effort to revisit an idea first explored during the administration of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who had also proposed aligning his recall with the midterms. That effort did not advance, and the referendum was ultimately held separately in 2022.

Yesterday, Morena majority leader Ricardo Monreal confirmed that discussion of the initiative would be temporarily paused. Speaking at a press conference, Monreal stated that he would ask the chair of the Constitutional Points Committee to delay deliberations to allow for broader debate among lawmakers. Members of opposition parties, including PAN, PRI, and Movimiento Ciudadano, have expressed concern that the proposed change could be perceived as a strategic move to influence electoral outcomes.

While the initiative remains under review, it reflects an ongoing conversation about how to enhance participation and efficiency in Mexico's electoral processes. Whether or not the reform advances, it underscores the evolving role of constitutional mechanisms in the country's political landscape.

Tax Justice or Trial by Media? The Empire Pushes Back

Grupo Salinas has intensified its legal and public campaign against Mexico's tax authority SAT and the Supreme Court, following recent procedural setbacks in long-running litigation over back taxes. In an

open letter addressed to President Claudia Sheinbaum, the company claimed that it is being subjected to “selective litigation tactics,” alleging that only its 2013 fiscal case was forwarded to the Court, while earlier files from 2008 to 2012, allegedly part of prior discussions with the López Obrador administration, were excluded.

Federal authorities promptly rejected the accusations. Fiscal Prosecutor Arturo Medina firmly stated that “there was no deal, no arrangement, and no pact,” reaffirming that the total tax liability under dispute amounts to 74 billion pesos, significantly higher than the figure cited by the company. President Sheinbaum added that Grupo Salinas remains free to settle its obligations through established legal channels, but no preferential treatment would be granted.

The Supreme Court, for its part, rejected a petition from the company to suspend resolution of seven appeals currently under review. The Court ruled the request inadmissible, underscoring the need to maintain procedural consistency. The legal standoff takes place against the backdrop of recent amendments to the Amparo Law, which limit the use of provisional injunctions to delay fiscal enforcement—a strategy Grupo Salinas has previously employed.

In a follow-up statement on November 9, the company signaled it may pursue international recourse, citing alleged violations of its procedural rights and suggesting potential filings before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. No formal case has yet been submitted.

Selective Sovereignty: Mexico’s New Foreign Policy Standard

Mexico’s recent asylum decisions have drawn criticism from South American governments, triggering diplomatic consequences and renewing debates about the boundaries of sovereignty and humanitarian protection.

Earlier this month, Peru announced the suspension of diplomatic relations with Mexico following the asylum granted to Betssy Chávez, former prime minister and political ally of ousted president Pedro Castillo. Chávez, currently facing legal proceedings for alleged rebellion and conspiracy, had entered the Mexican embassy in Lima and was later granted protection. The Peruvian Congress responded by declaring President Claudia Sheinbaum *persona non grata*, citing what it described as “unacceptable interference in internal affairs” and “disrespect toward Peru’s democratic institutions.” The resolution also referenced Sheinbaum’s previous public remarks critical of Castillo’s successors.

This development echoes an earlier diplomatic rupture with Ecuador. In April, Ecuadorian police entered the Mexican embassy in Quito to detain former vice president Jorge Glas, who had been convicted of corruption and had received political protection from Mexican diplomats. The incident led to a formal complaint by the Mexican government before the International Court of Justice, alleging a violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Bilateral relations between the two countries remain suspended.

The Mexican government has defended both asylum decisions as consistent with international law and humanitarian tradition. President Sheinbaum reiterated that offering political asylum is not equivalent to interfering in domestic matters and emphasized Mexico's historic role in providing refuge.

Nevertheless, officials in both Peru and Ecuador have expressed concerns that the individuals receiving asylum share political affinities with the current Mexican administration, raising questions about the intersection between humanitarian policy and ideological alignment. These cases have further complicated Mexico's regional posture, particularly as it continues to advocate for non-intervention abroad while asserting sovereignty in response to external scrutiny of its internal policies.

No Free Kicks: Mexico Revises World Cup Tax Deal to Limit FIFA's Perks

As Mexico prepares to host 13 matches of the FIFA World Cup in 2026, including the opening ceremony at Mexico City's Estadio Azteca, attention is shifting from stadium renovations and tourism forecasts to fiscal policy. Specifically, to the tax benefits originally granted to FIFA and its affiliates nearly a decade ago.

The Sheinbaum administration, through the Ministry of Finance (SHCP), has announced a revision of these fiscal and customs exemptions, initially pledged under the 2015 government guarantee signed by the Peña Nieto administration. That commitment extended preferential treatment to FIFA, its subsidiaries, contractors, and partners, for up to ten years from 2018, as part of Mexico's successful bid to co-host the event.

According to SHCP, technical meetings were held with FIFA to narrow the scope of these benefits and better align them with the country's current fiscal policy. The revised terms now limit exemptions strictly to entities directly involved in event execution, excluding secondary providers and unrelated contractors. The aim, the Ministry emphasized, is to preserve national revenue without violating international commitments.

President Sheinbaum confirmed the adjustment: "We couldn't undo the agreement, but we updated it to fit Mexico's current fiscal reality. FIFA fully agreed." The statement marked a clear effort to distance the current administration from the blanket exemptions negotiated in the past, while reassuring stakeholders that revenue protection remains a priority.

Infrastructure investments remain substantial. Combined federal, local, and private contributions exceed 15 billion pesos, with key urban upgrades under way in Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey. The projected economic impact—estimated at 3 billion USD—has made the event a focal point for attracting U.S. investment, particularly in technology, tourism, and urban services.

Still, critics warn that enforcement will be key. While the SAT has committed to publishing clear eligibility criteria, concerns remain about loopholes and indirect exemptions.



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