

## Public Affairs Chatter

November 25, 2025

### **Forty Hours, Many Timelines: Mexico's Slow-Motion Labor Revolution**

Mexico's much-promised but long-stalled 40-hour workweek is gaining new momentum, though at the pace of a constitutional glacier. It began in 2023 as Movimiento Ciudadano's 35-hour proposal, subsequently softened to 40 hours, and then trapped in a legislative loop: sent to the floor, returned to committee, subjected to open parliament and ultimately deferred until after the 2024 elections. The political math never worked. Amending Article 123 required qualified majorities and state-level ratification, an all but impossible feat during an electoral year.

The Sheinbaum administration revived the process in 2025, though with a deliberate, consultative approach, first sending the reform to "social dialogue." The Labor Ministry launched national forums with unions, business, academics and the International Labour Organization (ILO). Union leaders like Napoleón Gómez Urrutia pressed for a quick rollout (40 hours by 2027 with tax incentives) while business groups led by CCE president Francisco Cervantes pushed gradualism and sector-specific implementation. Consulting firms offered their own staircase: 48 to 46 hours in 2026, 44 in 2027, 42 in 2028, 41 in 2029 and finally 40 in 2030.

The government frames the reform as both a moral imperative and productivity measure, noting that Mexican employees still average 2,250 work hours per year, among the highest in the OECD. The emerging plan points to a staggered rollout starting in 2026, possibly with a first cut to 46 hours on May 1, and possibly different rules per sector. The ultimate configuration remains in flux: five eight-hour days, six shorter days, or even four 10-hour days. If Congress votes before year-end, Mexico will begin a decade-long transition; if it slips to February 2026, it risks overcrowding the legislative calendar. Either way, the administration has claimed ownership. Missing the 2030 target would be costlier than taking the scenic route.

### **A Narrow Isthmus, With Big Ambitions: The Interoceanic Train Picks Up Speed**

The Interoceanic Corridor, designed as a 308-kilometer rail bridge between the Pacific port of Salina Cruz, Oaxaca and Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz, on the Gulf of Mexico coast, is evolving into a sprawling state-backed logistics ecosystem. Three rehabilitated lines, four expanding ports (Salina Cruz, Coatzacoalcos, Dos Bocas, Puerto Chiapas), 23 passenger stations, 31 sidings, five yards and 12 industrial parks anchor the project. By October 2025, trains had moved 134,000 passengers and nearly 900,000 tons of cargo, while the suburban "Tehuano" service added a social-policy layer. The missing link, the K Line from Ixtepec to Ciudad Hidalgo, is at 99% completion, including the 4.27-km Huixtla viaduct, with full operation expected in the first half of 2026.

Geopolitically, Mexico positions the corridor as an alternative to the Panama Canal and a hub for nearshoring. Ten industrial parks have been tendered with tax incentives, and flagship ventures such as a Danish-led \$10 billion green hydrogen complex underscore clean energy ambitions. Officials emphasize

the corridor's ability to provide a six-hour rail connection between the Pacific and Atlantic, offering a unique logistical advantage for trade.

Politically, the corridor is framed as a sovereignty play. Both López Obrador and Sheinbaum have insisted that ports and parks remain under Mexican control, defending military administration as a safeguard against privatization. But questions persist on long-term viability: security along extortion-heavy routes, competition with low-cost ocean freight and the governance implications of Navy-run infrastructure. For now, cranes are rising, tenders continue to be awarded and cargo volumes are climbing. Delivering jobs and steady freight by 2026 will determine whether the corridor becomes a logistics breakthrough—or another regional promise that stalls on the tracks.

### **Farmers, Truckers and the Politics of Discontent**

On November 24, 2025, farmers and truckers once again paralyzed highways in at least twenty states, blocking key routes into Mexico City and major corridors such as Mexico-Querétaro and Mexico-Toluca, raising costs for possibly hundreds of thousands of businesses that depend on these highways to transport employees, and get products into stores and warehouses. The protest united two long-running crises: rural income and cargo-route insecurity.

Farm organizations argue that policy favors cheap imports and a narrow set of basic crops, leaving small producers exposed to price swings, extortion and limited access to credit. They demand expanded guaranteed prices, a rural development bank and a tougher line on USMCA disputes, particularly over genetically modified corn. Truckers' demands center on security: robberies, hijackings, extortion and kidnappings have turned federal highways into high-risk zones. The high-profile kidnapping of driver Fernando Galindo became a rallying point. Transport companies also cite bottlenecks in licensing, medical exams and federal plates.

The government responded with a combination of empathy and delegitimization. President Sheinbaum highlighted dozens of meetings with sector leaders and stressed ongoing National Guard deployments. Interior Secretary Rosa Icela Rodríguez argued the blockades had “no reason” other than political motives, naming protest leaders tied to PRI, PAN and PRD. Authorities praised major transport chambers that withdrew from the protests as evidence of a fractured movement, and by evening many blockades had eased, though some farm groups held their ground.

Gradually, policy responses have emerged: new guaranteed prices for key crops, farmer representation in Segalmex governance, more National Guard patrols and efforts to speed up licensing processes. Still, tensions persist. Transport groups threaten an indefinite strike in early 2026 if security fails to improve, and farmers plan to use upcoming debates, such as the General Water Law, to escalate pressure.

The blockades underscore the risk of framing structural grievances through a partisan lens. For government, pointing to PRI pedigrees is politically useful but fails to resolve violence on highways or thin margins for producers. For opposition parties, riding discontent risks appearing opportunistic. And

for stranded motorists, the message is mixed: frustration at disruption but recognition that farm and logistics sectors have reached their breaking point.

### **Sister Republics, Shared Optics: Xiomara Castro's Farewell Visit to Mexico**

Honduran President Xiomara Castro's November farewell visit to Mexico offered carefully crafted optics: two women presidents, warm protocol and talk of "good friendship." The meeting reinforced Mexico's narrative of development-based migration management and Honduras' positioning within a progressive Central American bloc.

The agenda centered on expanding Mexican social programs, including Sembrando Vida and Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro, via the Mexican Agency for International Cooperation (AMEXCID); commitments under the Integral Development Plan; and coordination on consular protection and indigenous, women's and human-rights initiatives. Cooperation in health, education and rural electrification rounded out the script.

Diplomatically, the silence was louder than the speeches. Honduras heads toward a contentious 2025 election under scrutiny from the OAS and the U.S. Mexico offered no public commentary, sticking, this time, to its non-interventionist doctrine while giving Castro a valuable image of international support. The visit fits Mexico's Latin-Americanist narrative through CELAC and SICA, where both countries align on issues like Cuba and pharmaceutical self-sufficiency.

The economic footprint remains small (there were no major investments or trade announcements) but the diplomatic value is clear. Mexico positions itself as a regional broker balancing U.S. pressure on migration with South-South solidarity. Whether the next Honduran administration maintains this alignment will show whether the partnership survives beyond Castro's term—or fades with the end of the personal rapport.

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