

Mexico Political Chatter

March 26, 2026

With no recall referendum for 2027, the "watered-down" version of Plan B for electoral reform that was voted on Wednesday night in the Senate opens new questions about the viability of the Morena-PT-Green Party alliance. After weeks of accusations and disagreements, the Labor Party emerges as the architect of this second legislative setback, despite statements from leader Alberto Anaya about the commitment to support President Claudia Sheinbaum "firmly until 2030." The approved legislation put on the table the cost of local politics: state legislatures with million-peso budgets and oversized municipal structures.

In the Chamber of Deputies, meanwhile, the reform against "golden pensions" was approved unanimously by the full chamber, despite protests from retirees of companies such as Pemex, CFE, Banobras, and Luz y Fuerza del Centro, some of whom attempted to force their way into the legislative building. The decision comes weeks after the Anti-Corruption and Good Governance Ministry exposed thousands of pensioners — some with multimillion-peso pensions — who, following the reform's approval, will receive a cap of 70,000 pesos per month.

With the Tax Administration Service (SAT)'s decision to revoke the authorization to receive tax-deductible donations from more than 100 civil organizations — including some that have been critical of the governments of the so-called Fourth Transformation, such as IMCO and Mexicanos Contra la Corrupción y la Impunidad — a new rift opens between the government and organized civil society. While the president defends the decision as a technical matter of the SAT over which she has no involvement, Ricardo Raphael denounces that the motivation behind this ruling is openly political.

Meanwhile, the opposition's political pieces are also in motion. The PAN generated anticipation with its announcement of opening 100% of its candidacies to citizens — a bet that is already showing traction with more than 5,000 registrations, amid a relaunch process led by Jorge Romero's leadership. From another front, the organization Somos México, backed by figures such as Emilio Álvarez Icaza and Acosta Naranjo, has met the key requirements to become a political party and awaits a ruling from the INE in the coming months.

Finally, an oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico once again puts Pemex under pressure. The federal government maintains that the situation is under control, although independent reports and local authorities have documented damage to wildlife, while claims persist that federal agencies have minimized or denied the magnitude of the spill.



Sheinbaum's Plan B Advances in Senate, But Without Recall Referendum

The **Senate** approved a trimmed-down version of the so-called electoral reform "**Plan B**" pushed by **President Claudia Sheinbaum**, after Morena failed to bring its own coalition into line. The original initiative — which included deeper changes such as the possibility of a recall referendum in 2027 — was watered down in the face of resistance from the Labor Party and other internal tensions. The result was a diluted package focused on minor operational and spending adjustments, far removed from the political overhaul originally proposed.

Beyond its content, the episode sends a deeper political signal: **the ruling majority is no longer automatic**. Morena's inability to align its allies exposes fractures in the governing coalition and foreshadows a more complex scenario ahead of the 2027 decisions involving the PT and PVEM. In practical terms, the ruling party showed that it can win votes, but can no longer necessarily impose its full agenda.

From what Sheinbaum proposed in the original initiative to this version, allies and opponents blocked approval of key points in her project:

- Eliminating lists and modifying proportional representation seats.
- Reducing party financing by 25%.
- Recall referendum on the same day as the election.

 [Milenio: The PT Gets Its Way and the Recall Referendum Is Left Out](#)

The Cost of Local Power: Expensive Legislatures, Oversized City Councils

Claudia Sheinbaum's so-called electoral Plan B once again ignited the legislative debate by putting on the table the cost of local politics: state legislatures with million-peso budgets and oversized municipal structures. The proposal, pushed by the president, seeks to **cut privileges and reduce the size of local governments** — including a cap of up to 15 council seats per municipality and fewer local legislators — with the argument that those resources should go toward public works rather than the political apparatus. El Universal laid out the most expensive state legislatures in the country, as well as the municipalities with the highest number of council seats:

Most expensive state legislatures:

- **Baja California:** 25 local legislators, 34,867,503 pesos.
- **Morelos:** 20 local legislators, 31,865,600 pesos.
- **Michoacán:** 40 local legislators, 30,227,857 pesos.
- **Mexico City:** 66 local legislators, 28,580,416 pesos.
- **Jalisco:** 38 local legislators, 26,737,125 pesos.
- **State of Mexico:** 75 local legislators, 26,448,161 pesos.
- **Chihuahua:** 33 local legislators, 24,350,126 pesos.
- **Quintana Roo:** 25 local legislators, 21,455,125 pesos.
- **Guerrero:** 46 local legislators, 17,903,478 pesos.
- **Querétaro:** 25 local legislators, 17,347,313 pesos.

Municipalities with the most council seats:

- **Monterrey:** 28 seats.
- **Puebla:** 23 seats.
- **Altamira:** 21 seats.
- **Mexico City:** 21 seats.
- **Matamoros:** 21 seats.
- **Nuevo Laredo:** 21 seats.

- **Reynosa:** 21 seats.
- **Tampico:** 21 seats.
- **Victoria:** 21 seats.

 [El Universal: Electoral Plan B: What State Legislatures Cost the Public Purse; Proposal to Cap Council Seats at 15 Per Municipality](#)

Clash Over NGOs: Fiscal Oversight or Political Pressure

The **SAT** triggered a new controversy by revoking the authorization to receive tax-deductible donations from more than 100 — and up to 300 — civil organizations, including some critical of the government, sparking accusations of political pressure and the weakening of checks and balances. The NGOs warn that the measure directly undermines their operations and funding, while international voices raise concerns about risks to civic space.

From the government side, **President Claudia Sheinbaum** rejected any political intent and maintained that these are "**strictly technical**" evaluations by the SAT, stemming from fiscal non-compliance such as missing declarations or administrative irregularities. The clash of narratives is clear: for the government, it is a matter of legality; for the organizations, a possible use of the fiscal apparatus that once again strains the relationship between power and civil society.

 [El País: Sheinbaum Defends Cancellation of 270 NGOs' Permits to Receive Donations: "It Is a Technical Decision by the SAT, Not a Political One"](#)

Opposition Moves Its Pieces: PAN Opens Up to Citizens and a New Alternative Emerges

Amid its relaunch process, the **National Action Party** decided to open 100% of its candidacies to citizens — a bet to break from its internal logic and attract new profiles ahead of 2027. The experiment is already showing traction: more than 5,000 people have registered to compete under a scheme that will include polls and filters to screen candidates. The message is clear: the PAN seeks to leave its membership crisis behind and reconnect with voters, even opening the door to profiles with no party background.

In parallel, from civil society, a new project advances. It seeks to capitalize on discontent with traditional parties and present itself as a "citizen" opposition. The underlying dynamic is the same: while traditional parties open up to survive, new forces attempt to fill the void. The opposition, fragmented, is beginning to move.

 [El Financiero: PAN Opens Candidacies to Citizens](#)

Gulf Spill: Environmental Damage Persists Amid Denial

An oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico once again put **Pemex** under pressure, with the company reporting the collection of at least 128 tons of oil tar on the coasts of Veracruz and Tabasco. The federal government and the state oil company maintain that the situation is under control, that cleanup efforts are advancing, and that the impact has been contained — with some versions pointing to an external origin, such as a private vessel.

However, the environmental scope has been called into question. Independent reports and local authorities have documented damage to wildlife including **turtles, dolphins, and birds**, while claims persist that federal agencies have minimized or denied the magnitude of the spill. The contrast between the official narrative and field evidence once again puts the debate over transparency and environmental response in the oil industry front and center.

 [El País: Pemex Says It Has Already Cleaned 128 Tons of Oil Tar from Gulf Beaches](#)

Chamber Approves in General End to 'Golden Pensions'

The **Chamber of Deputies** advanced a reform to eliminate the so-called **golden pensions at Pemex and CFE**, proposing that these retirement benefits be capped at a maximum of 50% of the presidential salary. While Morena defends the measure as an adjustment to end privileges and reduce the burden on public finances, the opposition and workers warn that it could undermine acquired rights and trigger a wave of litigation — opening a new legal and political front.

 [Milenio: Chamber of Deputies Approves in General the End of 'Golden Pensions'](#)

Quick Takes

• **Hello to New Parties, Goodbye PT and PVEM? – Azucena Uresti**

Uresti warns that the eventual emergence of new parties could alter the ruling bloc's balance, reducing the weight of traditional allies such as the Labor Party and the Green Ecologist Party of Mexico. In a more competitive scenario, Morena would have room to redefine its alliances or do without them. More than a renewal of the system, what is at stake is who remains useful within the governing bloc.

 [El Universal: Hello to New Parties, Goodbye PT and PVEM?](#)

• **The Spinning Top – Luis Carlos Ugalde**

Ugalde compares the recall referendum to a spinning top: the people can remove the ruler, but do not decide who replaces them — leaving power in the hands of party elites. He also criticizes the intention to advance this mechanism for political reasons, arguing that it responds to short-term incentives and could weaken democratic stability. The core of his argument is clear: changing rules for short-term convenience carries institutional costs.

 [Reforma: The Spinning Top](#)

• **The Recall – Denise Maerker**

Maerker warns that the recall referendum could be used not as a mechanism of citizen oversight, but as a political instrument to transfer presidential popularity to Morena ahead of 2027. The mechanism, designed as a form of accountability, would be transformed into a kind of early ratification — based even on a possible "simulation" of citizen support. The risk, she notes, is eroding democratic rules and normalizing the strategic use of institutions.

 [Milenio: The Recall](#)

• **The SAT's Technique Is Political – Ricardo Raphael**

Raphael denounces that the SAT's decision to revoke the tax-exempt donation status of various authorized organizations — including IMCO, México Evalúa, and Mexicanos Contra la Corrupción,

among others — is openly political. The pretext: a legal gap created by the very reform that established the new Science Ministry, which failed to designate which office would henceforth validate the scientific work of these organizations. For Raphael, the trap was deliberate: an impossible-to-meet requirement was imposed, and the decision — far from being technical, as SAT spokespeople and the president herself claim — is calculated and political.

 [Milenio: The SAT's Technique Is Political](#)



The Agenda in Brief

President Claudia Sheinbaum announced the suspension of her morning press conferences on Holy Thursday and Good Friday, April 2 and 3, as part of the adjustment for Holy Week 2026.