

Miranda Intelligence – Public Affairs Chatter

A Judicial Reform That Needs a Sequel

Morena is making course corrections to the 2024 judicial reform, one of the 4T's most controversial and far-reaching legislative projects. An initiative published on April 21 by Alfonso Ramírez Cuéllar, Olga Sánchez Cordero, Javier Corral, and Susana Harp goes beyond technical tweaks to seek to address design flaws.

It is no accident that this effort is being led by Alfonso Ramírez Cuéllar. He is widely understood to be one of Sheinbaum's most trusted political operators, with a long personal relationship with the president and a record of taking on assignments central to her agenda. He has been instrumental in key economic and legislative priorities, organizing support around the presidency and translating presidential signals into parliamentary movement. This matters because the initiative is being presented not from the margins of the ruling coalition, but from its inner circle. Their proposal reflects the reform's structural weaknesses, and it's now being patched up by many of the same people who designed it.

Formally, the proposal's aims are administrative: improve the technical evaluation of candidates, refine campaign rules, create internal sections within the Supreme Court to ease workload, and avoid the overlap of judicial races with what will already be the largest midterm election in Mexico's history. Proponents say the election postponement would simplify logistics, ease pressure on ballots and polling stations, and give the government time to improve the model before running the entire system through a highly congested electoral calendar.

Requiring stronger certification, examinations, and technical filters for judicial candidates is a tacit admission that popular election alone is an inadequate proxy for judicial competence. Others see the postponement as a political recalibration as much as an institutional one: by moving the election, Sheinbaum would gain control over the timetable, ease immediate pressure on her government and on Morena, and avoid having judicial races swallowed by the partisan noise of 2027. That reading has gained credibility since Luisa María Alcalde — who stepped down as Morena's leader to become the president's legal counsel — was tasked with this assignment.

The changes also buy time to shore up a reform that continues to generate uncertainty within the judiciary and wariness in the private sector. The legislative calendar adds urgency: the current congressional session concludes on April 30, meaning any proposal not processed before then would require an extraordinary session.

A Finance Hand for a Diplomatic Post

President Sheinbaum's reconfiguration of Mexico's foreign policy team continues with her decision to nominate Roberto Lazzeri, currently head of Nafin and Bancomext, to replace Esteban Moctezuma as Mexico's ambassador to the United States (pending Washington's agreement and Senate ratification). The timing is notable: coming on the heels of Roberto Velasco's appointment as foreign minister, the nomination signals a preference for a technically minded economic operator with deep U.S. experience over a more traditional diplomatic figure, as the USMCA review looms. Sheinbaum's own reasoning was revealing enough: the central issue in the bilateral relationship "right now" is trade, and Lazzeri's value lies in his familiarity with the Finance Ministry, his ties to U.S. counterparts and his recent role in development banking. In that sense, the nomination looks less like a diplomatic reshuffle than a recalibration of Mexico's strategy in Washington — with a sharp focus on commerce and finance.

At the same time the appointment provides an (admittedly minor) counterweight to Economy Minister and chief trade negotiator Marcelo Ebrard, a previous political rival to President Sheinbaum, and not exactly in her circle of trust. Some wondered whether it was a coincidence that the President decided to field a question on whether Ebrard should resign for allowing his adult son to stay in the Mexican embassy in London rent-free for 6 months, while Ebrard was foreign minister. While Sheinbaum "defended" Ebrard in her answer, the prominence given to the issue has weakened the Economy Minister just as the USMCA trade review talks are entering a critical phase.

Lazzeri's profile fits the brief. An economist trained at CIDE who also studied law at UVM, he began his career in the Mexico City finance apparatus, rose through Banobras, and held senior posts at the Finance Ministry before becoming chief of staff to Finance Minister Rogelio Ramírez de la O. In August 2025, he was appointed head of Nafin and Bancomext. His partner is American, and he knows the country well.

Some Mexican media have raised possible and seemingly unfounded conflict-of-interest questions linked to his disclosed shareholdings in U.S.-registered entities and the restrictions in Article 42 of the Vienna Convention, which bars diplomats from practising professional or commercial activity for personal profit in the receiving country. Lazzeri has pushed back, saying there is no conflict; the companies in question have generated no federal business or income for him since his arrival at the Finance Ministry in 2020 and he says he has already divested from one investment, and the other divestiture is in process.

Health Insurance Catches Regulatory Fever

Mexico's private health insurance market is getting an uncomfortable check-up. A bill due to be voted on by the Chamber of Deputies' Finance Committee on April 28 seeks to tighten regulation of major medical insurers and private hospitals, targeting a sector that has become both commercially lucrative and politically sensitive. The proposal, presented by Deputy Jericó Abramo Masso, responds to alleged practices such as opaque contracts, denied coverage, weak portability, and premiums that become unmanageable as clients age and grow most dependent on the system. But while no doubt abuses exist, the private insurers fear that over regulation will end up backfiring by limiting availability of insurance. Like any company, they will only offer a product if they earn an acceptable return on capital deployed.

Among the more consequential elements are proposals to cap premium increases for older policyholders, improve access to treatment outside insurer-approved networks, and require greater disclosure from brokers and intermediaries. The initiative arrives at a delicate moment: medical insurance costs have already risen more than 20% this year, following the sector's defeat in its dispute with the SAT over VAT crediting on damage insurance. Insurers also blame hospitals for rate increases that have run well above inflation.

The industry argues that capping premium increases — particularly through a formula loosely tied to inflation — ignores the real economics of insurance, where costs are driven by claims, hospital charges, technology, and epidemiological risk, not the consumer price index alone. Critics also warn that a poorly calibrated cap could reduce supply, narrow coverage, or push some insurers out of the Mexican market altogether. Ricardo Monreal, Morena's leader in the Chamber of Deputies, said the proposal could be reviewed in a possible extraordinary session, to allow more time to consider industry input before it is discussed further.

Chatter box

- **Digital Discounts at the Pump:** On Monday, Sheinbaum announced the federal government has reached an agreement with banks and voucher companies to reduce digital payment fees at gas stations, effective May 1 through October 31, 2026. The measure is designed to help contain fuel prices for consumers amid volatile international oil prices. The core change is the elimination of interchange fees — which account for roughly 80% of transaction costs — on debit and credit card payments. This translates to average savings of 2.57 pesos per debit transaction and 7.45 pesos per credit

transaction. Voucher fees are also reduced: to zero on open networks, and by 1.10 pesos per transaction on closed networks. Implementation will be automatic, requiring no action from consumers or gas stations. The agreement involves the Finance Ministry, Banxico, the banking regulator (CNBV), the Mexican Banking Association, and voucher companies. The government also signalled further measures to reduce cash use in the sector, reporting that nearly half of fuel purchases are currently paid in cash.

- **Navy Nets a CJNG Kingpin:** A top leader of the Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG), Audias Flores Silva, known as “El Jardinero”, was arrested in Nayarit on Monday in an operation carried out by Mexican navy special forces following 19 months of surveillance. “The operation was carried out surgically, without the need to fire a single shot, with no fatalities, no injuries, and no collateral damage” according to the navy; U.S. intelligence was also credited with helping to track the cartel leader. Security analysts considered El Jardinero a contender for leadership of the CJNG following the death of El Mencho, and the U.S. government had offered a US \$5 million reward for his capture. US Ambassador Ronald Johnson hailed the arrest as an “important step against those who profit from fentanyl and generate violence in our communities” and recognized Mexico’s federal security ministry and navy for “courage and commitment”. This capture comes in the thick of national debate about the extent of covert U.S. involvement in law enforcement actions in Mexico, sparked by the deaths of two CIA agents in a car accident following a raid on a clandestine drug lab in Chihuahua last week. The foreign ministry sent a letter of protest to Ambassador Johnson insisting that Mexico’s sovereignty must be respected and that the federal government had not been informed of the intelligence officers’ participation in the operation. Chihuahua’s attorney general, César Jáuregui, confirmed his resignation on Monday night, which he said would “allow the investigations to proceed with autonomy, speed and thoroughness and restore public trust”. Governor Maru Campos has been in hot water since the story broke and she announced the establishment of a special unit to investigate the case on Friday. Her scheduled appearance before the Senate on Tuesday morning has been cancelled (Jáuregui was also called upon to testify).
- **CDMX Housing Debate Deferred:** Mayor Clara Brugada’s proposal to elevate the Law on Fair, Reasonable and Affordable Rents into Mexico City’s Constitution is more substantive than just capping rent increases; it is an attempt to move housing policy into the category of permanent State obligation. The package rests on four pillars: pegging rent increases to inflation, expanding affordable housing through public land policy and social housing reserves, creating a public body to mediate landlord-tenant disputes, and recognising a right to remain in one’s community in the face of displacement. In a city where two million people are renters, where poorer households spend close to half their income on housing, and where rental costs in some areas have risen by more than 30 percent in just a few years, the government is arguing that the market has stopped producing anything one might reasonably describe as balanced.

Critics have focused less on the bill's intent than on the risks of the design: without more housing construction, clearer urban regulation and the right incentives for formal rental investment, rent controls may ease pressure in the short term while worsening scarcity over time. Opposition figures and market analysts have warned that badly calibrated State-enforced limits could discourage investment, reduce the rental stock or push landlords towards tighter requirements for tenants. Even sympathetic voices in the local Congress have stressed that the right to housing must remain compatible with legal certainty for property owners and investors. That, in the end, is the real test. By starting with a constitutional reform, Brugada has given the initiative a more structural tone, but has also delayed the substantive legislative fight until September

- **A Taxpayer-Friendly Reversal:** A reform published on April 9 amending Article 141 of the Federal Tax Code reverses the November 2025 rule that had forced taxpayers challenging a tax assessment to secure the fiscal interest first through a cash deposit certificate at Banco del Bienestar, before other forms of guarantee could even be considered. The new regulation restores the previous system, under which taxpayers may choose freely among the legally recognised forms of guarantee. In practical terms, the state has stepped back from a model that treated liquidity strain as part of tax enforcement and returned to one that gives taxpayers more room to structure their defence, without first parking cash where the government dictates.

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