

# OUR VOICE

Since Mexico's elections, the new presidential team headed by Enrique Peña Nieto of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) has been readying itself to take office December 1. According to Federal Electoral Institute official figures (see [www.ife.org.mx](http://www.ife.org.mx)), more than 50 million votes were cast, 38 percent of which went to the victor, followed by 31.6 percent for Andrés Manuel López Obrador, backed by the different left organizations, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), the Labor Party (PT), and the Citizens' Movement Party (PMC).

Undoubtedly, the incumbent National Action Party's plunge to third place on the national spectrum with 25.4 percent of the votes has been a debacle that has led its leaders to talk about the need to reorganize the party from the bottom up. After heading the democratic transition for the last 12 years, spiking violence in Mexico and the government strategy for fighting organized crime determined the citizenry's decision to make the elections a referendum on the PAN, represented by Felipe Calderón.

It is necessary to underline that the presidential election returns were emphatically questioned by the left parties, organized together in what was called the Progressive Movement, which used every legal mechanism at their disposal to nullify the vote. López Obrador himself called on his followers to engage in civil disobedience, arguing the purchase of votes and fraudulent practices, and even questioning the legitimacy of electoral authorities, demanding the nullification of the elections.

As a result, July and August were tense nationwide until the Federal Electoral Tribunal ruled that the elections had been valid; in addition, the new federal legislators took office last September 1, with a very favorable position for the left parties that, taken together, became the second-largest congressional caucus.

Pressure began to drop particularly when López Obrador announced his intention of creating a new party, the Movement for National Regeneration (Morena), yet again sowing a seed of political division in the ranks of the country's progressive forces. In this context, Fernando Dworak's article in this issue allows us to look more closely at the characteristics of the political culture that permeate the way legislators behave in Mexico. Particularly outstanding is his criticism of legislators' short-term vision and the enormous mistrust of the citizenry that make this branch of government rather more symbolic than effective in efforts to take the nation forward.

Considering the influence that civil society organizations have acquired as agents of change, Mike Aiken's article contrasts the experience of two particularly distinct political milieus: that of Anglo-Saxon countries and that of Latin American nations. Noting formal democracy's incapacity to respond to the public's needs, Aiken reviews several interpretations of the concept of civil society, discussing its capacity for generating a civic culture that can build a decisive bridge to representative democracy.

This issue's "Society" and "Economy" sections move through the consequences violence continues to have in our country. Hilda García, in "Society," characterizes the Caravan for Peace headed by poet Javier Sicilia as a praiseworthy effort to raise awareness in the United States about both

nations' co-responsibility for dealing with drug use and the growing empowerment of organized crime. She notes that Mexican civil society seeks to warn about the war conditions in several parts of the country, something not recognized as such despite the human tragedy they have brought about. The scant response to the caravan's tour speaks to a palpable indifference in the United States that obliges social activists to persevere in opening up new channels in their search for solidarity.

For her part, researcher Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera displays her experience with the issue of organized crime. She sketches us a paradox: although the number of victims of the so-called "war against drugs" continues to rise, economic indicators show that Mexico continues to grow. Her analysis recognizes the dramatic events in different parts of Mexico's North, and she narrates the diversification of the cartels' activities, now operating like multinational corporations.

Of course, we could not ignore the issues that will have an impact on the U.S. presidential elections, since the outcome will undoubtedly have repercussions for Mexico. Two CISAN researchers examine this unprecedented scenario in which the gap between Obama and Mitt Romney has closed significantly during the weeks of the presidential debates. José Luis Valdés-Ugalde underlines the impact of globalization on this process, as well as the effect of the emergence of the Tea Party inside the Republican Party, representing its extreme right wing. He considers that this has disrupted the GOP's capacity to build the internal equilibrium needed to win the election. His analysis incorporates variables of internal and external politics that are undoubtedly decisive in this setting. Paz Consuelo Márquez-Padilla's article is also obligatory reading for completing reflections on this issue, since she deals with the importance of the Latino vote and the dilemma of the pending immigration reform.

Mexico's cuisine is particularly significant for this issue, taking up a substantial part of our "Art and Culture" section, celebrating the fact that in 2010, the UNESCO included it on its List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Through five exceptional contributions, we invite our readers to familiarize themselves with the diversity and capability of our gastronomy to build bridges between Mexico's history, tradition, and identity markers.

In addition to this spectrum of specific themes that this issue of *Voices of Mexico* offers for your consideration, the importance that energy has acquired globally and regionally led us to dedicate our "Special Section" to its meticulous analysis. Coordinated by Rosío Vargas, as we move through its pages, we are alerted to the choices Mexico faces in the domain of oil production and electricity generation, as well as the need to strengthen new alternative forms of energy and to understand the strategic mark that geo-politics stamps on this sphere of activity.

I conclude adding my voice to that which Irma Delgado expresses in her article: our oil belongs to the people of Mexico. From my standpoint, it is completely impossible to build a future in my country based on equity, inclusion, and social justice if we renounce this cornerstone of our sovereignty.

*Silvia Núñez García*  
Director of CISAN