

Mexico Program Summary

Since 1997, the International Republican Institute (IRI) has worked in Mexico to enhance the development of this important democracy. IRI works with political parties of diverse ideological backgrounds, state and local elected officials, and civil society groups.

Political Parties

IRI works with Mexico's three main political parties, the National Action Party (PAN), the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) to support improvements in democratic processes within each party and encourage all parties to become more transparent and inclusive. Ultimately these reforms help increase competitiveness, inclusiveness and connectivity with voters on issues of importance.

IRI draws upon its international networks to assist Mexican political parties develop their internal structures. Recently, IRI convened international experts from the Netherlands, Chile, Spain and the United States with their Mexican counterparts to discuss primary election systems. The experts discussed best practices for democratizing parties' structures, primary systems and internal party rules that are conducive to effective political organizations. The seminars and one-on-one consultations produced significant results. First, the PAN created a national Elections Committee to ensure equality and transparency in the selection and election of candidates for public office at all levels of government. Second, IRI's work enabled both the PAN and PRI parties to register new members through the Internet, replacing the long and complicated membership processes that had existed for decades.

At the request of party leadership, the Institute has also supported the development of issue-based platforms to address Mexicans' most pressing concerns. To facilitate improved communication between the parties and the voting population, IRI focuses its training sessions on developing effective campaign strategies and media outreach techniques. Training topics include using polling data to inform political stakeholders about citizen priorities, conducting effective grassroots outreach, using new media technologies in campaigns and organizational planning.

Democratic Governance

As it does throughout the world, IRI places great emphasis on improving democratic governance in Mexico. IRI launched its governance program in 2008 in the state of Oaxaca, partnering with two municipalities, San Jacinto Amilpas and San Baltazar Chichicapam. With support from the National Endowment for Democracy, IRI provided those municipal governments with technical assistance to improve their responsiveness to citizen needs and enhance the overall quality of municipal service delivery. These programs provide public officials with timely opinion research on citizen priorities, train public officials on how to implement mechanisms for transparency and improve the quality and frequency of communication between governments and their constituents. Additionally, the Institute has helped to foster greater citizen interest and participation in areas such as municipal budget-making, public safety and economic development. Earlier this year, IRI expanded its governance program to the state of Morelos and to the municipalities of Cuernavaca and Huixquilucan, where the Institute continues to focus on institutional capacity building, transparency and promoting two-way communication between government and citizens.

Civil Society

Informed and interested citizens play a critical role in the democratic process, and so IRI supports civil society organizations that promote greater involvement in political- and social-dialogue, especially among traditionally

marginalized sectors of society, such as indigenous populations and youth. In the months preceding the July 2009 legislative elections, for example, IRI helped civil society organizations in Oaxaca and Mexico City organize campaigns to register young indigenous voters. To further encourage youth participation in the political process, IRI initiated programs in Oaxaca, Puebla and Mexico City to educate young citizens on their voting rights, as well as the value of their vote. Partners in this project included civil society organizations such as *Movimiento por Oaxaca* (Movement for Oaxaca), *Inculca Valores* (Instill Values), and Mexico's Federal Institute of Elections.

