



Checking. Reinvented.

SEARCH

11:11 AM PDT, June 20, 2007

[JOBS](#) [CARS](#) [REAL ESTATE](#) [APARTMENTS](#) [SHOPPING](#) | [WEATHER](#) [TRAFFIC](#)

World News

Print E-mail story Most e-mailed Change text size

HOME
[MyLATimes](#)
[Site Map](#)

World
[Africa](#)
[Asia](#)
[Europe](#)
[Latin America](#)
[Middle East](#)

NEWS
[California | Local](#)
[National](#)
[World](#)
[Entertainment News](#)
[Business](#)
[Sports](#)
[Politics](#) **NEW**
[Opinion](#)
[Columnists](#)
[Print Edition](#)

[Calendarlive](#)
[Travel](#)
[West Magazine](#)
[Home & Garden](#)
[Health](#)
[Food](#)
[L.A. Wheels](#)
[Books](#)
[Image](#)
[Obituaries](#)
[Crossword, Sudoku](#)
[All Sections](#)
[Corrections](#)

BUY, SELL & MORE
[Jobs](#)
[Cars](#)
[Real Estate](#)
[Apartments](#)
[Personals](#)
[Deals at Local Stores](#)
[Coupons](#)
[Newspaper Ads](#)

PLACE AN AD
[LAT Media Group](#)
[latimes.com](#)

MEMBER SERVICES
[Sign Up](#)
[Log In](#)
[Help](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[L.A. Times Archives](#)

HOME DELIVERY
[Customer Support](#)
[Subscribe](#)

Tension Builds Over Mexico Vote

By Hector Tobar, Richard Boudreaux and Carlos Martínez, Times Staff Writers
8:47 AM PDT, July 5, 2006



PHOTO GALLERY
Waiting for the Final Count



GRAPHIC
Presidential results in Mexico
[click to enlarge](#)



PHOTO GALLERY
Election Day

Related Stories

- [PRD Backers Left Feeling Cheated](#)
- [Weak Showing Will Complicate Victor's Task of Uniting Nation](#)

MEXICO CITY -- The official count of votes in Mexico's increasingly fractious presidential election began today, with the two leading contenders separated by less than 0.6%.

Already, disputes are emerging over how the tally should proceed. A final result could come late in the day or in the coming days.

Leftist candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador trails by a narrow margin in the last preliminary count of votes with some 1 million votes not tallied. He called on his supporters to act as unofficial observers at the 300 regional election offices where the tally sheets from more than 130,000 polling stations were to be counted.

Conservative rival Felipe Calderon accused Lopez Obrador's Democratic Revolution Party, or PRD, of attempting to tamper with the process by requesting that individual ballot boxes be opened and the votes inside counted anew. The opening of the boxes is allowed under the law in cases in which there is a dispute among party representatives about the polling station tally sheets.

But Federal Electoral Tribunal officials said opening all the boxes would throw the count into chaos.

The left-leaning newspaper La Jornada reported that Calderon's National Action Party has instructed its representatives at the counting centers to resist the opening of ballot boxes.

Today, Lopez Obrador said the vote tally registered in the preliminary count at 50,000 polling stations exceeded the number of voters registered at the stations, the latest in a series of allegations of irregularities.

The dispute comes amid increasing signs that Lopez Obrador's campaign will seek to mobilize its followers for protests if the result does not go his way.

Late Tuesday, election officials added the 2.5 million votes to the public count. The new figures were released after Lopez

Obrador charged Monday that more than 3 million votes had been "lost" from the preliminary tallies released by the electoral tribunal.

The Calderon campaign insisted that the final outcome was not in doubt.

"The general tendencies and the result will not change," Calderon advisor Arturo Sarukhan said. "Felipe Calderon is today the president-elect of Mexico With or without these 3 million votes, the result will not change."

But leaders of Lopez Obrador's PRD, said election officials had committed a serious error by leading Mexicans to believe that nearly all the votes had been counted.

"It seems to me very grave, and unforgivable, that a fact of this nature was not released to the public," said Jesus Ortega, Lopez Obrador's campaign coordinator.

Tuesday's developments were the latest twist in an already strange saga pitting two candidates on opposite ends of the ideological divide. The vote is the closest in Mexican history.

On election night, both of Mexico's major television networks said their exit polls showed a statistical tie. Two hours after the polls closed, electoral tribunal President Luis Carlos Ugalde said an official "quick count" based on a survey of 7% of the polling stations also showed the race too close to call. Minutes later, Lopez Obrador and Calderon each claimed victory.

Ugalde reminded Mexicans in a television interview Tuesday that the preliminary count

advertisement

Call 1-888-999-9844
or click here > **LEARN MORE**

UNIVERSITY OF Redlands
RANKED AMONG THE 10 BEST UNIVERSITIES!

ELECTION in MEXICO

- Candidates, Polls, Timeline
- Complete Pre- and Post-Election Coverage

More World News

- [Israeli launches first military action in Gaza Strip since Hamas took control](#)
- [U.S.-Iraqi offensive yields results](#)
- [Second chance for Abbas and Olmert?](#)

[Most Viewed](#) [Most E-mailed](#) [Related News](#)

advertisement

issued by the institute had no legal standing.

"We still do not have a winner," Ugalde said, adding that there was never any intent to hide the vote result from the public.

Officials decided long ago to keep the votes from polling stations with irregularities separate, Ugalde said. His office did not inform the public that the preliminary tally was more than 3 million short because the tribunal's role is "not to calm, raise or satisfy expectations," he said. "We have to act with responsibility, and that's what we did."

At a news conference Tuesday, leaders of the PRD repeated and elaborated on Lopez Obrador's charges of irregularities in the preliminary count.

Campaign chief Ortega said results from 13,086 polling stations -- slightly more 10% of the total -- were not included in the initial count released by election officials.

Party leaders said results from many stations in the states of Jalisco, Sonora and Guanajuato, strongholds of Calderon's National Action Party, appeared more than once in the preliminary results.

Cesar Augusto Morones Servin, a pollster hired by the PRD, said fewer votes were counted in the presidential race than in the races for congressional deputies and senators. Mexicans were voting for all three. Blank or "null" ballots are included in the vote total, and all three categories should have had the same number of votes, Morones said.

While PRD officials were suggesting that they had ample evidence for a challenge of the results, the candidate who finished third conceded defeat.

Preliminary results showed Roberto Madrazo of the Institutional Revolutionary Party finished 13 percentage points behind the two front-runners. Madrazo reversed the declaration he made Monday that he would challenge the results in court.

"We've completed a very detailed survey of the polling reports and we recognize the result is not favorable to us," Madrazo said. The third-place finish was the worst for the party since its founding in the wake of the 1910 Mexican Revolution.

Lopez Obrador and the PRD said Tuesday that they would respect the result of a free and fair election. But they made it clear that they were not yet convinced the vote had been conducted according to democratic standards. And they would not discount calling for public protests after the official count was complete.

"Do not doubt that we will defend our rights and that we will fight a battle to ensure the legitimacy of the electoral process," PRD President Leonel Cota said.

Suspicion among Lopez Obrador's supporters was heightened Monday when the investigative magazine Proceso, citing police intelligence sources, reported that senior Interior Ministry officials had attempted to shape media coverage on election night.

Ministry officials called the news directors at Mexico's two leading television networks and requested that they not broadcast the results of their exit polls, Proceso reported.

Interior Minister Carlos Abascal did not deny making such calls, though he said Mexico's media were free of the government controls of the recent past. The networks did not report the specific figures from their exit poll results out of a sense of responsibility, he said.

Abascal made several oblique references to Lopez Obrador, without naming him, and insisted on the need for all parties to respect the official count. He noted that during the campaign, all parties signed an accord pledging to honor the results.

"We insist that the electoral process has to be absolutely respected, because it was transparent," Abascal said. "It is characteristic of democracy to have argument and passionate rivalry, but it is also characteristic of democracy to submit unconditionally to the referee and the result."



Shot dead in 1536

Archeologists identify earliest documented gunshot victim in Americas.

"Grade: A all the way!"

"High-octane action!"



Find the right car for you.™



