

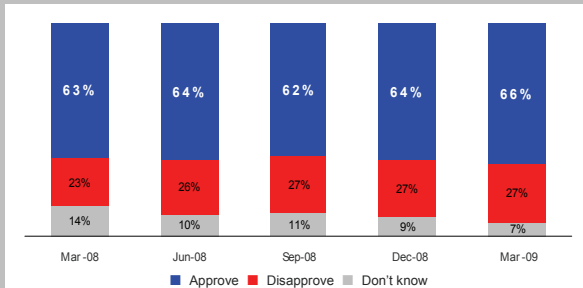
Alan Stoga, President
Daniel Wilson, Managing Director and editor

Polls

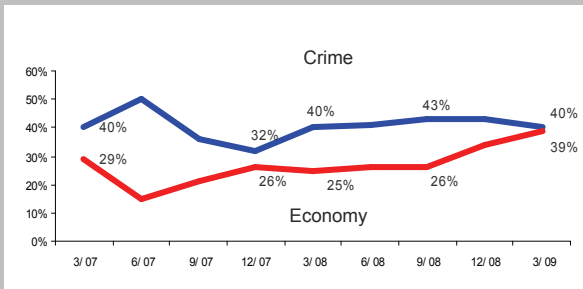
Calderón popularity holds

A *Reforma* national survey (3/1) shows **President Calderón** sustaining, and even increasing, his high approval ratings; 68% of respondents approve of his performance, and 27% disapprove. His overall rating was 6.8. At the same time, economic concerns are overtaking security as voters' principal preoccupation for the first time in this presidency, but with important class and regional variations. Middle class voters see security as more important (by 46-38), while working class voters see the economy as more important (by 40-32). Northerners are more concerned about security, while those in the other regions see the economy as priority.

In general, do you approve or disapprove of the job that Felipe Calderón is doing as President?



In your opinion, what is the country's biggest problem?



Key Dates

1/31-3/11: Federal 'pre-campaign' period

3/14-29: Major parties select candidates for Congress

4/6: Start of state election campaigns *

4/30: End of regular Congressional session

4/29-5/2: Deadline for registering candidates for Chamber of Deputies

5/5: Start of federal election campaigns

7/5: National congressional, 6 gubernatorial, and 5 other local elections.

* May vary by state

More troops to Chihuahua; senior state judge kidnapped

The Security Cabinet met in Juárez to signal their determination to end the violence in the state of Chihuahua. Government Secretary **Fernando Gómez Mont** pledged "to yield not one centimeter" to the gangs. The ministers agreed to deploy an additional 5,000 troops in the state, to join the 2,500 already there, and the first 3,200 soldiers reached Juárez over the weekend. The day after the meeting, the state's top criminal court judge, **Flor Mireya Aguilar Casas**, was kidnapped on her way to work. She was released a few hours later, after negotiations led by the state chief justice and payment of a ransom. (Excelsior 2/26-7, Universal 3/2)

PRI - PAN battle over blame for spread of drug trafficking

The week after President Calderón reportedly berated the PRI governors in private for their lack of action, PAN party head **Germán Martínez** put a video on YouTube criticizing the PRI governors for failing to tackle drug trafficking. PRI Secretary General **Jesús Murillo Karam** called his statements "stupid," and said everyone needed to work together without searching for scapegoats. Trying to calm the waters, Government Secretary **Gómez Mont** the next day said, "The violence has been happening for a long time.... Evidently, there were omissions during the last *sexenio* [of **Vicente Fox**]." Columnist **Salvador García Soto**, who broke the story of the Calderón-PRI meeting, wrote that military intelligence had prepared a list of eight PRI *narcogovernors* who received campaign contributions from the cartels or gave the cartels freedom of action in their states. (Universal 2/24, Excelsior 2/25)

IFE scores 'own goal' with salary raise

Federal Electoral Institute board members, already among the highest paid public officials in Mexico, voted themselves a 46% raise to Ps. 330,000 per month. IFE head **Leonardo Valdés** argued that they were only adhering to the Constitution. The board reversed the salary hike the next day, after outcries from all sides, but the Official Diary published the salary increase as originally passed. Columnist **Leo Zuckermann** writes, "This is happening in a context when nobody is defending the IFE. ... Those who support the 2007 electoral reform think that the IFE counselors are doing a bad job implementing the new law. Those who criticize the new law ... think the IFE is acting in a ridiculous manner with their resolutions.... [The salary increase] will be used by everyone to hit the Institute." (Excelsior 2/26)

PRD declares 'financial emergency'

Party president **Jesús Ortega** said that the PRD was practically broke, with Ps. 713 million in debt, including Ps. 130 million in fines owed to the IFE. The leadership is trying to raise Ps. 25 million in donations from party militants to solve the immediate liquidity problem, and will borrow an additional Ps. 100 million to get through the campaign. An audit has been ordered for the last five years, when the party was controlled by AMLO's allies, to discover where the money went. (Universal, Excelsior 3/1)

Senate dawdles on asset forfeiture law

The Senate postponed consideration for another week of the government's proposed asset forfeiture law as a tool to tackle organized crime, because of opposition from the PRI and PRD. Senator **Pedro Joaquín Coldwell**, the head of the Commission on Constitutional Provisions, said, "It's a complicated law... we have to be careful not to affect the rights of third parties." (Reforma 2/26)