

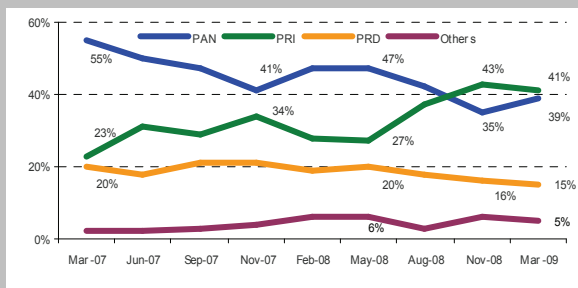
Alan Stoga, President
Daniel Wilson, Managing Director and editor

Polls

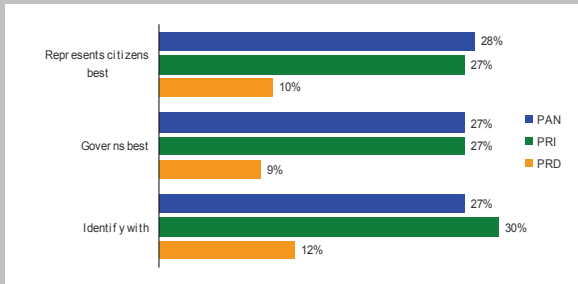
Congressional race tightens

A GEA-ISA national survey released last week showed that voter preferences for the July congressional election have tightened. Excluding undecided voters (31% of the total), the PRI lead had fallen to 2 points from 8 points last November. The PAN and PRI are running neck and neck in terms of other indicators of voter preference. The PRD continues to lose ground. (www.isa.com.mx)

If you had to vote today for federal deputy, for which party would you vote?



Which party represents the interests of citizens best in Congress? Who will govern best? Which party do you most identify with?



Key Dates

- 3/14-29: Major parties select candidates for Congress
- 3/25-26: Hillary Clinton visit
- 4/1-2: Janet Napolitano visit
- 4/6: Start of state election campaigns *
- 4/16-4/17: President Obama visit
- 4/18-19: Summit of the Americas, Trinidad
- 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

Top operator for Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas captured

The authorities captured Sigifredo Nájera, 24, known as "El Canicón," who is said to be the top operator for the **Gulf Cartel** and their **Los Zetas** paramilitary wing in Nuevo Leon. Nájera is wanted for the killings of nine soldiers last November, as well as for the grenade attacks on the U.S. consulate and Televisa studios in Monterrey. The *Templo Mayor* column eulogized the government's actions: "The capture of the leader of Los Zetas in Nuevo León ... makes clear one more time that in the war against the narcos the Army today is very different from previous administrations. First is effectiveness. In just a few months, the troops have struck hard at organized crime with high level arrests such as 'El Hummer' and 'El Vicentillo,' during operations that reflect intelligence work and a new ability to carry out urban missions that, so far, have left civilians unharmed. The second is even handedness. The Army, as never before, has been hitting the two strongest criminal gangs equally, with the rhythm, 'Gulf [cartel],' 'Sinaloa [cartel],' 'Gulf,' 'Sinaloa,' in a way that almost seems planned." (Reforma 3/20, 22)

PAN leader blasts PRI on drug trafficking

Speaking at the annual banker's convention in Acapulco, PAN party president **Germán Martínez** blasted the PRI: "It's time for the PRI to define fully if it will support the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime. ... President Felipe Calderón and the PAN are on the side of security. We want to know what side the PRI is on." The PANista, who was sharing the podium with PRI leader **Beatriz Paredes**, said, "The old political culture of the country, the culture of deals, of accommodation, isn't the way to confront organized crime, nor will it generate a viable and durable atmosphere for public peace." In her response, Paredes called Martínez's statements a "lamentable spectacle" and "very damaging to democracy." (Proceso 3/19)

Pemex refinery decision pushed back

Instead of announcing the location of the new US\$10 billion refinery on the anniversary of the nationalization of the oil industry as expected, **President Calderón** announced a series of public forums to examine the merits of the different locations, with a final decision on April 15th. Governors of ten states have been lobbying for the refinery, which will be the largest public works project of the *sexenio*. PRI Senator **Francisco Labastida** called the forums "a waste of time," and PRI and PRD congressmen said they would refuse to participate. It is widely reported that locating the new refinery in the PRI-controlled state of Hidalgo is the clear winner on technical grounds. (Reforma 3/18-19)

Manlio calls on President to 'hitch up his pants'

PRI Senate leader **Manlio Fabio Beltrones** called on the President to take the decisions that the Executive had to take, including the location of the refinery, the repatriation of convicted French kidnapper **Florence Cassez**, and whether to allow partial U.S. ownership of Citigroup subsidiary Banamex. "The three decisions require that President Felipe Calderón hitch up his pants once and for all.... We don't want more doubts, more indecision," he said. (Reforma 3/19, Universal 3/20)

Ebrard hedges on next PRD candidate

Mexico City mayor **Marcelo Ebrard** raised eyebrows by saying that the PRD "has no natural candidate" for 2012. On the other hand, Ebrard appeared at a rally in Mexico City's Zocalo that was a kickoff for **AMLO's** efforts to enroll 15 million supporters for his 2012 bid. (Universal 3/21)