

# Mexico: Ex-Ruling Party Rebounds in Local Election

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The party that governed Mexico for 71 consecutive years has rebounded in local elections, returns showed on Monday, and a poll had it jumping into the lead for next year's national congressional vote.

Nearly complete results from the southern state of Guerrero showed the Institutional Revolutionary Party recapturing mayorships in the major tourist centers of Acapulco and Zihuatanejo while holding onto the state capital, Chilpancingo.

The party known as the PRI appears to have benefited from splits in the leftist opposition and by the government's struggle with drug violence and a slowing economy.

The PRI has struggled since losing its seven-decade grip on Mexico's presidency in 2000. It finished third in the 2006 presidential and congressional races. But a poll published Monday by El Universal newspaper showed a clear PRI lead for the 2009 congressional elections.

Forty-four percent of those polled in late September said they would vote for the PRI if congressional elections were held now. President Felipe Calderon's conservative National Action Party was favored by 34 percent, and the leftist Democratic Revolution Party by 19 percent. The PRI and National Action had been tied at 40 two months ago.

The poll by the Buendia & Laredo company surveyed 1,000 people face-to-face nationwide and had a margin of error of 3.5 percentage points.

The big loser in the Guerrero vote was Democratic Revolution, which finished just behind National Action in the 2006 presidential race and won the state's governorship in 2005.

Recent feuds nearly split the party and its leftist coalition.

The PRI's Manuel Anorve won Acapulco, the state's largest city, with just 34 percent of the vote. Two leftists backed by rival factions in the Democratic Revolution coalition split 62 percent of the vote.

The PRI won in 14 of the state's 28 legislative districts — up from 10 three years ago — while Democratic Revolution and its allies captured 13, down from 18 in the current legislature. Calderon's party, a minor force in Guerrero, won one seat.