

The legislative branch of government has functioned basically as a rubber stamp for presidential decisions. However, since the beginning of 1987, changes to the electoral laws have somewhat increased the political power of Congress, thereby transforming the Chamber of Deputies into a debating forum. At present, the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) has 263 seats and the opposition, 237. Since any constitutional reform requires 332 votes, for the first time in history the PRI needs the opposition's support to make major legislative changes.

State governors are elected for six-year terms; and even though they exercise considerable local power, they are, in practice, subservient to the president. (The first opposition governor was elected in Baja California in July 1989.) State legislators, mayors and municipal councils are elected for three-year terms and are, in turn, strongly influenced by their state governors.