

System of Government

Mexico is a federal republic divided into 31 states plus the federal district, which comprises Mexico City and the surrounding areas. The federal government delegates relatively little authority, except certain public services, to state and local governments.

Federal executive power rests with the President of the Republic, who is both head of state and head of government. Elected by direct popular vote for a single term of six years, the President's parents must be of Mexican birth.

Twenty Cabinet ministers assist the President with the executive functions. Executive power extends to a number of state-owned enterprises and agencies which are important to the Mexican economy. Among the most important are *Petróleos Mexicanos* (PEMEX), the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE) and the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS). The executive branch also controls the Department of the Federal District (DDF).

Legislative power is the responsibility of the National Congress, which is divided into two chambers. The Chamber of Deputies has 500 members elected for a three-year period. Senators are elected for six-year terms. Reforms introduced in 1993 doubled the number of senators from 64 to 128 beginning with the August 1994 elections, including one-fourth elected on a proportional representation basis.

The judicial branch consists of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation. Its judges have lifetime tenure and are appointed by the President of the Republic, subject to ratification by the Senate.

While there are many political parties in Mexico, the PRI has dominated the political system since it was founded in 1929. All presidents since then, and the majority of deputies and senators, have come from the PRI. The current president, Ernesto Zedillo, took office on December 1, 1994, receiving just over 50 percent of the vote. The National Action Party (PAN) took 27 percent of the vote and the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) took 17 percent.