

**El legislador a examen. El debate sobre
la reelección legislativa en México**

(The Legislator under Examination. The Debate about
Reelection of the Legislature in Mexico)

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ARE REELECTION OF THE LEGISLATURE
AND DEMOCRACY INCOMPATIBLE?

One of the most intense recent debates in the framework of Mexico's democratic transition is about the possibility of reestablishing consecutive reelection of legislators in both chambers of Congress. This book presents a balanced review of the positions and political situations throughout the post-



revolutionary period promoting this measure (one such attempt was Vicente Lombardo Toledano's bill presented in the 1960s that was frozen in the Senate), together with the arguments for prohibiting it from 1934 to the present. Emma Campos and Maité Careaga deal with these issues in their excellent contributions.

The study also presents us with important evidence about what Congress's behavior would be if reelection were reestablished, looking at professionalization, certainty and effective decision-making in committee work and support and advisory services. Clearly, what stand out are the risks of falling into routine, corruption and general non-cooperation that would block parliamentary work. In that sense, the anti-reelectionists (among them, outstanding figures like the jurists Francisco José de Andrea or Jorge Carpizo) emphasize the lack of a solid party system and of an electorate that acts based on clearly democratic, rational information.

However, when examining moves during Calles' "Maximato" period in Mexico to prevent immediate reelection of

legislators, in Jeffrey Weldon's essay, the measure seems aimed to introduce discipline in exchange for sacrificing effectiveness. The data also shows that conditions for legislators' achieving continuity between 1917 and 1933 were not precisely optimum. But it is obvious that the new controls produced greater discipline and averted the creation of a parliamentary class. This trend was reinforced when the principles of proportional representation were introduced, since these seats are used to "reward" people close to the party apparatus instead of tolerating regional leaders or strongmen who could break up existing loyalties to the party leadership.

With this logic, the thought of a Congress dominated by reelection is not in and of itself an answer to all the structural reforms that Mexico's legislative branch still needs. If we take into account the valuable comparative experience that Fernando F. Dworak contributes, limited reelection (such as the U.S. case of the presidency, though not the legislature) could be a valuable reference point for separating and regulating both the steps to be taken and the depth of an eventual reform that would chase away any hint of dictatorship accompanying these kinds of measures. For this reason, Andrés Mejía's review of the Ecuadoran case shows us that conditions can exist for a return to reelection, as long as the uncertainty caused by forms of voting and the creation of parliamentary caucuses with a tendency to strengthen discipline and the institutional cohesion of Congress itself can be overcome.

The Latin American peculiarity of strong presidents and weak congresses overwhelmingly marks the climate of skepticism for the prospects and conditions for reestablishing reelection in the Mexican case. Thus, it is reasonable to think that the possibility of such a measure being immediately approved undoubtedly requires the action of a strong majority, not only with cooperative voting by diverse political forces, but also to break through the wall historically created by public opinion that has dominated local political and academic debate. This is why the book compiled by Fernando F. Dworak is a splendid example of an intelligent collective exercise that should without a doubt aspire to receive an equally serious and responsible answer from its anti-reelectionist adversaries.

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