

***IMMIGRANT VOTING IN HOME-COUNTRY ELECTIONS:  
POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF EXTENDING THE  
FRANCHISE TO EXPATRIATE MEXICANS<sup>1</sup>***

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**Draft: May 5, 2003**

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<sup>1</sup> A grant from the University of California's Institute for Labor and Employment and support from UCLA's Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies made this research possible. We would like to thank David Heer of UCSD, Jorge Santibañez and Jesus Montenegro of El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF), and Susan Alva of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA) for their assistance with designing and implementing the 2001 Los Angeles County Mexican Immigrant Legal Status Survey (LA-MILSS).

## **Immigrant Voting in Home-Country Elections: Potential Consequences of Extending the Franchise to Expatriate Mexicans**

**Abstract:** Employing random household data from the July 2001 Los Angeles County Mexican Immigrant Legal Status Survey (LA-MILSS), we estimate that there were almost 60,000 Mexican-born adults residing in Los Angeles County who voted in the 2000 Mexican presidential election and more than 280,000 who intend to vote in the 2006 elections. Regression results suggest that more education, more frequent border crossing, and belonging to a political party increased the probability of having voted in the 2000 election. Conversely, voting was negatively impacted by employment, length of residency in the United States, unauthorized residency status and remitting money to Mexico. Although work and party membership appear to have had the same directional effects on 2006 voting intentions, religious and remitting behavior as well as having voted in 2000 appears to have had a positive – and speaking English well a negative – impact on voting expectations. Older authorized resident males with a high school diploma, who were relatively religious, have lived in the United States a fewer number of years, and were not members of the PRI, are estimated to have been more likely to have voted for Vincente Fox (PAN) than another candidate in the 2000 elections. Only religiosity and duration of residency, however, remain strong predictors of having a PAN preference in the future. Lastly, applying voting prediction parameters to the adult foreign-born Mexican population using the 2002 March Current Population Surveys (CPS) for the United States suggests how implementation of a Mexican absentee ballot system would impact 2006 Mexican presidential election outcomes. [Word Count = 252].

## INTRODUCTION

Reiterating his 2000 campaign promise to ensure that millions of expatriate Mexicans would be able to vote in future Mexican elections, President Vicente Fox vowed in a June 2002 visit to Tijuana “to allow them to vote for the 2006 elections” (Obsatz and Ortega 2002).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, some 60 nations currently permit expatriates to vote in home-country elections by mail (Hernandez 2003). But instituting the right to vote in Mexican elections by absentee ballot or permitting dual citizenship is accompanied by some potentially explosive political consequences. For instance, Rodolfo Tuirán has estimated that 8.5 million Mexicans residing in the United States will be eligible to vote in the upcoming 2006 Mexican elections (Melgar 1998). These potential expatriate voters represent approximately 14 percent of the entire Mexican voting population and could significantly alter the 2006 election outcomes if permitted to vote.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, conventional wisdom and the only systematic quantitative analysis of which we are aware (Lawson 2002) intimate that extending the franchise to Mexicans in the United States would harm the PRI and benefit the center-right National Action Party (PAN). Proffered justification for PRI and scholarly resistance to Mexican expatriate voting in home-country elections, however, is substantively collective rather than partisan. For instance, some opponents highlight one cost estimate that places the price tag for implementing the right for Mexicans residing in the United States to vote at \$76 to \$356 million (Instituto Federal Electoral 1998).<sup>4</sup> Others see permitting those not living in Mexico to vote as a direct threat to Mexican sovereignty

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<sup>2</sup> In other words, Fox promised to implement at least the first of two electoral reforms that were passed by Mexican legislators in 1996. The first would permit Mexican citizens residing abroad to vote in future elections without having to return to Mexico, and the second guaranteed “the non-loss of Mexican nationality to immigrants who became naturalized U.S. citizens.” Implementation of both laws, however, has been delayed by various constitutional and political hurdles maintained primarily by Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) legislators (Martínez-Saldaña and Pineda 2002).

<sup>3</sup> We estimate that there were 8,859,895 adult Mexicans residing in the United States in 2001 using the March 2002 Current Population Survey.

(Carpizo and Valadés 1998). Both economically and politically then, it is argued, extending the franchise to expatriate Mexicans may harm Mexico's common interests.

Rather than attempting to analyze the fiscal or political feasibility of implementing the 1996 Mexican electoral reform laws, we seek to understand factors that influence whether Mexicans residing in the United States vote in home-county elections, and the likely impact of extending the franchise on 2006 electoral outcomes.

Although Lawson's (2002) descriptive analysis suggests that increased psychological, physical and social distance from Mexico (or integration in the United States) had a negative impact on partisan attachment and a positive influence on opposition party support (e.g., the center-right PAN) among persons of Mexican ancestry/origin residing in Mexico and the United States, his regression analysis reveals that education and media messages may better explain variation between those who reported a preference for the PRI rather than another party's candidate in the 2000 Mexican elections. Interpersonal communication and exposure to media messages about politics also appear to have had an independent effect on distinguishing between those who voted for Fox and those who did not vote at all. And duration of residence in and attachment to the United States appear to have been important determinants of whether a person of Mexican ancestry/origin voted for Fox or at all.<sup>5</sup>

This paper has three objectives. First, we estimate the proportion of foreign-born Mexican adults residing in Los Angeles County who (1) were registered to vote for the 2000 Mexican presidential election, (2) were members of particular political parties, (3) voted in the 2000

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<sup>4</sup> The IFE (1998) sees these costs, as well as technological and legal issues associated with extending the franchise, as easily surmountable, however.

<sup>5</sup> Lawson (2002), however, does not highlight the impact of duration of residency or what he terms "nationality."

election, (4) voted for specific presidential candidates, and (5) stated that they intend to vote in the 2006 Mexican election.<sup>6</sup>

Second, we investigate whether individual-demographic characteristics (including unauthorized residency status and migration history), Mexico-U.S. border crossing and social integration in the United States, and Mexican political party membership influenced respondents' 2000 voting behavior and 2006 voting intentions. Specifically, we estimate the determinants of having voted in the 2000 elections and of having selected Vicente Fox rather than another presidential candidate. And we estimate factors affecting whether one reported an intention to vote in the 2006 Mexican election as well as respondents' electoral preferences.

Because unauthorized Mexican residents are not free to travel back and forth across the Mexico-U.S. border, we hypothesize that they were less likely to have voted in the 2000 elections and less likely (barring a new amnesty program and/or implementation of the 1996 electoral reforms) to vote in future Mexican elections. We accomplish our first two objectives by analyzing random household data collected in the July 2001 Los Angeles County Mexican Immigrant Legal Status Survey (LA-MILSS).

As a final step of our analysis, we apply predictors of voting behavior obtained from our 2001 LA-MILSS data to the foreign-born Mexican adult population found in the 2002 March Current Population Survey (CPS) for entire the United States to estimate how implementation of a Mexican absentee ballot system would impact future Mexican election outcomes.

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<sup>6</sup> Lawson (2002) estimates determinants of Mexican voter preference for a candidate/party alone because the Democracy through U.S. and Mexican Lenses Project data only include one preference variable.

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

### *The 2001 Los Angeles County Mexican Immigrant Legal Status Survey (LA-MILSS)*

The July 2001 Los Angeles County Mexican Immigrant Legal Status Survey (LA-MILSS) is a random sample of 456 households in which at least one person was born in Mexico and 829 foreign-born Mexicans who resided in Los Angeles County in July 2001. Specifically, 125 census blocks were randomly selected from 12,476 in which there were at least 20 residents and in which at least 75 percent of the population were of Hispanic (or Latino) origin according to the 2000 Census PL-94-171 data. These 125 blocks were located within 108 census tracts.<sup>7</sup> LA-MILSS interviewers were predominantly Mexican-born adult females who were provided with picture identification cards showing their affiliation with UCLA, neighborhood maps, address lists identifying which households to approach, and questionnaires in English and Spanish that had been developed and piloted by researchers from UCLA, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF) and the Coalition for Humane Immigrants Rights in Los Angeles (CHIRLA). Previous fieldwork in 1994 and in 2001 LA-MILSS pre-testing revealed that the combination of a local reputable university, a local immigrant rights organization, Mexican-born female interviewers, and a Mexican university boosted response rates – especially of sensitive questions regarding residency status and economic issues.

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<sup>7</sup> There were a total of 2,054 census tracts and 89,614 census blocks in Los Angeles County in 2000 (our sampling frame). As a proportion of this sampling frame, therefore, the 12,476 blocks with at least 20 residents and 75 percent of their populations being Latino represented approximately 14 percent of the all blocks in the county, and our sample of 125 blocks represented one percent of our 20-resident, 75-percent Latino universe. The associated 108 census tracts represented 5.3 percent of all tracts defining Los Angeles County. Our original plan to sample from census blocks with at least 50 percent of their populations being Latino was changed in light of the relationship between percent foreign-born Mexican and percent Latino observed at the PUMA level when analyzing 1990 PUMS data. We also decided to sample at the census block rather than the census tract level because our imposed sample selection

There were eight possible outcomes LA-MILSS interviewers may have encountered when arriving at the front door of a housing unit:

1. No one home (14.2%)
2. No adult home (1.6%)
3. No adult household resident born in Mexico (41.1%)
4. Appointment rescheduled for another time (0.5%)
5. Refused to answer (13.0%)
6. Agreed to be interviewed (21.5%)
7. Vacant housing unit (2.5%)
8. Housing unit non-existent (3.3%)

If no one were home (1), no adult were home (2), or a respondent indicated that another time would be better to complete the survey (4), the interviewer was instructed to proceed to the next randomly selected household on the address list and to return to that household at a later time. If no Mexican-born adult resided in the home (3) or the person opening the door refused to answer (5), then the interviewer was instructed to thank the person and not to attempt to interview that household again. Interviewers were also instructed to return to the same household no more than three times, and to record the outcome from each attempt on the same household screening form. Only if at least one adult were born in Mexico and an adult (not necessarily Mexican-born) agreed to answer the interviewers' questions was an effort made to complete questionnaires for all Mexican-born household members (6). Lastly, if the household unit were vacant (7) or did not exist (8) then the interviewer was instructed to note this and not return to that address.

The percentages in parentheses immediately following the eight possible outcomes listed above indicate what proportions of the 2,122 households that were approached for an interview resulted in each. Close to what was anticipated from our 1994 Los Angeles County Mexican Household survey, 22 percent of households approached resulted in a household roster and at least one individual-level questionnaire being completed. The total of the categories does not

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criterion of 75 percent Latino was unlikely to be as efficient at locating foreign-born Mexicans as was the

sum to 100 percent, however, because 51 (or 2.4 percent) of the screening forms were not returned to UCLA's Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies by interviewers. In sum, 456 households provided at least one completed questionnaire and a total of 829 individual-level questionnaires (or 1.82 per household) were obtained.

Dividing the sum of categories 4 and 5 (286) by the sum of 4-6 (742) and subtracting from one indicates that the household response rate of the LA-MILSS is 62 percent. Although slightly lower than average for household surveys, the LA-MILSS rate is less than disappointing given that we were surveying in relatively dense impoverished neighborhoods likely to have high proportions of unauthorized Mexican immigrants and consisting of a disproportionate number of informal housing units. Census block sample weights were computed and corrected for both block and household level non-response rates.

Finally, that we were able to obtain residency status data for 98 percent of our sample suggests respondents were comfortable answering these relatively sensitive questions of LA-MILSS interviewers. Slightly less than half (46 percent) of adult respondents admitted to residing in the United States without being a naturalized citizen, a legal permanent resident or a temporary visitor.

The LA-MILSS questionnaire consists of two parts. The first is a household roster that lists all household members at the time of the survey in July 2001. Part two of the questionnaire was administered for each foreign-born Mexican household member present or for whom the respondent thought she could provide accurate information. Specifically, there were four categories of questions: those concerning (1) Migration Experience, (2) Education, Fertility and Health, (3) Labor Market Outcomes and Social Networks, and (4) Political Participation in Mexico. For instance, there was a series of six residency status questions that were asked of each

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25 percent foreign-born Mexican criterion applied in our 1994 LA-MILSS.



foreign-born Mexican adult (n=780) to determine whether he or she was a U.S. citizen (20.1 percent), legal permanent resident (29.0 percent), non-immigrant visa holder (4.9 percent), or an unauthorized immigrant (46 percent). Of the 359 persons categorized as unauthorized immigrants, the majority (330 or 92 percent) “admitted” their residency status by disclaiming being in the country under one of the several legal categories about which we inquired. The remaining 29 (or eight percent) were categorized as unauthorized immigrant because a response for at least one residency status question was left unanswered or because a subsequent response to a residency status question conflicted with a previous one.

We also use the residency status of the household head to assign Mexican-born children a residency status. As a result, 28 of 49 children (or 57 percent) are tagged as unauthorized immigrants. In sum, 387 of 829 (or 46.7 percent) of all foreign-born Mexicans in the LA-MILSS sample are estimated to have been unauthorized immigrants.

The first of the five questions regarding political behavior asked whether an adult respondent was registered to vote in Mexico for the 2000 election (6.7 percent of all respondents did not answer this question or did not know). The second asked whether a respondent voted in the 2000 Mexican election (the non-response rate for this question is 6.2 percent). The third asked for which candidate (e.g., Fox, Labastida, Cárdenas, other) a respondent voted (non-response rate = 14.3 percent). A fourth asked whether one was a member of the PRI, PAN, PRD or another political party (non-response rate = 14.1 percent). And a final question asked whether respondents intended to vote in the 2006 Mexican election (2.1 percent of respondents did not provide a useful response to this question). The overall non-response rate for these five questions is 8.7 percent, and questions two through five are employed as our dependent variables in the analysis that follows.

### *Estimating Determinants of Expatriate Mexican Voting Behavior from Los Angeles County*

We estimate in equation [1] whether an adult Mexican immigrant  $i$ , residing in Los Angeles County in July 2001, voted in the 2000 Mexican election (VOTE2000) depending on a vector of individual  $i$ 's characteristics ( $X_i$ ), whether an individual was unauthorized to reside in the United States ( $UMI_i$ ), the number of times per year an individual crossed the Mexico-U.S. border ( $XBORDER_i$ ), the number of times remittances were sent to Mexico in 2000 ( $REMIT_i$ ), and whether an individual was a member of the PRI ( $PRIPARTY_i$ ) or PAN, PRD or other political party ( $OTHPARTY_i$ ). Equation [2] estimates whether an adult Mexican immigrant  $i$ , residing in Los Angeles County in July 2001, reported an intent to vote in the 2006 Mexican election (VOTE2006) using the same regressors in equation [1] plus VOTE2000.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{VOTE2000}_i = & X_i\beta + \_UMI_i + \_XBORDER_i + \_REMIT_i + \_PRIPARTY_i \\ & + \_OTHPARTY_i + \_i \end{aligned} \quad [1]$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{VOTE2006}_i = & X_i\beta + \_UMI_i + \_XBORDER_i + \_REMIT_i + \_PRIPARTY_i \\ & + \_OTHPARTY_i + \_VOTE2000 + \_i \end{aligned} \quad [2]$$

Equation [3] estimates the impact each of the factors in equation [1] had on the probability of not having voted ( $\text{CAND2000} = 0$ ) – or having voted for Vicente Fox ( $\text{CAND2000}=1$ ) – compared to having voted for Labastida (PRI), Cárdenas (PRD) or some other candidate ( $\text{CAND2000}=2$ ) in the 2000 Mexican elections using multinomial logit regression.<sup>8</sup> In equation

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<sup>8</sup> Thus, the base or comparison group is Mexicans residing in Los Angeles County who voted but not for Fox.

[4] we create a tripartite variable (CAND2006) that takes on one of three values in an effort to examine whether factors that influenced voting behavior in 2000 are likely to influence electoral choices in the 2006 Mexican election. Specifically, those who reported no intention to vote in the 2006 elections or reported an intent to vote but indicated no party affiliation are grouped together to represent those who had no intention to vote for a specific candidate (CAND2006=0). Those who reported an intention to vote and were either members of the PAN (CAND2006=1) or another political party (CAND2006=2) are the other two groups, and the latter (as in equation [3]) is the base or comparison group in our multinomial regression analysis.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{CAND2000}_i = & X_i\beta + \text{\_UMI}_i + \text{\_XBORDER}_i + \text{\_REMIT}_i + \text{\_PRIPARTY}_i \\ & + \text{\_OTHPARTY}_i + \text{\_}\epsilon_i \end{aligned} \quad [3]$$

$$\text{CAND2006}_i = X_i\beta + \text{\_UMI}_i + \text{\_XBORDER}_i + \text{\_REMIT}_i + \text{\_VOTE2000}_i + \text{\_}\epsilon_i \quad [4]$$

In equations [1] through [4] beta ( $\beta$ ) is a vector of parameter coefficients representing the relationship between explanatory and dependent variables, and the Greek letters alpha ( $\alpha$ ), gamma ( $\gamma$ ), delta ( $\delta$ ), thêta ( $\theta$ ) lambda ( $\lambda$ ) and phi ( $\phi$ ) represent the estimated coefficients for specific explanatory variables that directly follow them. Epsilon ( $\epsilon_i$ ) represents the residual variation in the dependent variable that is not estimated by an individual's observable characteristics. All variables are defined in Table 1.

<<< *Table 1* >>>

### *The Number and Electoral Preferences of Expatriate Mexicans Residing in the United States*

Although analyses of the determinants of Mexican voting behavior in the 2000 Mexican elections and of voting intentions for the 2006 elections among foreign-born Mexicans who resided in Los Angeles County in July 2001 provide a rough sketch of the characteristics of those who are more likely to vote in the upcoming Mexican election and who are more likely to vote for presidential candidates from particular political parties, they can tell us very little about how enabling expatriate Mexicans to vote in home-country elections will alter electoral outcomes. This is because, although approximately one-fifth of all foreign-born Mexican adults in the United States reside in Los Angeles County, we do not know how Mexicans residing in other U.S. locations will vote, or whether they will vote at all as a result of extending the franchise.

Because we do not have random data on voting behavior for Mexican immigrants from the entire United States, we apply predictors of voting behavior in the Mexican 2000 election and of 2006 voting intentions generated from the Mexican adult population in the 2001 LA-MILSS to foreign-born Mexican adults found in the 2002 March CPS. We are aware that this methodology is problematic on several fronts (e.g., applying coefficients generated from one population and in a specific location to another population and in other areas). However, this approach offers more systematic quantitative estimates of the number of Mexicans who are likely to vote in the 2006 Mexican elections, and for whom they are likely to vote, than currently exist.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Because the March CPS data do not include all the variables in our models employing the 2001 LA-MILSS data, we are limited to using only AGE, MALE, HIGHSCH, ENGWELL, MARRIED, YRSNUS, and WORK2000 in our regressions to generate predictors of likely 2006 voting behavior.

## RESULTS

### *Voting Behavior in the 2000 Mexican Election among Mexicans in Los Angeles County*

Slightly more than 38 percent (or 600,000) of all Mexican adults residing in Los Angeles County in July 2001 claimed to have been registered to vote in the 2000 Mexican elections (Table 2). Those who actually voted (approximately 59,000), however, represent a very small fraction (3.6 percent) of all Mexican adults in Los Angeles County.

<<< *Table 2* >>>

Nonetheless, there are apparent univariate differences between those who claimed to have voted in the 2000 Mexican election and those who did not. Persons who had earned a high school diploma, were married, attended at least one religious service during 2000, crossed the Mexico-U.S. border more frequently, were registered to vote in the 2000 Mexican elections and were affiliated with a political party, for instance, were more likely to have voted in the 2000 Mexican elections. Conversely, those who had resided in the United States for more years, worked or had a higher income in 2000, did not intend to be living in the United States in 2006 and remitted money to someone in Mexico during 2000 were less likely to have voted.

Among voters, 51 percent voted for Fox (PAN), 38 percent for Labastida (PRI) and 10 percent for Cárdenas (PRD). But before turning to a consideration of factors that may have influenced which candidate a voter selected in 2000, we first estimate how traditional individual characteristics, Mexico-U.S. border crossing and socioeconomic integration in the United States, and Mexican political party affiliation jointly impacted the probability of having voted. Column 1a of Table 3 suggests that socioeconomic integration in the United States and being affiliated

with a political party had larger effects on whether an expatriate Mexican residing in Los Angeles County voted in the 2000 Mexican election than more conventional individual demographic and human capital characteristics.

<<< *Table 3* >>>

Although having a high school diploma, for instance, augmented the probability of having voted by 4.6 percent, having any political party affiliation increased it by more than twice this amount (at least 11 percent depending on whether one was a member of the PRI or another party).<sup>10</sup> An additional year residing in the United States (-0.5 percent) and one less trip across the Mexico-U.S. border per year (-0.3 percent) appear at first glance to have had relatively small effects on whether someone voted in the 2000 election. These results are somewhat deceptive, however, because three other variables are capturing how residing longer in the United States, and crossing the border less, negatively affected voting. For example, having worked in 2000 reduced the likelihood of having voted by 7.8 percent, having been an unauthorized Mexican immigrant decreased it by 6.6 percent, and having remitted money to someone in Mexico in 2000 further diminished one's probability of having voted by 4.5 percent.<sup>11</sup> One implication of these results is that crossing the Mexico-U.S. border less frequently because one works in the

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<sup>10</sup> The statistically significant parameters reported in Column 1 of Table 3 are converted into probabilities by multiplying them by the mean of the dependent variable VOTE2000 (0.03559) and one minus the mean (1-0.03359). Other statistically significant parameters in Table 3 are converted similarly in column 1b (mean=0.02058) and 1c (mean=0.01564) for the dependent variable CAND2000, in column 2a (mean=0.34549) for VOTE2006, and in columns 2b (mean=0.0771) and columns 2c (mean=0.05938) for CAND2006.

<sup>11</sup> The interpretation of REMIT is based on the finding that only 2.5 percent of an estimated 869,000 Mexicans residing in Los Angeles County in July 2001 (or 53 percent of all Mexican adults) who remitted in 2000 did not send funds by mail, electronic transfer, or with friends or relatives who visited Mexico.

United States or because one is an unauthorized resident of the United States significantly reduces the probability that one votes in Mexican elections.

Turning to an analysis of factors influencing which candidate voters selected in the 2000 Mexican election, if any, we see that there are many more statistically significant predictors of having voted for Fox instead of another candidate (column 1c) than for not having voted compared with having voted for a non-PAN candidate (column 1b). Having worked in 2000 (+4.8 percent) and not having a party preference (+8.1 percent), for instance, are the only two factors that increased the probability that an adult Mexican-born resident of Los Angeles County did not vote in the 2000 Mexican election rather than having chosen a non-PAN presidential candidate. Results from column 1a, however, provided us with more information concerning the characteristics of those who did not vote.

Column 1c also reveals some useful information about those who were more likely to have voted for Fox rather than another candidate. Here we see that individual demographic characteristics – unlike in the analysis of who was more likely to vote at all – may have been more important determinants of voter choice than measures of border crossing and socioeconomic integration in the United States, or of Mexican political party affiliation.

Having been a PRI party member, for instance, only lowered the probability of having voted for Fox by 3.0 percent. And although having been an unauthorized Mexican immigrant reduced the probability of having voted for Fox by 14 percent, expecting to be residing in the United States at the time of the next Mexican election in 2006 reduced it by 10.2 percent, and having lived in the United States an additional year reduced it by 0.5 percent, those who did not think that they spoke English well or very well were 74.2 percent less likely to have cast a ballot for the PAN candidate. Granted, to the extent that speaking English well indicates greater

attachment to the United States, we may interpret this to mean that those who are less attached to Mexico were more likely to vote for one of the non-PRI (or opposition party) candidates (e.g., Fox). But other individual demographic characteristics that are less likely to reflect socioeconomic integration in the United States per se appear to have had a considerable impact also. For instance, having graduated from high school augmented the probability of having voted for Fox in 2000 by 10.3 percent and having attended a religious event or being male increased it by 7.2 and 5.0 percent respectively. Consequently, we may tentatively conclude that political party membership and policies influencing cross-border mobility and socioeconomic integration in the United States are more likely to have impacted the probability that expatriate Mexicans residing in Los Angeles County voted in the 2000 Mexican election than conventional individual demographic characteristics, and individual demographic characteristics and socioeconomic integration in the United States jointly determined for whom expatriate Mexicans residing in Los Angeles County voted. In short, older more religious males with a high school education who were not PRI-affiliated and had less opportunity to move back and forth across the Mexico-U.S. border were more likely to have voted for Fox rather than for another candidate.

### ***2006 Mexican Election Voting Intentions among Mexicans in Los Angeles County***

A significantly larger proportion of Mexican adults (approximately 280,000 or 16.4 percent of all Mexican adults residing in Los Angeles County) than those who actually voted in the 2000 Mexican election reported that they intend to vote in the 2006 Mexican election (Table 2). And as with correlates of having voted in the 2000 elections, those who reported that they intend to vote in the 2006 elections differed on various individual characteristics from those who reported no such intention. Furthermore, many of the differences between those who voted and those did



not vote in the 2000 elections appear when observing those who expressed an intention to vote in the 2006 Mexican election and those who did not. For instance, having earned a high school diploma, having been married, having attended at least one religious event, having been registered to vote for the 2000 elections and having been affiliated with a political party are positively related to having expressed an intention to vote in the next Mexican presidential election. Similarly, residing more years in the United States, having been employed or having had a higher income in 2000, and expecting to be residing in the United States in 2006 were negatively associated with the intent to vote in the 2006 Mexican election. But it is at this point that the apparent similarities cease.

Unlike with voting behavior in the 2000 election – males, those who were unauthorized residents and those who remitted in 2000 were more likely to express an intention to vote in 2006. Unsurprisingly, having voted in 2000 is also positively related to the expectation of voting in 2006. Speaking English well or very well and the frequency of border crossing, however, are negatively correlated with the intention to vote in 2006. The only two findings here that challenge conventional wisdom are (1) those who were unauthorized to reside in the United States were more likely to report that they intend to vote in 2006, and (2) those who crossed the border more frequently were less likely to do so. Before offering possible explanations for these results, however, it is useful to analyze these correlates simultaneously to see whether the univariate relationships remain after controlling for multiple possible influences on intending to vote in 2006.

Column 2a of Table 3 reports how all the same individual characteristics, measures of cross-border mobility and socioeconomic integration in the United States, and Mexican political party affiliation variables that were used to estimate the probability of having voted in the 2000

Mexican election impact the probability that one voiced an intention to vote in the 2006 elections except one (VOTE2000). But even without this additional variable there are fewer statistically significant determinants of VOTE2006 than there were for VOTE2000.

As for the 2000 Mexican election, having had a party affiliation positively affects the probability that one reported an intention to vote in 2006 (+34.2 percent for PRI members and +20.1 percent for persons with some other party affiliation). Furthermore, these remain important even after controlling for whether one voted in the 2000 election (which had a +48.9 percent influence on VOTE2006). Although having worked in 2000 (WORK2000) had the same directional impact on VOTE2000 as it did on VOTE2006, it is much larger in the latter case (-13.4 percent versus -7.8 percent). Consistent with this result is the negative impact that speaking English well or very well had on the likelihood that a Mexican-born resident of Los Angeles County intends to vote in 2006 (-16.8 percent). Both findings intimate that physical and psychological distance from Mexico may reduce the probability that an expatriate Mexican will vote in 2006.

Two findings differ from those reported regarding having voted in the 2000 Mexican elections (see column 1a). First, it appears that those who were more religious in 2000 will be more likely to vote in 2006 if reported voting intentions translate into voting behavior.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, the 2001 LA-MILSS data do not include any media exposure variables, and while this result may reflect a higher level of attention to political news, it may also be a proxy for underlying values. The second disparate finding is that those who remitted funds to Mexico in 2000 were 13.1 percent *more* likely to have reported an intention to vote in 2006. This result may seem to contradict that reported in column 1a for VOTE2000, where remitting had a negative

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<sup>12</sup> Having attending at least one religious event, although not statistically significant, was positively signed in the VOTE2000 regressions.

impact. However, it is perfectly reasonable that one who remits has a greater desire to vote in home-country elections, but may be unable to because of employment obligations in the United States or because one is unauthorized to reside in the United States and can not, therefore, act on this desire. Extending the franchise in this case would clearly benefit such persons.

Similar to when we attempted to estimate factors explaining why one did not vote compared to having voted for a non-PAN candidate (column 1b), in column 2b we see that only one variable is statistically significant at the 99 percent confidence level. Having voted in the 2000 election increased the probability that someone reported an intention to vote in the 2006 Mexican election compared to not voting for a non-PAN candidate. More interestingly, only two of the significant determinants of having voted for Fox compared to another candidate in the 2000 Mexican election remain when trying to predict the intention to vote for a PAN candidate in 2006. First, residing in the United States for an additional year (perhaps a proxy for distance from Mexico and integration in the U.S.) increases the likelihood of having reported that one will vote for a PAN candidate only slightly (by 0.4 percent). The other factor, religiosity, is more important. Those who attended at least one religious meeting in 2000 were 20 percent more likely to have reported that they plan to vote PAN in 2006. In sum, estimated differences in the predictors of whether one voted in 2000 and 2006, as well as those reported here concerning for whom one voted in 2000 versus for whom one thinks he will vote for in 2006, suggest that our two models of voting behavior in the 2000 Mexican election perform better than those used to estimate intended voting behavior in the upcoming 2006 Mexican elections. Below we extend our analysis to all Mexican adults residing in the United States in 2000 by applying our predictors from both sets of models that employ the 2001 LA-MILSS data to estimate the

number and characteristics of those who are likely to vote in the 2006 Mexican elections and for which party's candidate.

***Estimates of the Number of Expatriate Mexicans Likely to Vote in the 2006 Mexican Election***

Results reported above indicate that those expatriate Mexicans who resided in Los Angeles County in July 2001, who were connected with a political party in Mexico, and who were relatively free to travel back and forth across the U.S.-Mexico border were more likely to have voted in the 2000 Mexican election. Although results for those who reported an intention to vote in the 2006 Mexican elections are fairly similar, they are less robust and religiosity and remitting become differentially important. Likewise, determinants of a reported intention to vote for a PAN candidate in 2006 are consistent with those uncovered for having voted for Fox in 2000, but they are less robust.

To estimate the number of expatriate Mexicans residing in the United States as of 2001 who are likely to vote in the 2006 Mexican elections and for whom they are likely to vote, we decided to rerun our voting behavior models for 2000 and 2006 using the 2001 LA-MILSS data but only including those variables that also exist in the March Current Population Survey (CPS) data. We then apply these predictors of voting behavior to the CPS data to produce crude estimates of the number of potential Mexican voters residing in the United States in 2001 and their electoral preferences.

According to the 2002 March CPS data there were 9,773,846 foreign-born Mexicans residing in the United States during the previous year (2001), of which 8,559,895 (or 87.6 percent) were adults. This figure is almost identical to Rodolfo Tuirán's estimated number of eligible expatriate voters in the United States who will be eligible to vote in the 2006 Mexican election (Martínez-Saldaña and Pineda. 2002: 285; Melgar 1998). Applying AGE, MALE, HIGHSCH, MARRIED,

WORK2000 and a modified YRSNUS predictors generated from our VOTE2000 variable in our 2001 LA-MILSS data produces an estimate of 1.7 million expatriate Mexican voters (or 19 percent of all Mexican adults residing in the United States as of 2001) who are likely to vote in the 2006 Mexican election.<sup>13</sup> Applying the same predictors but generated from our VOTE2006 variable produces an estimated 2.8 million (or 33 percent of all Mexican adults residing in the United States as of 2001) possible 2006 Mexican expatriate voters.<sup>14</sup> If we apply Marcelli and Ong's (2002) estimated 10 percent undercount rate for all foreign-born Mexicans in the 2000 Census to these two point estimates, then the estimated number of expatriate Mexicans residing in the United States who will vote in the 2006 Mexican elections if the 1996 Mexican electoral reforms remain inoperative is 1.8 to 3.1 million.<sup>15</sup> The differences in these estimates, of course, are a function of how these voting behavior determinants differentially impact actual and intended voting behavior, and the range may be expected to adjust upward between the present and 2006 as the Mexican-born population residing in the United States continues to grow.

As a final step of our analysis, we apply the same methodology in an effort to predict how many expatriate Mexican voters are likely to vote for the PAN or another presidential candidate in the 2006 Mexican election. Employing parameters generated from our CAND2000 variable to those who are estimated to be likely to vote in the 2006 Mexican election suggests that approximately 1.3 million expatriate Mexican voters residing in the United States will vote for the PAN candidate. This figure represents about 15 percent of all eligible expatriate Mexican

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<sup>13</sup> The YRSNUS variable had to be modified into three categorical variables representing someone who migrated to the United States before 1980 (PRE1980), between 1980 and 1989 (YR8089) or after 1989 (YR90) because the March CPS data only provide categories of year of entry rather than a continuous variable. Parameter estimates for this prediction equation and others reported in this section are available upon request from the lead author. The actual estimate is 1,657,598 and the pseudo R-squared for this logit analysis is 15 percent.

<sup>14</sup> The actual estimate is 2,813,420 and the pseudo R-squared is 5 percent percent.

voters and fully 45 to 77 percent of all persons estimated to be likely to vote in 2006.<sup>16</sup> Applying parameters generated from our CAND2006 variable produces a very different result. Only eight percent (or about 650,000) of all eligible expatriate Mexican voters or 23 to 39 percent of those estimated to be likely to vote in 2006, are estimated to be likely to vote PAN. Given the nature of the way in which the CAND2006 variable was constructed, we are inclined to believe that the former range is more accurate. Recall that the predictors generated from CAND2000 are estimates of how expatriate Mexicans actually voted in the 2000 Mexican election. Those generated from the CAND2006 were obtained from combining a reported intention to vote in 2006 with party affiliation. And as results reported earlier for Mexican sin Los Angeles County attest, party affiliation is only one predictor of voting behavior.

## **CONCLUSION**

Evidence of expatriate Mexicans' desire to vote in home-county elections can be traced back more than seven decades to 1929, when Mexicans in the United States voiced support for José Vasconcelos's unsuccessful presidential candidacy (Martínez-Saldaña and Pineda 2002: 282). But overcoming political barriers to implementing Mexico's 1996 expatriate voting and dual-citizenship laws have has been partly frustrated by a lack of systematic evidence regarding how extending the franchise would impact political outcomes in Mexico. As with most exploratory research, our analysis has generated more questions than answers. Nonetheless, we provide the first systematic estimates of the number of expatriate Mexicans residing in the United States who are likely to vote in the 2006 Mexican elections. Should President Fox's pre- and post-election promise to implement the legal right of Mexicans residing in other nations to vote in future

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<sup>15</sup> This estimated undercount rate was employed in the recent U.S. INS report on unauthorized immigration in the United States (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 2003).

Mexican elections not materialize, we estimate that between 1.7 and 3.1 million Mexicans residing in the United States will vote in the 2006 election anyway. This range represents between 20 and 36 percent of all Mexican adults residing in the United States. Should either of the two 1996 Mexican electoral reform laws materialize and expatriate Mexicans be permitted to vote from the United States, the estimated number would presumably fall between some point in this range and a figure below the total number of eligible voters (8.5 million as of 2001).<sup>17</sup> Even assuming the lower bound range, dividing by the 37.6 million persons who voted in the 2000 Mexican election intimates that expatriate Mexican voters residing in the United States could represent between 4.8 and 8.2 percent of Mexico electorate. Such numbers could easily sway electoral outcomes.

We also estimate that approximately 1.3 million Mexican adults will vote for a PAN candidate rather than for a candidate of another political party in the upcoming Mexican presidential election. This estimate represents between 45 and 77 percent of the estimated number of eligible voters residing in the United States who are likely to vote in 2006, and confirms both conventional wisdom and Lawson's (2002) conclusion that permitting expatriate voting from the United States would likely harm PRI candidates in future elections. It should come as no surprise that the strongest resistance to implementing the 1996 electoral reform laws has come from PRI politicians and scholars sympathetic to their cause.

Our analysis of the 2001 Los Angeles County Mexican Immigrant Legal Status Survey (LA-MILLSS) also offers some preliminary conclusions regarding the determinants of whether expatriate Mexicans vote in home-country elections. First, the finding that unauthorized

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<sup>16</sup> The pseudo R-squared is 24 percent and the actual estimate is 1,272,951 persons.

<sup>17</sup> If Mexicans residing outside of Los Angeles County had exactly the same characteristics of those inside and vote similar as the latter did in the 2000 Mexican election in future Mexican elections, the estimated number of expatriate

Mexicans were less likely to have voted in the 2000 Mexican election and that persons who crossed the border more frequently were more likely suggests that increasing the ability of Mexicans residing in the United States to move more freely across the Mexico-U.S. border would likely augment expatriate participation in future Mexican elections. Second, that having sent remittances in 2000 is negatively associated with having voted in the 2000 Mexican election, but positively influenced someone having reported an intention to vote in the 2006 elections, further implies that barriers to mobility – whether by choice (e.g., work) or constraint (e.g., unauthorized residency status) – or the inability to register a vote from the United States may be limiting a latent desire to vote for many who have not in the past. Almost all remittances, our LA-MILSS indicates, were sent to Mexico by mail or with friends or relatives. Third, having a political party affiliation had positive impact on the probability that an expatriate Mexican voted in the 2000 election and on the probability that she intends to vote in 2006. Recent efforts by leaders of various Mexican political parties to reach out to potential expatriate voters in California and elsewhere thus make sense from a partisan perspective (Martínez-Saldaña and Pineda 2002). Finally, traditional individual demographic and human capital characteristics appear to have had relatively more sway on voter choice compared to the decision whether to vote than did border crossing, social integration in the United States, or party affiliation. Although unauthorized residency status, the number of years residing in the United States, an intention to be living in the United States in 2006, and being a member of the PRI negatively impacted the probability that an expatriate Mexican residing in Los Angeles County voted for Fox in 2000, all but one of our individual-level characteristics (MARRIED) had a statistically significant impact on having voted PAN. For instance, we saw that education, religiosity, and

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Mexicans voting in home-country elections, assuming the 1996 electoral reform laws are not implemented, would only be about 310,000 (e.g., 8.5 million x .036).



being male each had a positive, and speaking English well had a strong negative, effect on whether one voted for Fox. These individual characteristics do not predict the intention to vote for a PAN candidate in the 2006 election as well, however.

The disparity between the number of expatriate Mexicans residing in Los Angeles County in July 2001 who voted in the Mexican 2000 election and the number who reported an intention to vote in the 2006 election – as well as our finding that greater cross-border mobility had a positive impact on the probability of those who voted in the 2000 election – suggests that opportunities for greater binational mobility weakens any Mexican belief that “their interests are best served by abstention or participation through brokers” (Craig and Cornelius 1989: 355). Implementation of the legislative extension of the franchise that was granted expatriate Mexican voters in 1996 would further erode traditional authoritarian sentiments among Mexican immigrants in the United States. It may also profoundly alter electoral outcomes in Mexico given the relatively large proportion of the Mexican electorate represented by potential Mexican voters residing in the United States.

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**Table 1: Variable Definitions**

<b>VOTE2000</b>	Dummy variable = 1 if person voted in 2000 Mexican election
<b>CAND2000</b>	= 0 if person did not vote in 2000 elections; = 1 if voted for Fox; = 2 if for other
<b>VOTE2006</b>	Dummy variable = 1 if person intends to vote in 2006 Mexican election
<b>CAND2006</b>	= 0 if person intends not to vote in 2006 elections; = 1 if prefers PAN; = 2 if prefers PRI; = 3 if prefers PRD or other Party
<b>AGE</b>	Age in years
<b>MALE</b>	Dummy variable = 1 if person is male
<b>HIGHSCH</b>	Dummy variable = 1 if person earned a high school diploma
<b>ENGWELL</b>	Dummy variable = 1 if person claimed to speak English "well" or "very well"
<b>MARRIED</b>	Dummy variable = 1 if person is married
<b>RELIGION</b>	Dummy variable = 1 if person attended one or more religious meetings last year
<b>YRSINUS</b>	Years residing in the United States since first arrival
<b>XBORDER</b>	Number of times per year a person crosses the Mexico-U.S. border
<b>WORK2000</b>	Dummy variable = 1 if person worked at any time during 2000
<b>UMI</b>	Dummy variable = 1 if person estimated to be unauthorized Mexican immigrant
<b>SETTLE</b>	Dummy variable = 1 if person intends to stay in US for at least 5 more years
<b>REMIT</b>	Number of times in 2000 a person sent remittances to Mexico
<b>PRIPARTY</b>	Dummy variables = 1 if person is a member of the PRI party
<b>OTHPARTY</b>	Dummy variables = 1 if person is a member of the PAN, PRD, or other party

**Table 2: Characteristics of Mexican Adults Residing in Los Angeles County by Voting Behavior in the 2000 Mexican Elections and Voting Intentions in the 2006 Mexican Elections, Los Angeles County, 2001**

	VOTED IN 2000 ELECTION?			INTEND TO VOTE IN 2006 ELECTION?			
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Uncertain	Total
<b>VOTEREG</b>	91.5%	36.3%	38.4%	72.5%	28.0%	50.5%	39.0%
<b>VOTE2000</b>	100.0%	0.0%	3.6%	11.8%	1.0%	0.0%	3.5%
<b>CAND2000</b>							
Fox (PAN)	51.4%	0.0%	1.5%	44.1%	100.0%	0.0%	1.4%
Labastida (PRI)	38.4%	0.0%	1.1%	44.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%
Cardenas (PRD)	10.2%	0.0%	0.3%	11.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
<b>AGE (mean)</b>	36.5	37.2	37.2	37.7	37.5	34.4	37.1
<b>MALE</b>	49.7%	50.5%	50.4%	56.6%	49.4%	50.1%	50.7%
<b>HIGHSCH</b>	17.2%	9.6%	9.9%	11.3%	10.5%	5.4%	9.8%
<b>ENGWELL</b>	35.0%	35.7%	35.7%	29.6%	40.5%	22.5%	35.8%
<b>MARRIED</b>	81.1%	71.2%	71.5%	76.1%	71.1%	68.5%	71.5%
<b>RELIGION</b>	38.5%	35.6%	35.7%	40.1%	32.8%	42.5%	35.6%
<b>YRSNUS (mean)</b>	11.5	16.8	16.6	14.5	17.8	12.1	16.4
<b>XBORDER (mean)</b>	2.6	1.5	1.6	1.2	1.8	0.9	1.6
<b>WORK2000</b>	45.7%	88.2%	86.5%	76.8%	89.1%	87.9%	86.8%
<b>INC2000 (mean)</b>	\$6,719	\$13,762	\$13,559	\$11,329	\$14,726	\$10,996	\$13,524
<b>UMI</b>	43.6%	43.4%	43.4%	47.4%	38.1%	66.8%	44.4%
<b>SETTLE</b>	77.0%	84.9%	84.5%	70.2%	87.9%	85.8%	84.4%
<b>REMIT</b>	35.0%	53.7%	53.0%	58.0%	49.8%	62.9%	53.3%
<b>PARTY</b>							
PRI	45.8%	11.2%	12.6%	34.9%	7.4%	7.9%	12.4%
PAN	23.8%	10.8%	11.3%	21.2%	7.1%	24.0%	11.6%
PRD/Other	8.5%	2.5%	2.7%	3.0%	1.8%	7.6%	2.7%
None	21.9%	75.6%	73.5%	40.9%	83.8%	60.5%	73.3%
<b>N (Weighted)</b>	59,360	1,608,540	1,667,900	282,534	1,152,450	283,318	1,718,302

**Table 3: Determinants of Voting Behavior in the 2000 Mexican Elections and Voting Intentions in the 2006 Mexican Elections**

	MEXICAN 2000 ELECTIONS			MEXICAN 2006 ELECTIONS		
	(1a) Voted Parameter (s.e.)	(1b) No/Other Parameter (s.e.)	(1c) Fox/Other Parameter (s.e.)	(2a) Vote Parameter (s.e.)	(2b) No/Other Parameter (s.e.)	(2c) PAN/Other Parameter (s.e.)
<i>AGE</i>	0.039 (0.029)	0.029 (0.053)	0.134** (0.065)	-0.006 (0.021)	-0.001 (0.034)	0.034 (0.039)
<i>MALE</i>	0.804 (0.640)	-0.370 (0.813)	3.247* (1.979)	0.426 (0.289)	-0.234 (0.466)	-0.430 (0.643)
<i>HIGHSCH</i>	1.335* (0.746)	-0.605 (1.099)	6.683** (3.077)	0.138 (0.450)	0.160 (0.622)	0.762 (0.968)
<i>ENGWELL</i>	0.669 (0.691)	-0.771 (0.802)	-48.181*** (3.064)	-0.743** (0.306)	0.236 (0.724)	0.066 (0.931)
<i>MARRIED</i>	0.683 (1.097)	0.046 (1.212)	2.032 (2.026)	0.389 (0.358)	0.192 (0.587)	0.435 (0.782)
<i>RELIGION</i>	0.851 (0.579)	-1.156 (0.915)	4.684* (2.455)	0.886*** (0.293)	-0.332 (0.327)	0.866 (0.513)
<i>YRSINUS</i>	-0.145*** (0.058)	0.007 (0.100)	-1.139** (0.539)	-0.016 (0.019)	-0.026 (0.043)	-0.076 (0.038)
<i>XBORDER</i>	0.091* (0.049)	-0.090 (0.077)	0.386 (0.276)	-0.054 (0.045)	-0.056 (0.039)	-0.095 (0.069)
<i>WORK2000</i>	-2.286*** (0.551)	1.940** (0.916)	-2.369 (2.312)	-0.593* (0.350)	0.890 (0.728)	0.563 (0.643)
<i>UMI</i>	-1.922*** (0.595)	0.896 (0.790)	-9.104*** (3.438)	0.065 (0.315)	-0.652 (0.455)	-0.400 (0.700)
<i>SETTLE</i>	-0.314 (1.014)	-0.202 (1.614)	-6.635* (3.573)	-0.569 (0.422)	0.349 (0.569)	-0.264 (0.846)
<i>REMIT</i>	-1.310* (0.762)	1.033 (1.225)	-0.594 (1.744)	0.579** (0.264)	-0.037 (0.533)	0.981 (0.796)
<i>PRIPARTY</i>	3.340*** (0.606)	-4.258*** (0.925)	-1.977* (1.069)	1.513*** (0.309)	n.a n.a	n.a n.a
<i>OTHPARTY</i>	3.246*** (1.047)	-4.037** (1.683)	2.414 (2.524)	0.891** (0.369)	n.a n.a	n.a n.a
<i>VOTE2000</i>	n.a n.a	n.a n.a	n.a n.a	2.162** (1.003)	-2.837*** (0.647)	-1.557 (0.969)
<i>INTERCEPT</i>	-3.001*** (1.496)	4.203* (2.289)	3.473 (2.944)	-1.377 (2.126)	2.528* (1.494)	-1.377 (2.126)
<b>Weighted N</b>	1,055,511	1,055,511	1,055,511	1,055,511	1,055,511	1,055,511
<b>Pseudo R-Squared</b>	40.8%	54.4%	54.4%	18.0%	14.0%	14.0%

Note: Statistically significant at the 99% (\*\*\*)  $p < .01$ , 95% (\*\*)  $p < .05$ , and 90% (\*)  $p < .10$  confidence level.