

Ecuador's leader confident on referendum

The Miami Herald
Apr. 09, 2007

QUITO, Ecuador --

President Rafael Correa said Monday he was confident Ecuadoreans would vote in favor of creating a special assembly to rewrite the constitution, a key goal for the new leftist leader.

Correa, who took office Jan. 15, has sought the new constitution to limit the power of traditional political parties he blames for the nation's corruption and political instability.

Correa said the choice in Sunday's referendum would be between the new constitution and "the same thing as always."

"The possibility is very remote" that voters will reject the proposal, Correa told Telesistema television, predicting 85 percent would vote in favor of the assembly.

Sixty-three percent of respondents in poll last week said they supported creating the assembly. The Cedatos poll of 1,264 Ecuadoreans nationwide had a margin of error of 5 percentage points.

Correa's insistence that the assembly have unlimited powers - including the ability to fire any elected official - plunged the country into a monthlong legal crisis.

Last week, he said the assembly should not dissolve Congress but only limit its functions, apparently softening his position.

If approved, the 130-member Constituent Assembly would convene for 180 days beginning in November.