

# State of Mexico Addressed, by Invitation Only

## Calderón Delivers Speech At Ceremonial Palace

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MEXICO CITY, Sept. 2 -- President Felipe Calderón, blocked from delivering the traditional state-of-the-nation address to Congress, called Sunday for changing the format of an annual rite that has become a chaotic embarrassment for [Mexico](#).

Calderón is the second consecutive president to be barred by hostile legislators from delivering the speech, though he was able to broker a compromise that averted the fistfights that stopped his predecessor, [Vicente Fox](#), from addressing Congress last year. In an eleventh-hour deal, Calderón agreed to hand in a text of the speech Saturday, then address the nation Sunday at Mexico's ceremonial National Palace.

At the invitation-only event Sunday, Calderón vowed to press the United States to enact immigration reforms, push for Mexico to play a larger leadership role in [Latin America](#) and improve living conditions for the 40 percent of Mexicans who live in poverty. Ending economic inequality, he said, "is the most important challenge of our generation."

He promised reforms that would improve education and health care for the poor, though he was short on specifics or bold new proposals and said current programs would be fortified because they have been successful.

Calderón entered the National Palace's broad courtyard as one of the most popular Mexican presidents in recent history, with a 65 percent approval rating that narrowly topped Fox's rating at this point in his administration and was nearly double the mark achieved by Ernesto Zedillo, who preceded Fox. Calderón touted the arrests of dozens of top drug cartel leaders but warned that his military campaign was far from over.

"This is a long and difficult battle," he said, vowing that "the sacrifice of those patriots" in the military who have died battling the cartels "will not be in vain."

"The fight against organized crime is moving forward," he said.

Calderón's administration has been negotiating for a massive anti-cartel aid package that would be the biggest international foray by the United States into combating drug trafficking since the multiyear Plan [Colombia](#), which has allocated more than \$5 billion to stopping cocaine producers and sellers in Colombia.

Calderón has pushed for Mexico to improve strained relations with many Latin American countries and to increase its presence in world business markets. In a speech interrupted

sporadically by polite but restrained applause, he called for "more of the world in Mexico and more of Mexico in the world."

The Mexican government, he said, would continue to "energetically protest unilateral actions" of the [U.S. Congress](#) on the immigration front that he said "exacerbate the persecution of undocumented Mexicans in the U.S." He boasted that Mexican consulates in the United States have been buttressed to protect the rights of millions of Mexicans living there illegally.

"Wherever there is a Mexican," he said, "that is Mexico."

U.S. politicians have frequently accused Mexico of failing to produce enough jobs to entice young Mexicans to stay at home instead of risking crossing the border illegally. In remarks that appeared to be aimed at those critics, Calderón said 618,000 jobs had been created in the first eight months of his administration, equaling the best-case scenario predictions for the full year.

Protesters massed outside while Calderón spoke, but there were far fewer than in months past, when allegations that he had won the election fraudulently stoked emotions in the capital.

As he neared the end of his address, Calderón -- often serious and stiff in public -- broke into a smile.