

Mexico's president-elect backs migrant amnesty;

Meetings slated with Gore, Bush

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Body

Mexico City --- As he prepares to head for Canada and the United States next week, Mexican **President-elect** Vicente Fox said he supports a controversial Democratic proposal in the U.S. Congress for a new **amnesty** for undocumented workers.

"My position is certainly favorable toward the **amnesty**," said Fox, who will **meet** Thursday with President Clinton and Vice President Al **Gore**, the Democratic presidential nominee, to discuss the future of **Mexico's** relationship with the United States.

The day after, Fox travels to Dallas to **meet** with Texas Gov. George W. **Bush**, the Republican Party nominee, and Mexican immigrants.

"It seems to me that (an **amnesty**) would document an inevitable reality that (undocumented immigrants) are really there. And in addition, it gives human beings an opportunity for development without the uncertainty and fear they live in there. I think it would be a great gesture by the United States. Let's hope it happens," Fox said in a **meeting** with foreign reporters.

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Fox, who takes office Dec. 1, also described his ambitious plans for naming a "northern border czar" for Mexico to deal with pollution, crime, migration and other key problems. While in Ottawa on Wednesday, followed by New York City, Washington and Texas, Fox will also discuss his proposal that the United States grant more legal visas to Mexican guest workers and eventually open borders to the free transit of workers.

The proposal for a new **amnesty** for undocumented immigrants working in the United States since 1986 --- many of whom are Mexicans --- is **backed** by the Democratic Party.

Democratic nominee **Gore** and his Republican opponent, **Bush**, are both fighting to attract Latino voters, who have become increasingly numerous in states that will be key in the November election. So far, Republicans have not supported the proposal. Lamar Smith (R-Texas), chairman of the House immigration subcommittee, called an **amnesty** in 1986 "disastrous" and said it attracted more illegal immigrants.

Fox will become the first Mexican president in 71 years not to belong to the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, the PRI. A conservative who has promised to preside over a pluralistic government, Fox said he has no preference in the U.S. presidential race.

"They're the same, the Democratic and Republican parties," he said. Known for his blunt and often spicy language, Fox smiled and added: "It's been said that I put my foot in my mouth sometimes. But this time I'm not going to do it."

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In addition to trying to persuade the United States and Canada to consider long-term changes in migration policy, Fox would also like to beef up funding for a development bank set up by the North American Free Trade Agreement to stimulate job growth and other development needs in Mexico.

"What better thing could happen to the United States than to have a Mexico that's successful, a Mexico without poverty, a Mexico without violence, a Mexico without drug trafficking, a Mexico with opportunities for work for all its all inhabitants that would stop (illegal) migration to the United States?" Fox said.

In Europe in 1970, he said, the wage gap between northern Europe and southern Europe forced hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants from the poorer countries to flood into Germany, England, Holland and other wealthier countries.

The European Union budgeted \$ 35 billion a year to stimulate development in poorer countries, Fox said, which helped close the wage gap.

"How was that gap closed? With solidarity, with brotherhood, which is an element or value that's missing in the North American Free Trade Agreement," Fox said. "The North American Free Trade Agreement . . . only has the bottom line, and that's what we have to get past."

Graphic

Photo

An **amnesty** "gives human beings an opportunity for development," said **Mexico's President-elect** Vicente Fox, adding, "I think it would be a great gesture by the United States." / VICTOR R. CAIVANO / Associated Press

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