

## **Grown Cautious, Fox Expects Delay on U.S. Action on Migrants**

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### **Body**

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In an interview to discuss his scheduled visit to Texas this weekend, President Vicente **Fox** of Mexico said this week that he did not **expect** the **United States** to adopt sweeping reforms that would give legal status to millions of undocumented workers until well after the presidential election this fall.

Mr. **Fox** reiterated support for a proposal by President Bush to give temporary work permits to an estimated eight million illegal immigrants. He described the plan, which could benefit as many as four million Mexicans, as "an excellent starting point" and later as "great progress." And he praised Mr. Bush for having the "courage" to present the reforms despite opposition in the Republican Party.

Mr. **Fox**, who challenged the **United States** to open its borders to a greater flow of Mexican workers at the start of his presidency three years ago, made clear he had not abandoned his campaign. However, Mexico's first opposition president, whose rise to power ended seven decades of authoritarian rule, departed Tuesday evening from his unrelenting optimism and accepted that long-awaited migration reforms would have to wait some more.

"We understand clearly that we are in an election year," Mr. **Fox** said. "We do not **expect** any kind of final decision this year. But starting next year, yes, after the election of the next president."

Political observers said the remarks reflected a changed and seasoned head of state.

"President **Fox** has become more realistic about what he can accomplish and when," said Jorge Chabat, a political analyst. "He does not want to keep raising **expectations** and then fail to deliver what he promised."

Mr. **Fox** is scheduled to travel Friday to Mr. Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas, to discuss migration, trade and border security. The meetings come at a time when Mr. **Fox**, battered by rising unemployment and a stagnant economy, hopes to show that his most important foreign policy initiatives are back on track. Meanwhile Mr. Bush, facing what may be a close election race, strives for support among America's Latino population.

Officials in both governments said they did not **expect** any important agreements to be made during Mr. **Fox's** visit to Texas. What is important, political observers said, is that the two men agreed to meet at all.

Three years ago, Mr. Bush visited Mr. **Fox's** family ranch in the northern state of Guanajuato and proclaimed that America had no greater friend than Mexico. Several months later, Mr. **Fox** became the first state visitor to the Bush White House.

But the warm personal relationship between the two was severely strained after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the **United States**, when the Bush administration abandoned its promises to work on a migration accord with

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Mexico and Mexico voted against war with Iraq at the United Nations. Since then, Mr. **Fox** and Mr. Bush have had have had little more than stiff and fleeting encounters.

The chill began to thaw in January when Mr. Bush announced his plans for the most comprehensive overhaul of American immigration policy in recent years. Most Mexicans praised the proposal for giving undocumented immigrants opportunities to work legally in the **United States** and be reunited with their families. Others, however, said it would allow the **United States** to enjoy the economic benefits of low-cost immigrant labor without offering workers the protections that come with permanent residency.

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