



**International
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CEPPS/IRI Quarterly Report: April-June 2005
**BRAZIL: SUPPORT FOR ACTIVITY TO PROMOTE BROAD PUBLIC
DISCUSSION ON POLITICAL REFORM**
USAID Cooperative Agreement Leader Award: DGC-A-00-01-00004
Project Dates: February 25, 2005 – September 30, 2005
Total Budget: \$80,000 (\$80,000 obligated for FY '05)
Expenses to date: \$34,063

I. SUMMARY

The International Republican Institute (IRI) is organizing a 3-day conference (August 9-11) in Brasilia to increase awareness of the law for election reform proposed by the Brazilian congress. In organizing and implementing this conference, IRI will seek broad multi-partisan participation, provide in-depth discussion of the relevant issues by key political party representatives, and establish a means for sustained dialogue after the event.

Through its extensive network of international expert consultants and practitioners, IRI will interject an international perspective and encourage broad public discussion of election reform among representatives from Brazilian media and civil society. Also, IRI is partnering with IFES, who will provide international expertise on campaign finance and open- vs. closed-list systems (both of these issues are part of the proposed reform bill). By providing an external and independent point of view, the conference will provide Brazilian legislators with an opportunity to incorporate and apply ideas, untainted by domestic Brazilian politics. Neither IRI nor IFES endorse any one political viewpoint; both organizations will simply act as interlocutors in offering diverse views and past experiences from political players in other countries.

II. BACKGROUND

The political party system in Brazil has evolved in unexpected ways, with the appearance of dozens of political parties which are ideologically undisciplined, opportunistic, weakly-structured, and centered on one or two well-known leaders. In countries such as Mexico, citizens vote for a particular party, not knowing specifically who the candidate

is. In Brazil, however, the opposite occurs—up to 80% of voters vote for a candidate, not knowing which party the candidate even belongs to. This has been a major contributor to the profusion of “party-switching”ⁱ, a prevalent phenomenon which has been one of the primary drivers behind the calls for the introduction of election reform legislation in Brazil. Obviously, new regulations that would diminish party switching among Brazilian political parties would most benefit those parties that are currently losing their successfully elected candidates to other parties. On the other hand, parties that are gaining these elected officials are more opposed to such legislation, since they perceive no benefit from it, and see party switching as a valid, competitive means to attain political gains.

The Brazilian congress established a special commission called the *Select Committee on Political Reform*, established to draft reforms, submitted to the committee in December 2003 a significant legislative proposal. Disagreements among the parties prevented the reforms from coming to a vote in early 2004 as scheduled, but the issue of political reform remains a top legislative priority for late 2004 and 2005. In order to take effect for the next general elections, scheduled for October 2006, the reforms must be enacted one year beforehand.

According to political scientists and experts, one of the biggest pitfalls of the bill is that it does not directly address the “party-switching” problem. However, a second reform bill proposed by the Select Committee, which is pending analysis from the Constitution and Justice Committee, establishes a minimum one-year period of party affiliation for candidates who will run for office for the first time, and two years if the candidate has changed parties. It is expected that this bill would also diminish the practice of party-switching.

Therefore, it is vital to encourage broad public and press discussion of the issues. Although the topics appear deeply technical to laypersons, the final legislation could have a significant impact on Brazil and its democratic institutions. In other words, citizens have a huge stake in the debate, which has raised suggestions of public consultations regarding some of the propositions.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

On February 25, 2005, IRI began implementing this new cooperative agreement in coordination with CEPPS partner IFES. As of the end of this quarter, IRI has incurred cumulative total expenditures of \$33,287.

On June 17, 2005, IRI requested a no-cost extension of the project. On June 21, 2005, DCHA/DG and Embassy/Brasilia approved the no-cost extension for the CEPPS/IRI program. The new approved end date for this program is September 30, 2005.

ⁱ During 18 months of the 52nd Congress (2003 – 2005), there were nearly 200 “party switches” in the Federal Chamber of Deputies (lower house).

The specific programmatic activities proposed by IRI are divided into three phases: a) conference planning phase; b) conference phase; and c) post-conference phase.

a) Conference Planning Phase:

Identification of local partners. IRI has signed an agreement with the identified local NGO partner (Center for Studies of the Americas at the Candido Mendes University - a.k.a. CEAs/UCAM). The signed contract is valued at U\$31,750. CEAs/UCAM will coordinate all logistical preparations for the event as well as manage the event's web page which can be visited at www.refirmapolitica2005.com.br

Logistical preparations for conference. All local air travel arrangements for the conference, as well as local arrangements including ground transportation and meals for the participants will be handled by IRI's in-country partner CEAs/UCAM. IRI is handling air travel for participants from outside of Brazil.

International speakers for the conference have already been identified. They include:

- Dr. Luis Camilo, Attorney General (Colombia). He will focus on the issue of open and closed lists.
- Congresswoman Gabriela Ruiz (PAN Mexico). As former PAN party treasurer for over 18 years, she is extremely experienced in public financing of campaigns. She will speak of her experience in working strictly with public funds at the PAN party as well as Mexico's publicly financed electoral system.
- Commissioner Michael Toner, FEC Vice-Chairman. He will describe the U.S. system of public financing for Presidential elections and the recent proposal to increase the amount of public financing from \$30 million to \$250 million which he co-sponsored with FEC Chairman Commissioner Scott Thomas.
- FEC Commissioner Bradley Smith (last year was the Chairman of the FEC) will give an overview of the FEC's role in federal elections
- Anton Reelii, Special Assistant to Commissioner Toner, will speak about his history of the FEC.
- Cesar Micheo, IRI Consultant, will make a comparative presentation on the differences between public financing of campaigns versus public funding and their impacts.

ii Commissioner Toner authorized for the FEC to cover all costs associated with Mr. Reel participation in the conference. IRI will not be utilizing funds for his participation.

The web site for the conference is fully functional, it can be found at:

[Http://www.reformapolitica2005.com.br](http://www.reformapolitica2005.com.br)



b) Conference Phase:

International experts. IRI has acquired initial commitments from a Commissioner of the U.S. Federal Election Commission, a Treasurer/Congresswoman from Mexico's PAN Party, and other experts, including those being sponsored by IFES. The experts being selected for this conference are from the U.S., Latin America and Europe. The project is expected to fund five experts from outside of Brasilia, others will be invited to attend at their own expense (note: the same applies to international experts).

Conference Agenda. The agenda can be found on the conference's web page

c) Post-conference phase

Web postings. The web site is fully functional. All presentations at the conference, in addition to news related stories and presented documents, will be posted under the "Biblioteca" or Library section of the web site.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since this project is still in the pre-conference phase, IRI will evaluate the results and accomplishments of the conference in the next quarterly report.

V. EVALUATION

IRI has worked with its local partner to ensure that all logistical aspects of the conference are on schedule. Most local participants have been confirmed (including the President of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies). The web site, a key component in the organization of the conference, is also fully operational. Due to political events beyond IRI's control, the conference has been postponed on a number of occasions. However, the new dates for the conference are fortuitous, as they will coincide with the end of the congressional recess at which time the "Reforma Politica" will be at the top of the legislative agenda and a heated debate in the Brazilian congress.