

## Brazil's Opposition Presidential Candidate Pans Corruption and "Rachitic Growth"

Contributed by Newsroom  
Thursday, 16 March 2006

Geraldo Alckmin, governor of São Paulo state, was named this week presidential candidate for Brazil's main opposition party PSDB, ending months of internal wrangling between Alckmin and his rival for the candidacy, José Serra, mayor of São Paulo city.

The fight for the PSDB candidacy has left the presidential dispute waiting for President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva who, although he will not officially decide whether to run for re-election until June, has been in full campaign mode since the beginning of the year.

Elections for president, governors and legislators will take place in October.

Lula da Silva's popularity fell steadily last year after the leftwing PT, of which he was founding president, was accused of using illegal campaign finance and buying the support of its coalition partners in Congress.

But he regained the lead in opinion polls this year as the scandal faded from view and voters concentrated instead on the economic stability that, in spite of disappointing rates of overall growth, has increased the spending power of Brazilians.

Alckmin announced his candidacy at a hastily-convened press conference in São Paulo, after Serra's office said he would no longer contend the candidacy. Although Serra has consistently outperformed Alckmin in opinion polls, he was reluctant to resign as mayor - a precondition for his candidacy and something he promised not to do when elected in 2004 - without the undivided support of the party.

Alckmin, formerly regarded by many as a grey candidate with little appeal beyond the São Paulo business community, has shown surprising determination in recent weeks. He is seen as being more market-oriented than Serra, whom many regard as an interventionist.

"It is with humility, enthusiasm, energy and determination that we will begin a great journey, not against any person or against any party, but to construct a grand national program for growth," said Alckmin.

"Brazil no longer tolerates this wave of corruption that has raged the country, a country without a project and rachitic growth," he emphasized.

If elected Alckmin would be likely to maintain the tight anti-inflationary monetary policies inherited by Lula da Silva from his predecessor, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, also of the PSDB.

Alckmin is a catholic doctor, founder of the PSDB in 1998 next to former president Fernando Cardoso. He was deputy governor of Sao Paulo between 1995 and 2001. In 2002 he was elected governor with a landslide 58% vote.

Many regard his track record during five years as governor of São Paulo as evidence that he would move ahead quickly with structural reforms, especially of public pensions and payroll, needed to reduce the government's budget deficit and release money for investment in infrastructure and other drivers of growth.

But he has also been the target of the press and cartoons because of his managerial insipid style and lack of charisma and political aggressiveness. He's referred to as a "light chayote ice cream", or "chuchu ice cream" (sorverte de chuchu), an insipid almost tasteless tropical fruit, although rich in fiber and vitamins.

"My government is going to be chayote ice cream; the same "chuchu" as in Sao Paulo when I received a record support of twelve million votes", retorted with humor the main Brazilian opposition presidential candidate.

Mercopress - [www.mercopress.com](http://www.mercopress.com)