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**News**

**Ecuador's Correa To Have Complicated Route For Referendum**

3:47p ET January 28, 2011 (Dow Jones)

Ecuador's Correa To Have Complicated Route For Referendum

By Mercedes Alvaro  
Of DOW JONES NEWSWIRES

QUITO (Dow Jones)--The political outlook for President Rafael Correa's planned referendum has become more complicated because of a rupture within Ecuador's ruling party. A number of politicians who helped Correa win election in 2006 announced Friday their withdrawal from Alianza Pais, the ruling political party. Alianza Pais now has 51 of the 124 seats in the National Assembly. The so-called "Ruptura de los 25" made their decision after three lawmakers from Alianza Pais, headed by a founding party member Betty Amores, also quit because of disagreements about the referendum. The Ruptura de los 25 has strong support with the younger population. "With their departure, the referendum becomes an uphill battle for the government. The referendum will no longer be as easy as seemed a week ago," said Gabriela Calderon, a research associate at the Cato Institute, a think tank based in Washington. The planned 10-question referendum includes an overhaul of the judiciary and on the way judges are chosen, which the opposition says will allow Correa to appoint his allies to the courts. Among other controversial questions for the referendum are those that will prevent companies in the banking and media sectors from operating outside of those specific sectors. Ruptura de los 25 was born about five years ago as a group aiming to fight against corrupt political practices in the Andean country. "This is a slap in the face. There is a shakiness in the Correa's government," Calderon said. Although analysts said the political climate could deteriorate because of divisions that could continue within Alianza Pais, Juan Carlos Cassinelly, a lawmaker of Alianza Pais, said that the Correa political project and the political party won't be affected. Correa, a left-leaning economist, took office in 2007 and since then has aimed to give the government more power. Correa started with a four-year term on Jan. 15, 2007, but after a constitutional change, he was elected again in 2009 and could stay in office until 2017 if he wins re-election in 2013. -By Mercedes Alvaro, Dow Jones Newswires; 5939-9728-653; mercedes.alvaro@dowjones.com

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