

Public discussion of new Cuban constitution being held island-wide



Havana, August 14 (RHC)-- Cubans began on Monday a nation-wide public discussion around the text of a new constitution for the island that's revealing a truly participatory angle to democracy here.

During Monday's prime time news, Cuban television presented a thorough account of how the discussions had unfolded during the day in different provinces, with participants standing to voice suggestions, opinions and concerns.

At a health clinic in Havana, a union activist presented the proposed changes point by point to the clinic's employees, with some people asking for clarifications on individual amendments.

"We Cubans are going to ratify what has already been done," Alina Morada, one of the participants and head of nursing at the municipality of Central Havana, told Reuters news agency. "I think the same-sex marriage issue is the most polemical of the proposals because it never has been discussed here," said Isabel Palacios, a nurse at the Havana clinic.

The Cuban National Assembly approved the text of the draft constitution last month. It included

amendments that pave the way for recognition of small private businesses and gay rights, including same-sex marriage.

More than one million copies of the draft constitution have been sold island-wide, with the text also available on-line.

The text of the proposed new constitution will be discussed in 135,000 workplaces and community meetings across Cuba, until mid-November. Once the debate is concluded, the legislature will approve the new draft and submit it to a national referendum in February.

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