

Argentina's lower House approves bill to legalize abortion



Buenos Aires, June 14 (RHC)-- The lower chamber of Argentina's Congress voted Thursday to approve a bill to legalize elective abortions up to the 14th week of pregnancy. The law will now go to the country's Senate for another round debate.

The bill received the last minute support of three legislators of the Justicialist Party, whose support proved vital in guaranteeing its passage. The final vote after the 20-hour long debate was 129 for, 125 against with one abstention.

Before the final vote, a legislative committee held consultations for over two months, where experts in favor of and against the legalization presented their positions and arguments.

Since Wednesday, some Argentines who support the bill filled the street of downtown Buenos Aires in a vigil demanding legislators vote in favor of the legislation.

In Argentina, abortions are only legal in cases of rape and risk to the woman's life under the current law. Outside of those circumstances women who get an abortion and doctors who perform them can face up to four years in prison.

According to the bill's promoters, the criminalization of abortion has not stopped women from having

them, but it has pushed them into illegality and forces them to risk their lives in clandestine abortion clinics.

The bill presented by the National Campaign for Legal, Safe and Free Abortions also establishes that the public health network must provide essential health coverage for women, including abortions, as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO).

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