

Argentina Becomes Largest Latin American Country to Legalize Abortion

At the end of a 12-hour session, the Senate in Argentina passed a bill legalizing abortion today, Wednesday, Dec. 30. The law decriminalizes abortion up to the 14th week of pregnancy, with abortions allowed later in the pregnancy in pregnancies resulting from rape or endangering the health or life of the mother.

Until today, abortion in Argentina was illegal except for cases of rape or if the mother's health was in danger. The law passed, according to the Associated Press, by a vote of 38-29 with one abstention.

On Dec. 11, the lower house of Congress, the Chamber of Deputies, passed the bill with a vote of 131-117 with six abstentions.

Several deputies said change would bring regulation and remove stigmas on a practice that is carried out clandestinely. Deputy Graciela Camaño said that through the measure, "what is being done is to enable to discard the life of a human being."

Crowds for and against abortion gathered outside the legislative building in Buenos Aires during the Senate deliberation. Many of the pro-abortionists were dressed in green and waving flags. When passage of the bill was announced, "Women screamed with delight, sweeping their friends into tight hugs and jumping in ecstasy."

The country's left-wing president, Alberto Fernández, tweeted "Safe, legal and free abortion is now law ... Today we are a better society."

While some celebrated, others held their own vigils where many people openly prayed—mourning the passage of the bill. Pope Francis, who is from Argentina, continues to oppose abortion under all circumstances. Just hours before the vote, he tweeted,

The Son of God was born an outcast, in order to tell us that every outcast is a child of God. He came into the world as each child comes into the world, weak and vulnerable, so that we can learn to accept our weaknesses with tender love.

– Pope Francis (@Pontifex) December 29, 2020

According to Human Rights for Women, a global pro-abortion group, it's estimated that 500,000 abortions occur every year in Argentina. That number represents about 40% of the country's annual pregnancies.

Prior to the passage of this new bill, Argentina's penal code only allowed for abortion where the pregnancy endangered the life or health of the mother or where the pregnancy was the result of the rape of a mentally disabled woman.

Argentina is now the largest Latin American country with legalized abortion. Three others—Cuba, Guyana and Uruguay—allow elective abortions, according to the Centre for Reproductive Rights. {eoa}