

Brazil Close to Legalize Abortion. It's Been a 22-Year Effort.

Contributed by Newsroom
Wednesday, 28 September 2005

A bill to decriminalize abortion and make it available through the Brazilian public health services system will go to commission hearings today in Brazil's Chamber of Deputies.

The bill was drafted by representatives of the executive and legislative branches, as well as civil society, including medical and legal experts. The bill's main idea is to provide women who want abortions with medical assistance.

The Brazilian Penal Code of 1940, which remains in effect, considers abortion a crime, except when the mother's life is in danger or the pregnancy resulted from rape.

Defenders of the bill say it protects a constitutional right a woman has over reproduction.

The struggle to make abortion laws more flexible in Brazil is not new. As long ago as 1983 a bill was sent to Congress legalizing abortion in Brazil. The bill never got a final vote. Since 1991 a number of bills decriminalizing abortion have been presented in Congress but never received final votes that could turn them into law.

Meanwhile, the Brazilian Supreme Court has expanded the right to abortion to include cases of fetal abnormalities. Recently the First National Conference on Women Policies approved a proposal for changes in abortion laws in Brazil.

Agência Brasil