

Opposition Will Sue Brazil's Lula for Spending Without an Approved Budget

Contributed by Ana Paula Marra
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The leader of the Brazilian opposition party PSDB in the Senate, Arthur Virgílio (Amazonas state), reports that his party will file a suit in court questioning the legality of the use of temporary measures permitting the government access to monies in the 2006 budget, which has still not been approved by Congress.

"There's no way we can agree with these temporary measures. They are equivalent to morally closing down the legislative branch of government. If we still do not have a budget, how can the government make withdrawals for spending purposes? The only thing we have at the moment is a draft bill that has not been approved by the Congress," said Virgílio.

The opposition, led by Virgílio, is up in arms because the government has emitted two temporary measures releasing a total of 26.1 billion reais (US\$ 12.3 billion).

Last Wednesday, April 12, with its 2006 budget still bogged down in Congress and little prospect for a quick vote on it, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva emitted a temporary measure (Medida Provisória, MP) releasing 1.7 billion reais (US\$ 798 million) for spending.

And announced that the Ministry of Planning would emit another temporary measure releasing an additional 24.4 billion reais (US\$ 11.4 billion) for further spending.

The government's vice leader in the Congress, senator Romero Jucá (PMDB party, Roraima state), says that the Palácio do Planalto is doing everything it can to bring its 2006 budget bill to a vote. But, says Jucá, if a budget is not approved the government reserves the right to use temporary measures to keep the country running.

"The government refuses to be paralyzed because of the delay in voting the budget. If there is an urgent need it will not hesitate to emit more temporary measures," declared Jucá, who steered the government's 2005 budget through Congress (he was the "redactor" of the budget).

The delay has meant that for the last four months the government has not been able to make investments and create new jobs, said the senator. "This is a case where temporary measures are a technical solution that makes it possible for the country to grow and move ahead," Jucá concluded.

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