

Uruguayan Lawmakers Pass Overhaul of Media Regulations



Montevideo, December 24 (RHC-EFE) -- The lower house of Uruguay's Congress has passed the Audiovisual Communication Services Act, which was approved by the Senate last week and is aimed at preventing monopolies and oligopolies in the media.

Fifty of the 75 lawmakers present supported the bill Monday backed by the governing Broad Front coalition, voting along party lines, with all opposition lawmakers rejecting the initiative as had happened in the Senate.

The main part of the legislation regulates the licensing of radio, television and other media services.

Former President Julio Maria Sanguinetti denounced the legislation promoted by President Jose Mujica in a newspaper article, calling it a "loaded gun to the head of independent journalism."

Last week, Mujica defended the initiative, saying he did not want to see "(Argentine media conglomerate) Clarin or (Brazil's) Globo, or (Mexican telecom magnate Carlos) Slim become the owners of communications in Uruguay."

Article 106 of the bill requires that entities applying for licenses to operate media outlets "should not be affiliates or subsidiaries of foreign companies, and should not execute acts, contracts or property deals

giving foreign capital a dominant position over the licensee."

Article 51 refers to the "duty of the state to implement proper measures to prevent or limit the existence and formation of monopolies and oligopolies in audiovisual communication services, and to establish mechanisms for their control."

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