

Domestic Work Recognized in 'Historic' Ecuador Labor Law Reform



Quito, April 15 (teleSUR-RHC)-- After a marathon 11 hour session, the National Assembly of Ecuador approved a historic reform of the country's labor laws on Tuesday.

Dubbed The Law for Labor Justice and Recognition of Work from Home, the reform modifies the 1938 labor code to expand rights in several areas. President Rafael Correa handed over the reform proposal to National Assembly President Gabriela Rivadeneira at a rally in Guayaquil in November 2014 attended by over 100,000 people.

Among the changes enacted through the new labor law include the recognition of the labor of homemakers who will also be incorporated into the social security system for the first time in the country's history, benefiting upward of 1.5 million people. "We are recognizing the work that is done at home. This defines us as part of 21st Century Socialism," said President Correa. Rivadeneira stated on her Twitter account that this reform is a "decisive step to change the history of women in Ecuador."

In an effort to reduce precarious work conditions, the new labor law, which was approved with a vote of 91 votes in favor to 29 against, also stipulates that all new labor contracts signed as of January 1, 2016 will

be indefinite as opposed to fixed-term. It also includes provisions to protect vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women, as well as historically discriminated groups such as Afro-Ecuadoreans and LGBT workers.

Employers who are found to have illegally fired a worker will now have to pay a year's salary to that worker. The new law will allow workers to choose to receive bi-annual bonus payments in smaller increments throughout the year, meaning workers will be able to set this money aside and earn interest off the sum. In Ecuador, workers have historically received two bonuses two lump sum payments, one in August and another in December.

The new law mandates the creation of the National Council for Work and Salaries, which includes representation for workers, employers and the state, which will serve as a consultative body regarding work policies and salaries.

One of the more controversial provisions of the new law mandates democratic elections for trade unions. This measure was opposed by some unions, however a march criticizing the labor reform was characterized by a low turn-out. The United Workers Trade Union Federation, which unites over 60 workers' organizations in the country, backed the labor reforms.

The law was first debated in the assembly in January and went through a consultative process that included eight meetings of the Commission of Workers Rights and Social Security where lawmakers heard from representatives from 35 organizations.

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