

Brazil's Senate Picks Temer Ally to Head Upper Chamber



Brasilia, February 3 (RHC)-- Brazil's Senate has elected an ally of coup-imposed President Michel Temer as its new leader, providing key support in the upper chamber of Congress for proposed reforms to restore fiscal discipline.

Senator Eunício Oliveira, who is 64 years-old, was elected Senate president by a vote of 61 to 10, despite accusations that he took a bribe of 2.1 million reais -- about \$670,000 -- from a defendant in a sweeping graft investigation. Oliveira has denied the bribery allegation.

His election for two years will help Temer muster support for a controversial bill reforming Brazil's pension system. As head of the Senate, Oliveira will be second in the presidential line of succession, after the speaker of the lower house of Congress.

Oliveira succeeded Senator Renan Calheiros, who completed his term in office after defying a Supreme Court order to step down last year following his indictment in one of five corruption cases against him.

"The Senate must not fall out of step with the current momentum in the fight against corruption in the country," Oliveira said in a speech before the vote. He vowed to defend the independence of the legislature from judicial interference.

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