

Chile's congress approves coronavirus pensions bill



Santiago de Chile, July 23 (RHC)-- Chilean lawmakers punched the air and waved the national flag in Congress on Thursday after giving final approval to a government-contested bill to allow citizens to withdraw 10 percent of their pension savings to help ease the economic pain wrought by the novel coronavirus outbreak.

The bill has sped through several congressional votes with cross-party support despite staunch government opposition. The bill required a three fifths majority, 93 votes, and 116 deputies voted in favor, with 28 against and five abstentions. A number of the 71-strong ruling coalition bloc -- including the president of one of its parties -- voted in favor.

The chamber erupted in cheers and clapping amid chants of "No more AFP" -- a reference to the long-running campaign to tear up Chile's much-mimicked defined contribution Pension Funds Administrators (AFP) system that was introduced during the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship.

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