

# Chilean Unions Negotiate With Government

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Santiago de Chile, December 17 (teleSUR-RHC)-- The Chilean government announced Tuesday it would submit a labor reform bill to Congress at the end of this month. Leading up to the final submission, the Central Workers Union (CUT) executive committee met with the Chilean Labor and Finance ministers to make clear various stipulations contained within the labor reform bill.

During the negotiations, CUT representatives requested additional information regarding the implementation of specific policies including measures that would require companies to engage with just one union, considered the "most representative", enhancing its power, and could forbid companies from replacing striking workers, along with other possible changes to how often collective contract negotiations are carried out.

However, following the meeting CUT, union president Barbara Figueroa expressed her disappointment with the outcome of the discussions stating that the government had failed to concretely communicate which provisions of the labor reform bill that it seeks to modify before submitting to congress.

According to the Chilean Office of Labor, only 12 percent of workers are unionized which falls well below the OECD average of nearly 30 percent. Despite low levels of unionization, real wages grew by 4.1 percent in 2013 and unemployment levels dropped by more than half-of-one percent, which marked one of the highest decreases in Latin America.

In an effort to further strengthen domestic labor laws, Chilean President Michelle Bachelet presented a reform bill on Monday to raise unemployment insurance benefits.

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