



Uruguay is preparing to legalize abortion, a groundbreaking move in Latin America where no country except Cuba has made abortions accessible to all women during the first trimester of pregnancy.

Compromises made to get the measure through Congress disappointed both sides of the abortion debate, who gathered in protest. Once through Uruguay's lower house, the measure would go back to the Senate for approval of changes, but President José Mujica has said he will allow it to become law.

The measure would give women the right to a legal abortion during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, and decriminalise later-term abortions when the mother's life is at risk or when the foetus is so deformed that it would not survive. In cases of rape, abortions would be legal during the first 14 weeks.

The goal is to reduce the number of illegal abortions in Uruguay, Iván Posada of the centre-left Independent party told fellow legislators on Tuesday. Posada wrote the law and is expected to provide a 50th vote against the opposition's 49.

"They talk of 30,000 a year, a hypothetical number, but whatever the number is, it's quite dramatic for a country where 47,000 children are born each year," Posada said in an earlier interview.

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