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# 'Divorce law will violate Constitution'

By JESS DIAZ

A divorce law will violate the Constitution that protects the sanctity of marriage, Rep. Lito Atienza of party-list group Buhay said yesterday.

"The proposed law is definitely unconstitutional. It is expressly stated in Article 15 on The Family, Section 2 of the Charter: 'Marriage, as an inviolable social institution, is the foundation of the family and shall be protected by the State,'" he said.

"The Constitution is very clear and there is no room for misinterpretation. So how can Congressman Edcel Lagman and other divorce proponents interpret their proposed law as constitutional?" he asked.

Atienza said since he is not a lawyer, he looked up the meaning of "inviolable" in the dictionary.

"It means anything that cannot be assailed, cannot be broken, cannot be interchanged. Anything inviolable is considered hallowed, holy, sacred, sacrosanct and untouchable," he said.

Atienza said the House of Representatives should not have tackled the bill on divorce and dissolution of marriage "because it cannot be considered as part of the law of the land."

The House approved the bill on second reading on Wednesday night. Only two members - Atienza and Cebu City Rep. Raul del Mar - opposed it.

Aside from Lagman, several congresswomen, including Pia Cayetano of Taguig and representatives of Gabriela Women's Party, are among the bill's authors.

Like Atienza, Del Mar said he and his constituents believe that a divorce law would violate the constitutional provision protecting the sanctity of marriage and the unity of the family.

He said he knew that the few opponents of the bill would be overwhelmingly defeated when voting time came.

"But that doesn't mean you are right and we are wrong. You could be wrong and we could be right," he said.

The bill's authors claimed that they have the support of most senators to get their proposed law approved by the Senate and signed by President Duterte provided that they delete the word "divorce" from it and label it only as a proposal on the dissolution of marriage.

But Atienza said the proposed deletion is just a deodorizer that would not diminish opposition to the bill by people who believe in marriage and the family.

"It's the same thing. It's still a divorce bill or a proposed divorce law," he said.

He said the suggested deletion of the word "divorce" is apparently intended to lessen opposition from the Catholic Church.

But he added that he does not think that such a suggestion would mollify Church leaders.

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