Divorce bill good as dead – lawmaker

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The divorce bill the House of Representatives has approved on third and final reading is as good as dead, Rep. Lito Atienza of party-list group Buhay said yesterday.

He lauded the position taken by the President against the divorce bill, adding that this has doomed the fate of the proposed law.

"I think that with the President's opposition to this unconstitutional and anti-family and obviously anti-marriage measure, the Senate will not pass it. Even without the President opposing it, I don't believe majority of our senators will support it," Atienza said.

He added that the House-approved divorce bill does not have a counterpart measure in the Senate.

"We welcome and fully appreciate his stand. The President has saved the Filipino family with his strong position against divorce. We strongly agree with the President that divorce would be very detrimental to mothers and children," he said, admiring Duterte's "display of strength and character."

Atienza pointed out that Duterte "did not allow himself to be stampeded by the mob on this critical issue. His strong leadership will forever be remembered for saving the Filipino family and future generations. I am sure that with his strong position against divorce, this bill will most likely be relegated to the archives."

Another divorce opponent, Rep. Gary Alejano of Magdalo, said authors of the bill, several of them congresswomen, are mistakenly promoting it as a pro-woman measure.

"They have failed to mention, however, that divorce would most likely force Filipino women to destitution," he claimed, citing a British study that showed divorce had a positive effect on men's finances, while women became poorer.

Alejano said, "Separated women have a poverty rate of 27 percent, three times that of their former husbands. Moreover, only 31 percent of separated mothers receive payment from the father of their children."

"We must remember that divorce is a two-way street: if women can easily afford to leave their husbands, so can men easily afford to leave their wives. In the end, how can the divorce process be pro-woman if it's the men that benefit the most?" he asked.

Alejano stressed that aside from the harm a divorce law would inflict on women, "more disconcerting is the dangers it exposes a child to."

"There is a general consensus among academic circles that children are affected by the sudden change in their familial environment, including the influences that accompany the divorce process. The divorce process affects the mental state of children," he said.

He conceded that there are irreparable marriages, but that the remedy in such cases is already available in the present law on annulment of marriage. While critics claim that annulment entails time and money, Alejano said the solution is to make it more expedient and affordable, especially to the poor.