

## Delay in Divorce Bill Transmittal to Senate Amid Vote Controversy

The transmission of the absolute divorce bill to the Senate has been postponed following disputes over the voting results in the House of Representatives. Despite achieving a majority vote, reported initially as 126 to 109 and later corrected to 131 to 109, opposition members have challenged the bill's legitimacy.

### **House Voting Rules and Legitimacy**

The controversy centers on the interpretation of House voting rules. According to Section 117 of Rule XVII, abstentions are not counted in the final tally. Only a majority of affirmative votes over negative votes, given a quorum, is required for the approval of an ordinary bill. Thus, the divorce bill's approval remains valid under these reported margins.

### **Deferral of Transmission**

Due to the ongoing disputes, House leaders have decided to defer the transmission of the divorce bill to the Senate pending further review of the vote-counting process. This delay has prompted calls for immediate action from proponents of the bill.

### **Rep. Edcel Lagman's Statement**

In a press statement, Rep. Edcel Lagman argued for the immediate transmission of the bill to the Senate. He emphasized that the vote adhered to established House rules and any minor corrections could be addressed when Congress reconvenes on July 22, 2024. Lagman criticized the opposition, stating, "The more vociferous detractors are sore losers as they continue to trample on the clear and well-accepted rule on the reckoning of the winning votes."

### **Addressing Misconceptions About Church Marriages**

Opponents of the bill have expressed concerns that it would not cover "sacramental marriages" or church weddings. However, Lagman clarified that church marriages are recognized as civilly valid under the Family Code and are subject to the same secular laws as civil marriages. He pointed out the inconsistency in the church's stance, noting, "It is hypocritical for the church to seek recognition of canonical dissolution of marriage, which is akin to civil divorce, and yet reject the coverage of a divorce law on church marriages which are recognized civilly."

### **Conclusion**

The House of Representatives is pressing for the immediate transmittal of the divorce bill to

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the Senate to ensure its legislative progress. Despite opposition efforts to challenge it, Lagman insists that the process has followed legal protocols and that the bill's approval stands firm.