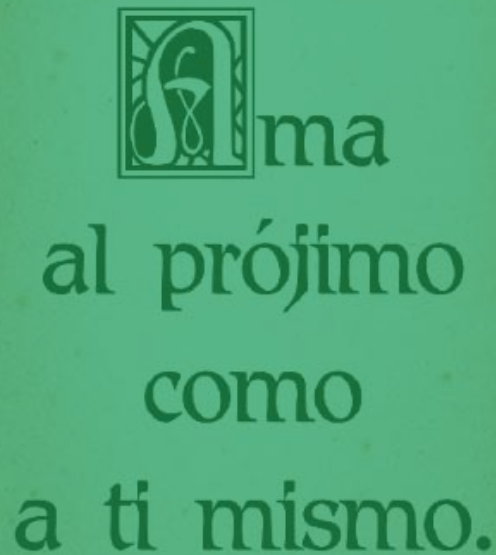


Challenging Religious Fundamentalisms in Mexico: The Separation of Church and State and Reaffirmation of Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights



Alma
al prójimo
como
a ti mismo.

Challenging Religious Fundamentalisms in Mexico: The Separation of Church and State and Reaffirmation of Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir-México
Elizabeth Plácido

Mexico is an atypical case in Latin America due to the guarantees of the separation of church and State included in the [Constitution](#) since the 19th century. In this case study, Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir-México (CDD-Mexico, Catholics for the Right to Decide) assesses the meaning and application of these guarantees in the current situation, wherein Catholic fundamentalisms are economically and culturally powerful and, during the last ten years, have begun to exert pressure for the church to have greater participation in government. As a result, CDD-Mexico and its allies decided that reforming the Constitution to more explicitly define secularism in Mexico was necessary to confront modern Catholic fundamentalisms, and to advance efforts to lobby and raise the awareness of legislators. Those efforts concluded with legislators' preliminary approval of the proposed reforms.

Introduction

According to Pace and Guolo, fundamentalism is:

A type of thought or religious action... that sets out the ultimate ethical-religious foundation of the *polis*: the political community that takes shape in the state must be based upon a religious pact.¹

What fundamentalism seeks is to re-establish a religious covenant based on the "holy book" at the centre of societies, supplanting the social contract underpinned by the rule of law. According to the aforementioned authors, fundamentalisms' behaviour is based on four principles:

- A. Inerrancy: the holy book is considered as a totality of sense and meaning that cannot be freely interpreted by human reasoning.

- B. Ahistoricity: human reasoning is not able to adapt the religious message to society's changing conditions.
- C. Superiority: divine law provides an integral model of a perfect society, superior to any other type of society invented or created by human beings.
- D. Supremacy of the founding myth: the faithful are called on to adhere to and remain bound to all those who believe in the tenets of the sacred text.

In this way, and in accordance with the cultural and geographic region, there are as many fundamentalisms as there are “holy books”. In Latin America and the Caribbean, Catholicism has been a source of domineering fundamentalism represented by its leadership and right-wing and extreme right conservative groups, which attempt to impose fixed ideas about life, social relations and society based on a narrow interpretation of the Bible.

In the last decade this type of fundamentalism has sought to renew and reinforce its political power by influencing the creation of laws and public policies. They have gained access to the media and education, which enables them to spread their moral doctrine, thereby affecting the effective exercise of human rights and the liberties of individuals and of certain specific populations, including women and people of different sexual orientation (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transvestites, transgenders and transsexuals, or LGBTTT people).

The Context of Religious Fundamentalisms in Mexico

Up to the first half of the 20th century Mexico was a predominantly Catholic country² with a long secular tradition recognized by the [Constitution](#) (1855-1857). Article 3 of the Constitution establishes the secular nature of education, Article 24 the freedom of belief and of religion, and Article 130 the separation of church and State. The Reform Laws (1859-1860) include measures to eliminate the interference of the Catholic church in government. As a result, for most of the 20th century³ Mexican law did not grant legal status to churches, prohibited its ownership of goods, limited worship outside of places of worship, banned political parties affiliated with religious organizations, and prohibited ministers from participating in political activities, public education and from speaking against the government or its laws.⁴

However, according to Tomasini, three factors explain the Catholic church's reintegration into the public life of the country in the second half of the 20th Century:

One is the global political situation resulting from the collapse of socialism; the second important factor is the gradual (and at this time still ongoing) debilitation of state institutions in Mexico; and the third is the arrival of Pope John Paul II in the Vatican... who fixed his eyes on Mexico, a country important for many reasons, not least the number of Catholics, but characterized by a tradition almost hostile to the Catholic church.⁵

By the beginning of the 21st century conservative groups with ties to this church had succeeded in imposing religious education in public schools and influencing legislation and public policies. They had also fought for access to the media and reclaimed political rights for priests. This was all possible because a conservative government assumed power in 2000. It has not respected the secular tradition of Mexican society or the restrictions on churches established by the Constitution and the Ley de Asociaciones Religiosas y Culto Público (Religious Associations and Public Worship Act).⁶

2000 was a historic year for Mexico; the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI, Institutional Revolutionary Party), which had been in power for more than 70 years, was overthrown in democratic elections, and the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN, National Action Party) took its place. Although this disruption was cause for celebration, it also provided an opportunity for the conservative Catholic leadership and extreme right groups to become involved in the political work of the country and the public debate, which up until that point had mostly been protected from the interference of the Catholic church by the secular nature of the Mexican State. In this political and social context, CDD-Mexico has identified that:

- They promote constitutional reform that would substitute religious freedom for the concepts of freedom of belief and freedom of conscience, with the intention of giving the conservative leadership of the Catholic church the right to be involved in determining what is taught in public schools and to have access to the media. These reforms would also give military chaplaincies official status and recognize chaplaincy grades for religious ministers.
- They are increasing the number of individuals from the ultra-right who are public officials and who occupy decision-making positions in the federal government, the legislative branch and the judiciary.
- Governors at different levels of government (state and municipal) earmark public resources to support the Catholic church or organizations that promote its agenda.⁷

- They create and strengthen civil society organizations that advocate for the concept of life from conception; oppose condom use, abortion, sex education, and sexual and reproductive health; and promote sexual abstinence and the family as a pillar of society through print and electronic publications, communication campaigns, service provision, calls to national demonstrations and education (particularly sex education), among other methods.
- They promote regional and global events to promote Catholic religious values. For example, Mexico hosted the World Encounter of Families in 2004 and did so again in January 2009.
- The Catholic leadership threatens to excommunicate anyone who supports women's right to make decisions about their sexuality and reproduction, while simultaneously protecting pedophile priests and granting them impunity for their sexual abuse.

These actions that support the expanded power of the clergy to interfere in the political and institutional life of our country negatively impact women's sexual and reproductive rights (SRR), HIV prevention, treatment for people living with HIV and AIDS, the right of same sex couples to marry and young people's right to sex education. They also deny priests' victims of pedophilia and sexual abuse access to justice.

At CDD-Mexico we have seen that there are more officials, legislators, communicators, businesspeople, and others who advocate for Catholic values and morality as "the only true way" of being in Mexican society. To a greater or lesser extent, leaders of all political parties are in contact with the Catholic leadership and regularly ask their opinion on sexuality, reproduction, women's rights and religious freedom.

We have also identified an organic relationship between groups and educational institutions promoted by the Catholic church and PAN, which is the political party in power, as well as the majority party in the Congress. Many members of this party went to private Catholic schools, such as the Universidad Panamericana, the Escuela Libre de Derecho (Free Law School) or the Colegio de Abogados Católicos de México (College of Catholic Lawyers of Mexico); some of their leaders have served as president of the Organización Demócrata Cristiana de América (ODCA, Christian Democratic Organization of America).⁸

Other groups that claim to be civil society organizations include: ProVida, Comisión Mexicana de Derechos Humanos (Mexican Commission on Human Rights), Fundación Cultura de la Vida (Culture of Life Foundation), Asociación Nacional Cívica Femenina (ANCIFEM, National Women's Civic Association), Asociación Católica de la Juventud Mexicana (Catholic

Association of Mexican Youth), Unión Nacional de Padres de Familia (UNPF, National Union of Parents), Legionarios de Cristo (Legion of Christ), and Grupo Familias y Sociedad (Families and Society Group); some of these groups have ties to Vida Humana Internacional (Human Life International).⁹

In addition, conservative, ultra-right businesspeople have sought to influence media content to include opposition to women's rights and to promote one family model based on heterosexual marriage. One example is Lorenzo Servitje, founder and president of Bimbo.¹⁰ The company will only place advertisements when the programming or publications do not violate "morality or good manners" and has threatened to withdraw its advertising from television channels that show reports of pedophilia abuse committed by Catholic priests, such as Marcial Maciel's¹¹ abuses of seminarians.¹² Bimbo also provides funding to international and Mexican right-wing organizations such as the ODCA, the Instituto Mexicano de Doctrina Social Cristiana (IMDOSOC, Mexican Institute of Christian Social Doctrine) and A Favor de lo Mejor en los Medios (Supporting the Best in Media). This last organization was created in 1997 with the goals of promoting Catholic principles and censoring programs that attack family values and those that include scenes with sex or violence.

Fundamentalists have immense economic resources to manipulate awareness through the media and to appeal to the vulnerabilities created by poverty, fear and blame. They infiltrate decision-making positions in the executive, legislative and judicial branches, as well as in state and municipal governments, and this has allowed them to influence public policies and legislation, as well as to earmark public resources for the Catholic church.

Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir-México

CDD-Mexico¹³ publicly and openly advocates for human rights, especially the sexual and reproductive rights of women and youth, and for the separation of church and state. Our strategies to implement this work include promoting rights through forums, seminars, workshops and talks to educate and raise the awareness of decision makers to expand the support base for women's right to choose. At the same time, we have built a strong network of alliances with the progressive sectors of different churches, the media, opinion leaders, women from different sectors and political parties, and social and civil organizations with the hope that these alliances will act as vocal advocates to defend and advance women's rights.

We also help with the creation of public policies and monitor their implementation to ensure that they comply with the highest standards of protection for HR. In addition, we have analyzed and submitted citizen

proposals for progressive legislative reform in Congress to protect women's SRRs and to strengthen the secular nature of the Mexican government.

Constitutional Reform

In response to serious attempts by ultra-right Mexican groups to violate the principle of the separation of church and state, at the end of 2006, CDD-Mexico, together with legislators, civil society organizations and representatives from academia, began advocating for reform of Articles 40 (description of the government as a federation), 118 (on limitations on states' powers) and 130 (on the relationship between church and State) of the Constitution of the United Mexican States.

As we noted earlier, historically Mexico is a secular state. However, secularism is not explicitly recognized in the Constitution. Neither are there effective legal mechanisms for recourse when either religious officials or representatives of the state put their beliefs ahead of their responsibilities and violate women's rights.

Before the 2006 elections, different civil society organizations organized meetings to present a Public Agenda for Human Rights to candidates from the political parties, alliances and coalitions participating in the presidential and congressional elections.¹⁴ This agenda included a section on Gender Parity and Women's Rights for Democracy and National Development, wherein we emphasized the need to recognize the secular state as:

A fundamental expression of diversity and multiculturalism, as well as an essential condition for, and guarantee of, individual freedoms. Therefore, it is necessary to expand its definition in the Constitution and to establish mechanisms to sanction officials who act against this principle.¹⁵

However, the results of the 2006 elections were contested. Although the PAN candidate Felipe Calderón (current president of Mexico) was declared the winner, the small margin of difference between the latter and the leftist candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (Partido de la Coalición por el Bien de Todos/Party of the Coalition for the Good of All), vote counting irregularities and inequity in the electoral contest resulted in a crisis of legitimacy for the elections and political institutions. In this framework, the executive and judicial branches began a reform process in April 2007 that attempted to resolve the conflict via legislative and administrative reforms in five thematic areas: system of government and governance, democracy and the electoral system, federalism, reform of the judicial branch, and social guarantees.¹⁶

In addition, legislators belonging to PAN and right-wing groups began to submit bills that would "broadly" recognize the political rights of religious associations. In January 2006, then Deputy Federico Döring (PAN) submitted to the full Chamber of Deputies a bill to reform Article 12 of the Constitution which would replace the concept of freedom of belief with that of religious freedom. In July 2007, the Colegio de Abogados Católicos (Catholic Lawyers' Association) submitted a citizen's bill to the Chamber to reform Articles 3, 24 and 130 to allow the church access to the media and to own property, implement religious education in public schools, and allow religious ministers to participate in political proselytizing during elections and to run as candidates.¹⁷

Given the threat of the right-wing bills, and with state reform on the way, the civil society organizations that had proposed strengthening the secular nature of the state realized the importance of reforming the Constitution so that it explicitly states that Mexico is a secular state, and of incorporating a modern definition of what that means. CDD-Mexico drafted a citizen's bill to reform Article 2¹⁸ and attempted to present it in the Chamber of Deputies, but there has not yet been any broad discussion of the contents of the proposal nor a clear idea about which article of the Constitution would be reformed. In addition, we sought to meet with deputies from the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD, Party of the Democratic Revolution) who were members of the Comisión de Puntos Constitucionales (Committee on Constitutional Issues)¹⁹ because they were working to prevent Deputy Döring's bill from advancing.

It was in this context that we decided the political agenda of the Partido Alternativa Socialdemócrata y Campesina (Social Democratic and Peasant Alternative Party), which focuses on sexual diversity, the right to choose and the decriminalization of marijuana, was in line with our own. Deputy Elsa Conde Rodríguez, a member of this party, asked us to comment on a bill on the secular state that she wished to submit to the full Chamber of Deputies.²⁰ Given CDD-Mexico's concern with countering the PAN's bills, which sought to reform Article 12 (freedom of belief and religion), in our first analysis we pointed to the fact that the justification for the PAN bill focused on the guarantee of religious freedom. However, we were convinced that freedom of religion is already guaranteed, and, therefore, any bill to strengthen the secular state should focus on privileging freedom of conscience, autonomy, non-discrimination and recognition of the diversity of thought. As a result, we proposed that Deputy Conde rewrite her bill and include the abovementioned points. In addition, we suggested that we collectively work on a proposal that would incorporate the knowledge of academics, such as Dr. Roberto Blancarte from the Colegio de México (College of Mexico), with whom we have worked for years, and the experience of organizations that have an understanding

of law and secularism. Deputy Conde agreed to our proposal and a pluralistic Working Group was formed.²¹

Strategies

One of the main strategies of the group was to collectively build a political discourse on freedom, wherein secularism would be understood as an essential condition for the exercise of the freedom of opinion, thought and expression, as well as the right to choose. Based on this discourse, we reaffirmed that the state cannot side with the ethic or moral world vision of any specific religion, for example Catholicism, but must rather respect the plurality of ideas and visions that comprise society, that Mexicans can believe in any religion or none, and that this shall not be taken as motive for discrimination or exclusion. Our goal was to establish as part of the Constitution a clear and objective definition of secularism that would not be subject to interpretations accommodative to the interests of the Catholic leadership. To refine these arguments and draft the final version of the bill, we met twice a month from the beginning of 2007 to the time the bill was submitted to the Comisión de Puntos Constitucionales in the Chamber of Deputies. This made it possible for our bill to have solid theoretical and legal foundations. The bill was not created by a legislator alone at her desk with her assistants, but rather was a product of political and social experience.

Our second strategy was to invite other actors and organizations to comment on the bill and to support actions advocating for the secular state. We met with a group of constitutional lawyers to determine which article of the Constitution was the right one to reform. The resulting analysis concluded that Articles 40 (description of the government as a federation) and 130 (on the relationship between church and State) should be reformed. In addition, we created informational cards to distribute to the deputies.

Our third strategy was to lobby to bring the bill to the attention of the political forces in the country, which are represented by parliamentary groups in the Chamber of Deputies. The legislators supporting the bill obtained a meeting with the chair of the Comisión de Puntos Constitucionales, Raymundo Cárdenas Hernández (PRD), to explain why he should not give an opinion on the bill proposed by the PAN deputy, Döring, and to gain his commitment to support our bill.

On November 22nd, 2007, Deputy Conde submitted the bill to the full Chamber of Deputies. Deputy Cárdenas requested that it be immediately sent to the Comisión de Puntos Constitucionales,²² placing it at the top of a long list of bills already submitted on the same issue. He believed our

bill in some way encompassed the proposals of the others and that it was the best written.

The legislators also obtained the support of deputies from the eight parliamentary blocs²³ by approaching the coordinators of each, presenting the bill and speaking about the importance of the secular state. As PAN is a right-wing party, its support for the bill was not obtained. In order to avoid supporting it, among the arguments that PAN deputies used was the idea that secularism taken to the extreme could turn people away from Catholicism and that the party's legislative interest is focused on expanding the privileges of the Catholic church as well as the rights of ministers of religion. However, some PAN legislators with liberal leanings individually supported it. As a result, the bill was endorsed by legislators from all the different parliamentary groups.

Despite our agreement with the chair of the Comisión de Puntos Constitucionales (Cárdenas), PAN members slowed down the committee's meetings to delay the report; nevertheless, the committee successfully issued a report, which was presented to the Mesa Directiva ([Executive Board](#)) of the Chamber so that it could send the bill to the full chamber for a first and second reading.²⁴ As a result of the working group's efforts, on April 30th, 2008, the full Chamber of Deputies approved on the first reading the report in favour of the bill.

It is worth mentioning that this entire process has depended on significant material, financial and human resources support from each of the members of the working group in order to hold the forum and press conferences, disseminate the bill, and create publicity materials. In the cases of community organizations and academia, support came from projects already underway and already financed. Sympathetic legislators also made available the infrastructure and support that the Chamber of Deputies makes available to them.

Lessons Learned and Future Challenges

Below we explore some of the obstacles we faced in implementing our strategy. To a greater or lesser extent, legislators from all political parties are in contact with the Catholic leadership, or were once part of ultra-right groups, and regularly ask their opinion on sexuality, reproduction, women's rights and religious freedom. Such is the case with PAN, which maintains an organic relationship with the Catholic leadership. In addition, as we noted above, many of its members and political leaders were educated in private Catholic schools or have served as president of the Organización Demócrata Cristiana de América. Additionally, PAN has ties to Yunque, an extreme right organization that operates clandestinely in our country to defend Catholic fundamentalism.

Since the LX Congressional Legislature of the Union closed its legislative period and the terms of the deputies who initially advocated for the bill have ended, the challenge until September 2009 was to continue the dialogue with legislators to get the bill read for a second time in the full chamber and be approved. However, this was not possible in 2009 as, due to the elections for the Chamber of Deputies, several legislators left their positions to begin campaigning. Given this new environment, the fundamental challenge we faced was to coordinate a more broadly based group, strengthen recognition of our bill among legislators in both chambers and seek its approval in the LXI Legislature.²⁵

This initiative has been valuable because it has allowed us to strengthen alliances with other religious communities and progressive Catholics; analyze and build, as a group, historic, philosophical and political arguments on secularism; and enrich the concept of a secular state, as it encompasses much more than the separation of church and state, such as the concepts of respect by public officials for fundamental freedoms, freedom of conscience, non-discrimination and full recognition of the plurality expressed by a democratic society. One criticism that we have of our own strategies is that, despite seeking to involve all possible actors to support the bill, we did not specifically have a strategy for intergenerational coordination or to include youth organizations.

Looking Ahead

In Mexico we still face the challenge of finalizing the process to reform the Constitution. However, as we worked towards this goal, we began to realize just how difficult it would be to get this reform passed because it needs the support and conviction of the political parties and the position of the right-wing party, PAN, is not going to change. We know that if this process does not succeed we can still strengthen legal protections for the secular state by modifying secondary laws such as the Ley de Asociaciones Religiosas y Culto Público.

We were able to bring together a plural working group on the issue and focus the debate in the Chamber of Deputies, a part of the legislative branch. Our bill advanced as far as it did due to the conceptual knowledge provided by academia and civil society organizations, as well as the commitment of feminist legislators who included advocacy for women's rights on their political agendas.

We need to be aware of, and expose the ongoing presence and participation of, Catholic fundamentalist groups in the circles of political, economic and social power. This must be an ongoing and systematic task

in Mexico and in all countries in Latin America as these groups operate at a regional level and have ties across borders. Other strategies for the future include: continuing to work with different churches, taking an ecumenical approach to the issues that we all face; and being careful to document reports of sexual abuse, rape, irresponsible paternity (that is, the fathering of "illegitimate" children by supposedly celibate clergy), corruption, and other negative acts of church members.

We know we continue to face many challenges, but we believe that the secular state must be a cross-cutting issue in public policies and that it is essential for women's rights because it is the basis of respect for freedom of conscience and the recognition of the diversity of thought that creates a society; advancing this issue will give us a common discourse for challenging religious fundamentalisms and strengthening the feminist movement.

Endnotes:

¹ Enzo Pace and Renzo Guolo, *Los fundamentalismos (Fundamentalisms)*, Mexico City: Editorial Siglo XXI, 2006: 7.

² The conquest of Mexico in 1521 by the Spanish Empire not only brought about the enslavement of the indigenous people and the appropriation of their wealth, but also the annihilation of their spiritual life due to the domination of Catholicism over indigenous beliefs, which did not cease until the mid-20th century.

³ In 1992, the then president of Mexico Carlos Salinas de Gortari approved changes to Article 5.27, paragraph II, and Article 130 of the Mexican Constitution. As a result, churches and religious associations were granted legal status; the ban on foreigners acting as ministers of religious worship was lifted; and ministers of religion were granted political rights to vote, to be elected and to participate as candidates for public office.

⁴ Roberto Blancarte, *Para entender el Estado Laico (Understanding the secular state)*, Mexico City: Ediciones NOSTRA, 2008: 31-41.

⁵ Alejandro Tomasini Bassols, "La religión en México: 1960-2010 (Religion in Mexico: 1960-2010)," In: *En Voz Alta - Testimonios de Medio Siglo (Out Loud - Testimonials from the Mid-Century)*. Mexico City: ISSSTE 2006: 6.

⁶ Published in the Official Gazette of the Federation on July 15th, 1992, the [Ley de Asociaciones Religiosas y Culto Público](#) establishes that the Mexican state is secular and that no type of preference or privilege in favour of any religion may be established.

⁷ In 2004, a legislator diverted public funds earmarked for HIV and AIDS prevention to Pro-Vida (Pro-Life), an ultra-right organization, and more recently the governor of Jalisco donated money for the construction of a place of worship.

⁸ Regional American organization, composed of 35 political parties and movements from 25 countries in the Americas.

⁹ International organization that promotes life and the family in the United States, Latin America and Spain.

¹⁰ Bimbo is a Mexican bread and food company founded in 1945 that sells its products in 18 countries in the Americas, Europe and Asia.

¹¹ Marcial Maciel was a Mexican priest and the founder of Legion of Christ, a powerful Catholic organization influential with the economically powerful classes in Mexico. The organization, like Opus Dei, was recognized by the Vatican. After numerous accusations of pedophilia and sexual abuse of seminarians, as well as paternity claims, the Vatican removed him as a priest in 2006. Maciel died in 2008.

¹² Salvador Frausto Crotte, “Lorenzo Servitje, una apuesta por el PAN (Lorenzo Servitje, a bet for PAN),” *El Semanario sin límites*: 9.

¹³ Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir-México was founded in 1994.

¹⁴ Under the auspices of the 2006 presidential elections, 24 civil society organizations (including 9 networks) focusing on development and human rights held five meetings and discussion forums between February 27 and June 14, 2006, with candidates to the presidency of Mexico.

¹⁵ Centro de Derechos Humanos “Fray Francisco de Vitoria O. P.,” (Fray Francisco de Vitoria O.P. Human Rights Centre) A. C., SEDESOL, INDESOL. Agenda Pública de Derechos Humanos (Public Human Rights Agenda). Report of the meetings and discussions of civil society organizations with presidential and congressional candidates. Mexico, 2006: 54.

¹⁶ Article 12 of the Ley para la Reforma del Estado (State Reform Act).

¹⁷ Currently education in Mexico is secular, the church is not allowed media access or to own property; religious ministers can vote, but they cannot be voted into public office or act as high-level public officials unless they formally, materially and definitively leave their ministry at least five years prior to elections or three years before assuming a position, respectively. These provisions establish the scope of the separation of church and state as it now appears in the Constitution.

¹⁸ This Article addresses the form of the Mexican nation.

¹⁹ There are 43 working committees in the Chamber of Deputies, which report on the bills proposed by the deputies.

²⁰ In Mexico the legislative branch is the Congress, which is composed of the Chamber of Deputies and the Chamber of Senators.

²¹ The Working Group is formed by the Foro Intereclesiástico (Inter-ecclesiastic Forum), Frente por una Cultura Laica (Front for a Secular Culture), Iglesia la Luz del Mundo (Light of the World Church), lawyer Arturo Medina, researcher Roberto Blancarte from Colegio de México, legislators Rosario Ortiz Magallón of the PRD, Martha Tagle of the

Partido Convergencia (Convergence Party), Elsa Conde and CDD-México are members of the Working Group.

²² In other words, the bill did not have to pass through the extended legislative process, in which it would first go to the Mesa Directiva (Executive Board), which decides which committee to send it to.

²³ The LV Legislature opened on September 1st, 2006, and closed on August 31st, 2009. During that time there were eight parliamentary blocs, or eight political groups whose members were elected to positions in the legislature. They include: Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), Partido del Trabajo (PT, Labour Party), Partido Verde Ecologista de México (PVEM, Green Ecological Party of Mexico), Partido Convergencia (Convergence Party), Partido Nueva Alianza (PNA, New Alliance Party) and Partido Alternativa Socialdemócrata y Campesina (PSD).

²⁴ Once a bill is submitted, it must go through the legislative process: 1) publication in the Gazette to be presented to the full Chamber of Deputies; 2) the Mesa Directiva (Executive Board) of the Chamber sends bills to the appropriate committees for their reports; 3) the committees issue a report that is approved by its members and passed to the Mesa Directiva, which presents the bill to the full chamber for its first reading; 4) if there are comments in the full chamber the bill returns to the committee so that comments can be incorporated or to make the appropriate adjustments to the bill; and 5) the bill returns to the full chamber for a second reading. If there are no more comments, the bill is approved by a simple majority; however, if it is a constitutional reform, it must be approved by a vote of two thirds of the chamber. If the bill is approved at its second reading, it is then sent to the Chamber of Senators for review. It is then submitted for approval to the states of the union.

²⁵ On September 1st, 2009, a quorum of 417 deputies and 118 senators declared the opening of the start of congressional sessions, the first period of regular sessions of the first year of the LXI Legislature.

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Organizational Bio:

Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir-México is a civil association founded in 1994 that works for the well-being and health of women and youth by advocating for human rights, social justice and democracy. It promotes the recognition of the dignity of all people and reaffirms the moral authority of women and youth, as well as the rights of all people to make decisions about their sexuality and reproduction based on the exercise of their freedom of conscience. In addition, it advocates for the separation of church and state as the basis of democracy and one of the elements essential to the protection and guarantee of sexual and reproductive rights.

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