



# ***The Declaration of Congress First***

## **Vision**

A clean and competent Congress honorably serving the Honduran people.

## **Premise of the Organization**

Congress is the most important component of the political system in a representative democracy and therefore it must be the priority focus of the citizens.

## **Explanation of the Premise**

In 1789, the USA produced the first written constitution in the history of the world to establish a representative democracy under the rule of law. Article One was "The Congress."

Congress was deliberately made number one. The sequence in the constitution was as follows:

- **Article One** - Legislative Power (the Congress) - Make the laws
- **Article Two** - Executive Power (the President) - Implement the laws
- **Article Three** - Judicial Power (the Supreme Court) - Adjudicate the laws

In a nation that is democratic and representative, it is the Congress that ignites the entire political system. This is true in both theory and practice:

**The Theory of Popular Sovereignty** - In a representative democracy, the People are the sovereign and exercise their sovereignty mainly through their elected representatives--gathered into a Congress--who have the exclusive authority to make laws.

**The Practice of Government** - In a representative democracy, unless there is a Congress that makes laws the Executive (who implements them) and the Judicial (who adjudicates them) do not have a function. In practical terms, the functions of the other two branches of the government derive from the primordial authority of Congress to make laws.

There are two additional indicators that help demonstrate that the legislative branch is "the first" in terms of constitutional powers in a representative democracy.

**1. Authority Over the Money** - Congress determines the national budget. It controls, assigns and oversees public spending and investment, and it can remove the economic resources from the other two branches of government, but the other two branches cannot control or remove the economic resources from Congress. The Congress controls the money, and without money, the executive power and the judicial power cannot function.

**2. Authority to Remove Officials** - Congress may through an impeachment process remove the president, other executive officials, judges in the judicial system, and all public officials elected by



Congress. But neither the executive branch nor the judicial branch has the constitutional authority to remove a congressman--unless congress makes a law that cedes that authority under special circumstances, and even then, the congress can eliminate this type of law whenever it so decides.

In summary, the functions of the other two branches of government in a representative democracy are derived from the constitutional authority of the Congress to make laws. Article 4 of the Constitution of Honduras declares: *The form of government is republican, democratic and representative. It is exercised by three powers: Legislative, Executive and Judicial...* as always, Legislative first.

## **The Citizens, Their Congress and the Toxic Relationship**

Currently, when the word "congress" is said, the vast majority of Honduran citizens have two main reactions: confusion and disgust.

- **Confusion about how Congress works** - Much of this confusion is caused by powerful anti-democratic groups who use a deliberate strategy of "complexity and confusion" to make it difficult for most citizens to understand how their congress works.
- **Disgust with the institution** - A belief that Congress is fundamentally corrupt, dishonest, inept, hypocritical and an embarrassment to the nation.

These two reactions--confusion and disgust--create a **vicious circle**. The greater the reaction of confusion and disgust, the less interest there is in understanding such a "confusing" and "corrupt" institution; the less interest in understanding how congress works, the greater the occurrences of harmful and corrupt actions; the more harmful and corrupt actions, the more disgust and lack of desire to understand how congress functions.

This vicious circle is extremely destructive to democracy. We have to break this circle--the health of Honduran democracy depends on it; we can and must do it if we want to close the gap that separates us from living in a functioning democratic nation.

## **The Gap in Honduran Democracy**

Congress is first because it is the foundation of a representative democracy. But in Honduras, the first thing in importance is not the first thing in the minds or the attention of the citizens. This gap between what is "most important" and "the lack of popular focus on what is most important" is the root of the main failures of the representative democratic system in the country. This must be remedied. What is number one in importance must become number one in focus.

## **The Mission of Congress First**

Close the gap between the fundamental importance of Congress and the lack of priority focus on Congress by the people of Honduras.