# Thailand's Senate Approves Marriage Equality Bill Amid Political Turmoil



**Thailand Moves Closer to Marriage Equality and Faces Political Unrest**

**Marriage Equality Bill Approved in Senate**

In a historic move, Thailand’s Senate voted on June 18, 2024, to approve a marriage equality bill, potentially making Thailand the first Southeast Asian country to legalize same-sex marriage. The bill received overwhelming support, passing with 130 out of 152 votes in favor, four against, and 18 abstentions. The bill now awaits the formal endorsement of King Maha Vajiralongkorn and its subsequent publication in the Government Gazette, which will set an effective date within 120 days. Thailand joins Taiwan and Nepal as the third Asian nation to allow same-sex marriage, ensuring equal legal, financial, and medical rights for all couples.

**Thaksin Shinawatra Faces Legal Battles**

On the same day, former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was formally indicted for defaming the monarchy—a charge known as lese majeste, punishable by three to 15 years in prison. Thaksin, ousted in a 2006 coup, reported himself to prosecutors and was subsequently granted bail of 500,000 baht ($13,000) under the condition that he cannot leave Thailand without court permission. The indictment concerns comments he made in 2015, and observers view the prosecution as a political maneuver to curb his influence.

Thaksin’s return to Thailand in 2023 saw him taken into custody for prior corruption charges, though he spent most of his sentence in a hospital and was released on parole in February 2024. Despite his charges, Thaksin has remained a significant political figure, reportedly influencing the Pheu Thai-led government.

**Political Landscape: Tensions and Legal Proceedings**

The legal proceedings against Thaksin are part of broader political turmoil involving several high-profile cases. Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin of the Pheu Thai party faces scrutiny over the appointment of a cabinet member previously imprisoned for bribery. Additionally, the Move Forward Party, a prominent opposition group, faces potential dissolution for advocating amendments to the lese majeste law.

The Constitutional Court is also assessing the legality of the recent Senate voting process, which could impact the tenure of military-appointed senators crucial to the existing political framework.

These events highlight ongoing tensions between Thailand's conservative establishment and its progressive political factions.