

9th Amendment to be amended | Channel5Belize.com

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The Prime Minister announced today that it is removing specific language on the proposed ninth amendment but is it still dangerous for Belize's democracy? On July twenty-second, Prime Minister Dean Barrow's government introduced a controversial ninth amendment to the Belize Constitution in the House of Representatives that unleashed fiery public debate. The bill has come under sustained and heavy attack from the Bar Association, the Chamber of Commerce, Belizeans for Justice and the Belize Council of Churches.

Professors from the University of the West Indies and even the influential Jamaica Gleaner have warned about the dangers for Belize's democracy if the ninth amendment is passed. Just last Tuesday, the Caribbean Court of Justice expressed the view that the ninth amendment would be unconstitutional if it tried to shut out the courts. The intense local and even international criticism of the bill has finally caused the government to soften its position... at least a little. This afternoon, the government issued a press release that, following meetings with the Churches, it was going to "trim" parts of the ninth amendment. The release was, however, silent on any specifics of what would be trimmed. The Churches then issued their own press release providing details of what looks more like major cuts in the ninth, not just mere trimming. Those offensive words that spoke about shutting out the court's ability to examine whether legislation was unconstitutional are being removed. But it still leaves the government with the basic power to amend anything in the constitution once it has the three-quarters majority without anyone being able to go to court and have the court decide the matter. We have obtained the preliminary views of members of the Bar Association who say that while some of the poison has been removed from the ninth amendment, what remains is still a potent danger to our democratic way of life. We'll have a closer look on the modifications in Tuesday's newscast.



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