

DPP threatens boycott over referendum

Written by Taipei Times
Saturday, 14 August 2010 07:39 -

Following a third failed attempt by opposition parties to hold a referendum on the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) caucus yesterday called on the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) to support another referendum proposal or face a boycott at next week's provisional legislative session.

"Let's not get into fistfights on the floor. Let's put the [ECFA] to a referendum and see who wins the support of the public," DPP Legislator Gao Jyh-peng (高志鵬) told a press conference.

Lawmakers across party lines yesterday agreed to hold a second provisional legislative session, which is expected to start on Monday and last two weeks. The session will be held to review the ECFA, which was signed between Taiwan and China in June.

However, the divisions that led to the collapse of the first extra session early last month — whether the legislature can amend the ECFA, whether to vote on the trade pact article-by-article and whether to deliberate bills unrelated to the ECFA — have not been settled.

DPP caucus whip Ker Chien-ming (柯建銘) said the party would submit a proposal calling on the legislature to initiate a referendum on the ECFA and restrict the agenda of the provisional session to only the proposed referendum and the ECFA.

"Other bills the KMT wishes to push through in the provisional session are not urgent," he said.

Through the Referendum Act (公投法), the legislature is entitled to introduce a referendum on "important policies."

The act stipulates that if the legislature adopts a referendum proposal, it may submit the main text and statement of reason directly to the Central Election Commission for implementation.

A legislature-initiated referendum bid requires no review from the Referendum Review Committee, which rejected on technicalities two referendum proposals on the ECFA introduced by the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU), and one by the DPP. The latest bid by the TSU was rejected on Wednesday.

KMT caucus whip Lin Hung-chih (林滄敏) said the KMT had not changed its position that the session should include a meeting with Premier Wu Den-yih (吳登毅) to answer questions by lawmakers, that the contents of the ECFA can be deliberated on an item-by-item basis and that a vote should only be held on the trade pact as a whole.

The DPP disagrees that the ECFA needs to be voted on as whole, saying it should be voted on item by item.

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Lin said the KMT intends to include on the session's agenda amendments allowing Taiwanese universities to accept Chinese students, an overhaul of the national health insurance system, the categorization of rice wine as cooking wine and the elimination of preferential treatment for retired heads of state convicted in a first trial.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2010/08/14](#)