Lin I-hsiung, second right, front row, yesterday sits with other members of the People Rule Foundation outside the Democratic Progressive Party's headquarters in Taipei to urge the government to lower the threshold for proposing and initiating a referendum.
Photo: Wang Yi-sung, Taipei Times

The Legislative Yuan should not wait until the end of this year to pass revisions to the Referendum Act (□□□□□), former vice president Annette Lu (□□□) said yesterday, as the People Rule Foundation concluded a protest fast outside the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) headquarters in Taipei.

"It appears that those who hold authority have forgotten their roots," she said, criticizing a statement by President Tsai Ing-wen (□□□).

She made the remarks after joining members of the foundation in their final march around the DPP's headquarters.

"The DPP's core value is allowing the people to rule themselves — and that is not just allowing them to vote for the president," Lu said, adding that the "young friends who hold power in the party today" have failed to follow their predecessors and "pay a price" to fight for referendum rights.

Foundation representatives had fasted outside the headquarters for two weeks, with Lin I-hsiung (□□□) joining them yesterday.

Lu and Lin were key figures in the opposition movement that preceded the DPP's founding and played active roles in the formation of the party after being released from prison over their connections with the Kaohsiung Incident, a key pro-democracy protest in 1979.

Lin later served as DPP chairman, but quit the party in 2006.

The DPP has long criticized the act for only allowing "referendums in a cage," as it stipulates high turnout thresholds that have invalidated every referendum held since its passage.

Amendments under consideration by the legislature would substantially reduce turnout requirements, while also making it easier to apply for a referendum to be held.

"The reality is that passing the revisions does not require any heavy lifting," Lu said, adding that there was "no reason" to wait until the end of the year for passage.

"I am extremely disappointed — the revisions have already passed out of committee and the deadline for cross-caucus negotiations has passed," Lu said. "Are they afraid of something? What are they avoiding?"

Asked whether she felt the delay might be the result of pressure from the US, she said she would not speculate, but added that the nation's leaders should resist any unreasonable obstruction.

DPP Deputy Secretary-General Cho Jung-tai (□□□) visited the protest briefly yesterday and later said Tsai told a meeting of the DPP Central Standing Committee on Wednesday that the party should seek to pass the revisions by the end of the year.

"Only if we maintain collective unity and act in rhythm can we achieve everyone's common objective in the shortest amount of time," he said, avoiding a question on whether the US has exerted pressure.

Foundation executive director Liu Ming-shin (□□□) called for the revisions to be passed before May 20, the one year anniversary of Tsai's inauguration.

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