

DPP avoids vote on Chen Shui-bian

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From left, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Kaohsiung city councilors Cheng Hsin-chu and Hsiao Yung-ta, and DPP Taipei City Councilor Chiang Chih-ming discuss a motion urging a pardon for former president Chen Shui-bian before the start of the party's National Congress in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: Peter Lo, Taipei Times

A motion urging President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) to pardon former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) prepared by Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) representatives yesterday was not addressed at the party's National Congress after they failed to reach the quorum needed.

More than 500 party representatives had endorsed the motion ahead of the congress.

Chen served more than six years of a 20-year sentence for corruption before being released on medical parole in 2015, but he still faces other criminal charges.

The opening of yesterday's congress was attended by 366 party representatives, who reviewed five proposals before taking a short break.

However, the number of attendees dropped dramatically to 135 by the time the congress began to address the motion to pardon Chen and 16 other motions, leaving the congress short of the quorum of 295 out of 590 party representatives needed to pass them.

Tsai subsequently announced that all 17 proposals would be passed on to the DPP Central Executive Committee for deliberation while proponents of the motion, including Kaohsiung City

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Councilor Hsiao Jung-ta (許江達), shouted in opposition.

After Hsiao and others complained about the party's decision to shelve the proposal and transfer it to the executive committee, Tsai said that she understood the complaints were directed against her, but insisted on the transfer.

Passing the motions to the committee was "for the harmony of the party" and "allowed the proposals to be discussed" later, she said.

It was expected that the motion would be voted on or directly approved after it garnered overwhelming support, including endorsements by 11 of the 13 DPP mayors and county commissioners, but the unexpectedly high number of attendees dropping out of the meeting dealt a blow to Chen's supporters.

Hsiao ahead of the congress said that if the proposal were not to be approved, "it means that the DPP is unwilling to take the political responsibility of pardoning Chen."

Former DPP chairman Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) yesterday also said that Chen should be granted amnesty, while former party chairman Hsu Hsin-liang (胡辛良) said a pardon would spark social conflict if it were granted by a DPP president.

Meanwhile, the congress approved a nomination mechanism for next year's mayoral and councilor elections that left room to renew the party's alliance with independent Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲).

The nomination mechanism for mayoral and commissioner candidates includes a so-called "Ko Wen-je article," which reserves the possibility of cooperating with the independent mayor again.

Taipei City Councilor Wang Shih-chien (王世堅) criticized the article, saying the DPP should not

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realign itself with Ko, who Wang said “lacks core values and is quick to shift blame to others.”

Wang’s remark was greeted with applause from DPP representatives, but the nomination mechanism was nonetheless approved.

The party also approved new rules for the nomination of councilor candidates that award first-time candidates, people aged younger than 35 and new immigrants a 10 percent boost in polling during the primary elections.

However, the 10 percent boosts are not to be granted to children or relatives of incumbent DPP mayors, commissioners, lawmakers or councilors if they choose to run in the same constituencies as their influential family members.

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