

Referendum hunger strike begins

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Members of the People Rule Foundation launch a relay hunger strike at the park in front of the Democratic Progressive Party's headquarters in Taipei yesterday to demand that the government amend the Referendum Act.

Photo: CNA

Members of the People Rule Foundation yesterday began a hunger strike outside the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) headquarters in Taipei, urging the DPP caucus to swiftly pass draft amendments to the Referendum Act (公投法), a move they say is crucial for the nation to attain direct democracy.

Foundation members gathered in a park facing DPP headquarters before circling the building three times in what foundation chief executive Liu Ming-hsin (劉明賢) described as the foundation's brand of "nonviolent protest."

Liu urged lawmakers to pass draft amendments to the act that have passed their first reading.

Although some like-minded civic groups have voiced objections to Article 2 of the draft amendment, which prohibits changes to be made to the nation's territory, official title, national flag and anthem, the foundation believes that solutions to these issues would manifest themselves after the proposed changes are enacted.

The DPP caucus believes that those issues should be addressed later through constitutional reforms, which is "understandable," Liu said.

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“We can achieve many things through referendums. Referendums should be made a habit and a part of people’s everyday life,” he said. “They will serve to revitalize Taiwanese democracy, encourage Taiwanese to take an active interest and participate in public affairs. That way, the restrictions imposed by Article 2 would disappear after two or three years.”

Asked if foundation founder Lin I-hsiung (林進春), a veteran civil rights advocate, would join the hunger strike, Liu said that Lin would “take part [in the event] in due time and in his own way.”

Foundation president Chen Lih-kuei (陳麗華) said that people being unable to exercise their constitutional rights through referendums is a flaw in the nation’s democratic system, which has prevented people from having direct democracy.

The act, passed in 2003, stipulates an unreasonably high threshold for a referendum to be adopted, which has caused the topics for all the referendums held in the past 14 years to be rejected, Chen said.

Democracy was the DPP’s core value when it was founded, but after gaining total control of the legislature more than 20 months ago, it has for the most part shelved draft amendments to the act, causing the legislation to drag on to this day, he said.

The hunger strike is a reminder to the DPP to fulfill its promise to finish amending the act before the end of this year, he added.

The hunger strike is scheduled to last until Nov. 23, with foundation members fasting in shifts.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2017/11/09](#)