

## Lai seeks DPP's backing for 2020 race

Written by Taipei Times

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Former premier William Lai, center, waves during a news conference yesterday at the Democratic Progressive Party's headquarters in Taipei after announcing his registration to run in the party's presidential primary.

**Photo: Huang Yao-cheng, Taipei Times**

Former premier William Lai (賴清德) yesterday registered to run in the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) presidential primary, saying that he could shoulder the responsibility of leading Taiwan in defending itself.

Lai, who stepped down as premier in January following the party's losses in the nine-in-one elections on Nov. 24 last year, said that calls from grassroots DPP supporters led him to contend for the party's nomination.

The DPP would find itself in an even more precarious position in next year's presidential election than in the 2008 race, particularly after the party's heavy losses in the local elections, Lai said.

DPP supporters are concerned that losing the presidency and a number of legislative seats would put the nation's sovereignty and democracy at risk, he said.

As a result, many voices have been urging him to "take up the responsibility," he added.

The legislative by-elections this month showed that the DPP's base is strong, but Lai said he

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believes that the party remains in a challenging situation.

Moreover, Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) is pushing for the annexation of Taiwan, “forcing Taiwan to accept the surrender-like ‘one country, two systems,’” he said.

The Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) has responded to pressure from China with a proposal to sign a peace treaty, but Lai said that Tibet's experience with Beijing has taught him that a treaty would not prevent China from trying to annex Taiwan.

“Taiwan will not become a second Hong Kong, a second Tibet,” he said, adding that cross-strait relations are what make next year's elections so critical.

Lai said that he made his decision to run after the legislative by-elections revealed a crisis in the DPP.

DPP Chairman Cho Jung-tai (卓榮泰) specifically asked him to “stand in the front lines” during the by-elections, Lai said, adding that the opportunity put him in touch with many people and allowed him to gauge the depth of their concern.

He said that he came to his decision over the past two days.

Lai said he informed Presidential Office Secretary-General Chen Chu (陳 Chu) prior to his registration and asked her to relay his decision to President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), who last month in an interview with CNN announced her intention to seek re-election.

Asked whether his decision would cause division in the party, Lai said that the DPP has a primary process that is democratic, not divisive.

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If Tsai wins the primary, she would have his support, Lai added.

The president yesterday posted on Facebook that she would register for the DPP primary some time this week.

The president would register for the primary before visiting the Pacific island countries of Palau, Nauru and the Marshall Islands, Presidential Office spokesman Xavier Chang (徐昌) said.

Tsai is to visit Palau on Thursday to Saturday and Nauru on March 24 and 25, before arriving in the Marshall Islands on March 26 for the first-ever Pacific Women Leaders' Coalition Conference, an itinerary released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs last week showed.

Additional reporting by CNA

Source: [Taipei Times - 2019/03/19](#)