

Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) caucus whip Lu Hsueh-chang (呂秀蓮) said yesterday that the caucus would file a lawsuit against a student who publicized the cellphone numbers of some KMT lawmakers and asked the public to lodge complaints against the government's lifting of a ban on US beef.

Chu Cheng-chi (朱程奇), a student at National Taiwan University's Department of Sociology who became known after uploading a video of himself eating cow excrement in protest of the government's relaxation of restrictions of US beef products, publicized the numbers of the KMT lawmakers who supported the amendment to the Act Governing Food Sanitation (食品安全法) proposed by KMT Legislator Kung Wen-chi (孔文智).

Chu encouraged the public to call the lawmakers to tell them to withdraw their signatures from Kung's version, which he said was to open the country to US beef and beef products without restrictions.

"Many lawmakers received harassing phone calls and messages after Chu publicized the numbers. The complaint is in place. We will take legal action against Chu," Lu said.

The government supported a version of the Act that would provide administrative means to block US ground beef and intestines from entering the country, while the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) proposed a statutory ban on the products.

Kung's version, however, adopted a loose position on the matter. While the DPP suggested a ban on imports of risky beef from areas infected with mad cow disease, Kung proposed that the ban be lifted on cattle from areas where risks of mad cow disease are under control.

His version opposed detailing the products in the Act, while authorizing the government to decide which products should be prohibited.

Because of a lack of consensus on revisions to the Act, the legislative session, which was scheduled to review bills, remained idle the whole day.

Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng (王金平) later criticized the DPP caucus over its continued boycott of legislative sessions to screen amendments to the laws governing beef imports.

Wang called on the DPP "not to overdo it" and instead to help restore order in the legislature.

Meanwhile, civic groups submitted 130,459 signatures to the Central Election Commission (CEC) yesterday in an effort to initiate a referendum on the import of US beef products.

To date, more than 200,000 signatures have been collected in the campaign, which aims to force a reopening of talks between Taipei and Washington on US beef imports, said Hsieh Tien-jen (謝天仁), chairman of the Consumers' Foundation, which is leading the drive.

The 130,459 signatures that have been submitted to the CEC by far exceed the requirements for the first threshold of a referendum initiative, Hsieh said.

The first step in the process requires at least 86,000 signatures — 0.5 percent of the country's 17.32 million registered voters in the last presidential election.

“The remaining 70,000 signatures will be kept for the second stage,” Hsieh said.

Under the Referendum Act (公投法), once a screening committee finds that the proposed referendum conforms to the legal guidelines, the next step for the referendum's sponsors is to obtain the endorsement of at least 5 percent of the electorate — in this case 860,000 signatures.

CEC Secretary-General Teng Tien-you (滕天祐) said the commission would determine by Friday whether the referendum initiative meets the terms of the regulations.

The commission will then submit the proposal to the Executive Yuan Referendum Screening Committee for confirmation, Teng said.

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