

Former president calls on Tsai to run in Sinbei City

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Former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) yesterday said he opposed forcing former Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) chairman Frank Hsieh (許信良) out of the year-end elections, while expressing support for an election bid by DPP Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文).

Chen's secretary, Chiang Chih-ming (蔣智明), said the former president complained that no one in the DPP came out to defend Hsieh when he was attacked by the pro-unification media and portrayed as a traitor during the Martial Law era.

"Since [former] chairman Hsieh already denied the allegation, the DPP must fully support him as a candidate in the elections," Chiang quoted Chen as saying after visiting Chen at the Taipei Detention Center in Tucheng (土城), Taipei County.

Elections for the heads of five special municipalities will take place on Nov. 27 in Taipei City, Sinbei City (新北市, the upgraded Taipei County), Greater Taichung (a merger of Taichung City and Taichung County), Greater Tainan (a merger of Tainan City and Tainan County) and Greater Kaohsiung (a merger of Kaohsiung City and Kaohsiung County).

Chen also expressed a wish to see Tsai stand in the election for Sinbei City in November.

Chiang said Chen was worried about the Sinbei City election, which he believes is key to the year-end elections and said that the party must nominate whoever has the best chance of winning.

"If Chairwoman Tsai is the best candidate, there is no harm in running in the race as party chairwoman," Chiang quoted Chen as saying. "If the person with the best chance of winning doesn't want to run, how does the party expect that person to lead its return to power?"

Chiang said Chen very much hoped to see the party unite and party members refrain from infighting, having only just recovered from its previous election defeats.

Meanwhile, Chen urged his supporters to back the referendum proposal initiated by the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) on whether to sign an economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA) with Beijing.

As the DPP has pledged to collect 50,000 signatures, Chen urged his supporters to gather 10,000. Chen himself will also sign the petition, Chiang said.

The TSU must amass at least 86,000 signatures to file a petition to hold a referendum. Once the proposal is approved by the Cabinet's Referendum Review Committee, the party must then collect more than 1 million endorsements for the referendum to take place.

The TSU's referendum proposal came after the review committee rejected a similar proposal from the DPP.

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