

DPP's Liu wins by landslide in Yunlin

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Yunlin By-election		
 DPP Liu Chien-kuo	74,272	votes 
 KMT Chang Ken-hui	29,278	votes
 Independent Chang Hui-yuan	22,747	votes

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate Liu Chien-kuo (劉建國) secured a landslide victory in yesterday's Yunlin legislative by-election, giving the party a boost as corruption charges against former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) continue to dog the opposition party.

Liu garnered 74,272 votes, beating his Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) rival Chang Ken-hui (張肯慧) by nearly 45,000 votes. Voter turnout was 45.55 percent.

The DPP had previously said that former Department of Health minister Yeh Ching-chuan's (葉清川) defeat in the KMT primary for the Hualien County commissioner election in December was a reflection of growing discontent with the government and a mark of no-confidence in President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九).

It had also said that the KMT would suffer a setback in the Yunlin County legislative by-election.

Liu's victory was significant to the DPP, which prior to the vote held 27 legislative seats, one shy of a quarter of the 113-seat legislature.

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Democratic Progressive Party candidate Liu Chien-kuo thanks voters after securing a la
PHOTO: LIN KUO-HSIEN, TAIPEI TIMES

With a quarter of legislative seats, the DPP will be eligible to propose a recall of the president or vice president, as well as constitutional amendments.

Bowing to his supporters, Liu said his victory was not his alone but that of the residents of Yunlin and the people of Taiwan.

“Today marks a very touching day in the history of Taiwan’s democracy,” he said at his campaign office.

“Yunlin residents’ hope for a better democracy and cleaner politics has finally come true. We oppose vote-buying and we utterly detest smear campaigns. That is the key to my victory,” he said.

Liu said his win showed that democratic politics trounced factional politics. It also showed that even a poor kid like him had the opportunity to serve the people and the country.

“The people used their ballots to prove that I am not a gangster,” he said.

In a statement, the DPP thanked voters for giving the party another chance to serve the public.

The by-election campaign saw the three contenders attack and sue each other. Independent candidate Chang Hui-yuan (張輝元) branded Liu a “gangster” and accused KMT candidate Chang

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Ken-hui of buying votes. Liu sued Chang Hui-yuan for slander.

The by-election was necessary to fill the seat left vacant by Chang Hui-yuan's son, Chang Sho-wen (陳昭文), who won the seat in January last year, but lost it this year after the High Court found him guilty of taking part in a vote-buying scheme organized by his father.

Chang Hui-yuan — who was found guilty of vote buying in the first trial — wanted to run as the KMT candidate in the election, but the party rejected his registration because its “black-gold exclusion clause” prevents party members found guilty of corruption in their first trial from standing for public office.

Chang Sho-wen filed a defamation lawsuit against Chang Ken-hui at the Yunlin Prosecutors' Office on Monday, accusing him of making groundless vote-buying allegations.

Chang Ken-hui yesterday attributed his defeat to time constraints, saying he only had 48 days to campaign and that most voters were not familiar with him.

Conceding defeat, he gave Liu his blessing and said he would respect the people's decision.

He said he did not work hard enough and that he would examine himself honestly.

He declined to comment on factionalism or a split within the KMT, but said that “somebody used despicable means during the campaign.”

“All I wanted was a fair election,” he said.

There were signs that KMT heavyweights were cool to Chang Ken-hui standing as the party's candidate. During a campaign rally last Saturday, former KMT chairman Wu Poh-hsiung (吳伯雄) said it was Premier Wu Den-yi who had recommended that Chang Ken-hui stand in the by-election during his stint as KMT secretary-general.

Analysts saw Wu Poh-hsiung's remarks as a means to distance himself from Chang Ken-hui if he failed.

Neither Ma nor Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng (王金平) stumped for Chang Keng-hui.

In a statement yesterday, the KMT said it respected the choice of Yunlin residents, adding it was aware of the difficult situation in the run-up to the election, but had insisted on nominating a young, professional academic with a clean image.

The party is determined to reform because only reform will bring hope, the statement said. It also called for unity among party members.

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