

Alliance urges scrutiny of grand justice candidates

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Legal experts and human rights groups yesterday called for increased public scrutiny of the ongoing nomination process for four members of the Council of Grand Justices.

Members of the Grand Justices Nomination Oversight Alliance, a watchdog organization founded more than a decade ago, gathered to push the group's aim of ensuring transparency in the nomination process and to monitor the quality of grand justice candidates.

While grand justice candidates are officially nominated by the president and confirmed by the legislature, the alliance seeks to promote public deliberation on the issue.

"We would not want legislators from the ruling party to merely become a rubber stamp for candidates nominated by the president; nor would we want the opposition party to abandon the issue completely," alliance convener Liu Ching-yi (劉清彥) said.

The alliance announced an upcoming evaluation of the four nominees that would encompass a wide spectrum of attributes, including professional capabilities, contributions to the promotion of human rights values and democratic principles, commitment to an independent judiciary as well as personal conduct.

It also seeks to challenge grand justice nominees by asking them to publicly state their stance on a series of human rights issues, ranging from gender and workers' rights to ethnic issues and environmental protection.

The four grand justice nominees are: lawyer Huang Horng-shya (黃宏夏), Deputy Minister of Justice Wu Chen-huan (吳陳煥), National Taiwan University law professor Tsai Ming-cheng (蔡明成) and Shilin District Court President Lin Jyun-yi (林俊義).

Lin's candidacy has raised eyebrows, as he was one of the Supreme Court judges who acquitted President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) of corruption charges in connection with the use of his special allowance when he was Taipei mayor.

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Another controversial candidate, Academy for the Judiciary President Lin Hui-huang (林惠黃), failed to make the president's final four picks despite a recommendation from the Ministry of Justice, largely because of criticism over his role as a military prosecutor during the Kaohsiung Incident of 1979 — in which prominent pro-democracy activists were put on trial.

Human rights lawyer Greg Yo (葛耀) said it was crucial for all grand justice nominees to exhibit a strong faith in democratic values, in light of an increasing possibility for the council to process cases related to the integrity of Taiwan's liberal constitutional democracy.

The nation's grand justices may soon face the task of determining whether future cross-strait negotiations — including the cross-strait service trade agreement or a potential cross-strait “peace accord” — are in line with the Constitution, Yo said.

“Taiwan's liberal democratic order is under grave threat, with a potential constitutional crisis halted only by last year's mass [Sunflower movement] protests,” Yo said, adding that a grand justice candidate would require the “moral courage” to point out unconstitutional acts committed by those in positions of authority.

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