

## Foundation marches for Referendum Act changes

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Members of the People Rule Foundation walk around the Presidential Office Building in Taipei yesterday in a demonstration calling on the government to pass a draft amendment to the Referendum Act that would lower the thresholds for holding and passing referendums.

**Photo: Liu Hsin-de, Taipei Times**

Dozens of members of the People Rule Foundation yesterday marched from Taipei's 228 Memorial Park to the Presidential Office Building as part of its campaign to urge the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) to swiftly pass a draft amendment to the Referendum Act (公投法).

The act has been compared to a “birdcage,” because it imposes an extremely high threshold for any proposal to pass. A proposal would be rejected if either its voter turnout or affirmative ballots does not exceed half of the number of the nation's eligible voters.

While the amendment passed its first reading in the legislature last year, it only cleared its second reading yesterday.

Foundation members marched to the Presidential Office Building and stood silently in front of the building to demonstrate their long-term demand for the referendum threshold to be lowered.

The foundation had staged a relay hunger strike in front of DPP headquarters in Taipei before to remind the ruling party of its promise to amend the act, foundation chief executive officer Liu Ming-hsin (劉明賢) said, adding that the passage of the proposed amendment would give people direct access to democracy.

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The demonstrators walked around the Presidential Office Building for about two-and-a-half hours and staged a sit-in in front of the White Terror monument, Liu said.

Foundation founder and former DPP chairman Lin I-hsiung (林錫山) has his own plans to address the issue, he added.

Lin might start another indefinite hunger strike if the amendment does not pass the legislature's third reading by the end of this month, he said.

Some have questioned whether the draft amendment would allow for referendums involving issues governed by the Constitution, such as sovereignty and national territory, he said.

Although the foundation hopes that no constraint would be imposed on referendum proposals, it would accept the amendment as it is, leaving those issues to a constitutional reform if needed, Liu said.

In response to the group's latest appeal, Presidential Office spokesman Sidney Lin (林錫山) said that Taiwan is a democratic nation and initiating a referendum is a power afforded to the people.

The proposed amendment is one of the priority bills for the DPP caucus in this legislative session, and the Presidential Office respects the Legislative Yuan's plans for it, he added.

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