

Ukraine parliament approves first reading of new election law

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Posted by:

Posted on : 2017/11/8 17:09:47

Analyst: "The only surprise came when a majority of People's Front MPs supported this measure. The party has no chance to get re-elected to parliament in the 2019 elections and we expect it will reach a decision at its Nov. 11 congress to merge with the Solidarity Poroshenko Bloc." [File photo: People's Front founders Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Oleksandr Turchynov]

KYIV, Nov 8, 2017 – Ukraine's parliament voted by a bare majority, or 226 votes, on Nov. 7 to approve the first reading of an election law that eliminates single-mandate districts and establishes open-list, proportional voting for all seats in parliament and local councils. In an online advisory, Concorde Capital also informed clients the bill would also create 27 election districts, largely based on the current existing regions. The measure, endorsed by the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, was supported by a majority of MPs of five of the six parliamentary factions. It lacked support from the Poroshenko Bloc, as well as single-mandate MPs, all of whom stand to lose the most from the legislation. Afterwards, MP Mustafa Nayyem claimed on Facebook the vote was the result of pressure placed on parliament by the tent city protest, which reached its third week yesterday. Presidential Administration spokesman Viktor Ukolov warned that creating election districts based on current regions raises the risk of MPs of regions voting for common interests that could lead to federalization, which is one of the ways the Russian government is seeking to dismember Ukraine. Concorde analyst Zenon Zawada added: "The only surprise came when a majority of People's Front MPs supported this measure. The party has no chance to get re-elected to parliament in the 2019 elections and we expect it will reach a decision at its Nov. 11 congress to merge with the Solidarity Poroshenko Bloc. "Despite official statements from the Presidential Administration that it supports open-list, proportional voting, we expect it will work behind the scenes to undermine any such legislation, particularly in the vote for the second reading of this particular bill. If the People's Front approves the merger by then, we expect that not voting for the measure is likely become a de facto condition demanded by the Poroshenko Bloc.

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*Editor's Note: People's Front (Ukrainian: ???????? ?????; also translated as National Front or Popular Front) is a political party in Ukraine founded by Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Oleksandr Turchynov in 2014. Many members of the new political entity were former members of Fatherland including Yatsenyuk and Turchynov. The party won 82 seats in the 2014 Ukrainian parliamentary election [ex Wikipedia].