

ELECTIONWATCH

UKRAINE



Ukraine Pre-Election Watch: January 2010 Presidential Election

Since gaining its independence in 1991, Ukraine has achieved some success in promoting democratic change, especially in creating independent mass media and ensuring open elections. These successes are considered direct, positive results of the Orange Revolution. The Revolution was the result of the Ukrainian people's protest against fraud during the second round of presidential elections in November 2004. This event had a profound impact upon both Ukraine's democratization processes, as well as other countries in the region in inspiring similar democratization movements.

Despite many positive advances after the Orange Revolution, Ukraine's ability to provide effective governance and stability has been hampered by political and constitutional crises. Prior to his election to the presidency, Viktor Yushchenko agreed to a number of measures which reduced presidential powers and expanded those of the prime minister and the parliament. This in turn provoked conflicts between legislators, the cabinet of ministers and President Yushchenko, resulting in Yushchenko's decision to dissolve parliament and call an early vote in September 2007. According to international observers, these parliamentary elections met international standards. However, certain issues remained unresolved, such as the quality of the voter list.

Since no single political party received the necessary number of seats in parliament to nominate a prime minister, the political parties had to form a coalition; a shaky 227-seat governing coalition of Bloc and Our Ukraine People's Self-Defense was formed on November 29, 2007, nominating Yulia Tymoshenko as prime minister.

Challenges Facing Ukraine

Even though President Yushchenko spoke of the need for constitutional reform in Ukraine before the 2007 parliamentary elections, this issue remains unresolved on the eve of the January 17, 2010 presidential election. The issue of separation of power between the president, prime minister and the parliament needs to be clarified in order to avoid continued confrontation between these bodies.

Ukraine's economy, which was slowly but steadily growing after 2004, suffered great losses as a result of the world economic and financial crisis. Growing unemployment coupled with the decreased income of citizens has made the economy one of the key issues in the presidential campaign. It is also one of the reasons for the plummeting approval rating of the incumbent president, which has decreased to single digits.

Ukraine is still divided into a Russian-speaking east and Ukrainian-speaking west, which makes the task of balancing various political interests even more difficult. Yushchenko's

pro-Western orientation is not popular in the eastern part of the country, which is the most densely populated part of Ukraine.

Voters in the east and south traditionally support the pro-Russian candidate, currently Yushchenko's former rival Viktor Yanukovych, whose approval rating is the highest according to recent surveys. Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, also a member of the original Orange Coalition, has the second highest approval rating among the numerous candidates.

Eighteen candidates have been registered by the Central Election Commission and will appear on the ballot on January 17, 2010:

Viktor Yushchenko - incumbent president, independent candidate

Yulia Tymoshenko - Prime Minister, All Ukrainian Union "Batkivshchyna" candidate

Viktor Yanukovych - opposition leader, Party of Regions candidate

Arseniy Yatsenyuk - former Parliament Chairman, representing Front of Changes Movement

Volodymyr Lytvyn - current Parliament Chairman, Lytvyn's Bloc candidate

Oleksandr Moroz - former Parliament Chairman, Socialist Party's candidate

Petro Symonenko - Communist Party's candidate, MP

Anatoliy Hrytsenko - former Minister of Armed Forces, independent candidate

Oleh Tyahnybok - candidate of the political party "Svoboda"

Inna Bohoslovska - Member of Parliament

Serhiy Tyhypko - candidate of the political party "Strong Ukraine"

Yuriy Kostenko - candidate of the political party "Our Ukraine"

Oleksandr Pabat - leader of All Ukrainian Movement "People's Salvation Army"

Mykhaylo Brodskyi - leader of the Free Democrats Party

Lyudmyla Suprun - leader of People's Democratic Party

Oleh Ryabokon - lawyer

Serhiy Ratushnyak - mayor of the city of Uzhgorod

Vasyl Protyvsikh - independent candidate

IRI in Ukraine

The International Republican Institute (IRI) began work in Ukraine in 1994. Since that time, IRI has aided in the development of democratic political parties at the national and regional levels, and in regional-based networks of youth and women political activists. IRI has sponsored Ukrainian nongovernmental organizations and assisted them in their efforts to become self-sustainable.

IRI has also provided a series of training programs for local elected officials from across the country to equip them with the technical skills necessary to fulfill their roles as elected representatives. In 2007, IRI opened a second office in the city of Odesa to expand IRI's programs to target the specific issues facing the southern region of the country.



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