

# ELECTIONWATCH

## UKRAINE



### Ukraine Pre-Election Watch: October 2010 Local Elections

Since gaining its independence in 1991, Ukraine has achieved certain success in promoting democratic changes, especially in the sphere of creating independent mass media and ensuring open elections. These successes are considered direct, positive results of the Orange Revolution in 2004, during which the Ukrainian people protested against fraud following the second round of the presidential election in November 2004. Despite many positive advances after the Orange Revolution, Ukraine's ability to provide effective governance and stability, and to continue to build democratic institutions, have been hampered by political and constitutional crises.

Ukraine will conduct local elections on October 31. With the exception of the capital Kyiv and Ternopol, all cities in Ukraine will elect mayors and local councils. In addition, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea will elect mayors, members of local councils and deputies to the Verkhovna Rada. More than 120 political parties in Ukraine are registered to contest the 2010 local elections.

### Challenges Facing Ukraine

The 2010 local elections are particularly significant, because of a highly contentious pre-election period. Parliament delayed the date of the elections from May 2010 to October 2010. This facilitated the passage of a highly flawed law on local elections in July. Although the Verkhovna Rada convened an emergency session on August 30, to address some of the issues with the election law, many concerns with the law and its administration remain.

Specific issues include the makeup of territorial election committees, which are primarily composed of members of the governing party and coalition; under the previous local election law, election commissions had representatives from all candidates and parties. The new election law also does not allow for individual candidates to compete outside of a party structure or allow for a "bloc" or like-minded parties to run together. In addition, the campaign period was limited to less than 30 days, hampering the efforts of smaller parties and local candidates to effectively campaign.

Finally, there are widespread reports of political parties being unable to register their candidates. In particular, candidates from the Batkivschina Party which is led by former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, have faced significant obstacles in registering their candidates in Kyiv, Luhansk, Lviv and Ternopol, among others.

### IRI in Ukraine

The International Republican Institute's (IRI) work in Ukraine began 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 worked with Ukrainian nongovernmental organizations to assist 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 2010, IRI opened a second office in Crimea to target the specific issues facing the region, specifically the growing Muslim Tatar population.

In advance of the 2010 local elections, IRI is conducting a series of programs designed to strengthen the connection between candidates and voters in the form of candidate/voter meetings and local press conferences for candidates to outline their platforms. After the elections, IRI will work with civic organizations to coordinate public hearings between newly elected officials and their constituents to address issues raised in local election campaigns.

IRI is also providing advice and consultations to a national electoral monitoring effort conducted by the Civic Initiative Support Center, a nationwide grouping of civil society organizations in Ukraine.



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