

Rebecca Neville

From: Jerry Markon
Sent: Tuesday, June 23, 2020 10:21 PM
To: Jerry Markon
Cc: Jerry Markon
Subject: Georgian Parliament Decidedly Adopts Historic Constitutional Changes on the Second Reading

Good Evening,

In a significant move today, the Georgian Parliament voted overwhelmingly on Second Reading to adopt Constitutional Amendments to strengthen Georgia's democracy and enact the historic March 8th Agreement on electoral reform. The Opposition boycotted the vote as a cynical pretext to delegitimize electoral reform and the October election, but this was not enough to quell support for the Second Reading.

The vote was immediately hailed by Georgia's Western Allies:

- [German MEP Viola von Cramon stated](#), "Good news! Parliament of #Georgia passed Constitutional amendments with 2nd reading. 1 more to go! #ElectoralReform is in interest of Georgian democracy & every party has to take responsibility for political processes by voting for the amendments."
- The E.U. Ambassador to Georgia [stated](#), "I welcome key constitutional amendments passed in 2nd reading. Regret the narrow margin and hope the spirit of 8 March agreement will be reclaimed, including the 142 votes backing it then, in view of final vote on 29/6."
- U.S. Rep. Adam Kinzinger, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, stated: "I want to congratulate everybody that voted for the constitutional amendments and I also call for the [full implementation of the March 8 agreement](#)."

Please find below a statement from Georgian Dream, the ruling political party in Georgia.

Thanks,
Jerry



GEORGIAN PARLIAMENT TAKES ANOTHER STEP TOWARD HISTORIC DEMOCRATIC CHANGES

Constitutional Electoral Reform Passes at Second Reading

Opposition Boycott of Vote Cynical Pretext to Delegitimize Electoral Reform and the October Election

(Tbilisi – 23 June 2020) Today the Parliament of Georgia voted at Second Reading to adopt the Constitutional Amendments to strengthen Georgia's democracy and enact the March 8th electoral reform agreement with the support of 115 members out of 150.

Unfortunately, the main opposition parties led by the United National Movement (UNM) and European Georgia deliberately abstained from supporting the Amendments in the Second Reading. This is a clear betrayal of the will of the Georgian people, Georgia's democracy, and Georgia's international partners, who have been steadfast in their support for the electoral reform process.

The Georgian Dream party continues to deliver on its promises to the Georgian people and to the international community. This started with the passage of the Constitutional amendments to ensure free, fair, and representative elections this fall.

The historic electoral reform agreement was reached by all political parties on March 8th of this year. The Memorandum of Understanding obliged all the signatories to put the interests of the Georgian citizens and the consolidation of Georgia's democracy first. The agreement was accompanied by a Joint Statement recognizing the broader objective of holding free and fair elections.

The overwhelming support of the ruling Georgian Dream party remained unchanged: 92 MPs representing the majority voted in favor of adopting the amendments negotiated on March 8th.

It is clear from this vote that Georgian Dream is now the only major party in Georgia committed to reform, committed to improving Georgian democracy, and committed to supporting Georgia's international allies in Europe and the United States. The European Union and the U.S. governments have consistently praised the electoral reform and stated that all parties should vote in favor of the reform.

UNM boycotts the vote for the second time.

The radical opposition's record of rejecting reforms proves that the last thing they have ever wanted is proportional elections. Dating back to their time in power in 2004-2012, UNM used every available excuse to avoid implementing these electoral reforms. Today, when presented with the opportunity to support the reform, UNM has once again hidden behind excuses and refused to vote. It is clear for all to see: UNM talks about reform, but talk is cheap. When it matters they never show up. The truth is that UNM opposition to this reform is rooted in self-interest: they know that a fair, proportional electoral system would reveal their lack of true support amongst the people of Georgia.

European Georgia also boycotted the Second Reading, even after supporting the vote at First Reading. European Georgia set an unacceptable precondition for future support of the amendments: the release from prison of a well-known criminal, Giorgi Rurua, who was extradited from the U.S. to Georgia in 2000 to face charges of kidnapping and torture, and has since been accused and convicted of multiple crimes.

With these boycotts, the radical opposition parties have demonstrated that they are not willing to support Georgian Dream's efforts to move our country closer to the European Union, and to the West. Georgian Dream remains fully committed to voting for the electoral reform, and to working with our international partners to continue Georgia's European path. It is sad that the opposition parties have chosen political posturing ahead of supporting Georgia's national interest.

The March 8 Agreement was the outcome of more than three months of intense rounds of negotiations among the broad spectrum of political parties, civil society, and international partners. The entire process was facilitated by the representatives of the United States, European Union, Germany, and the Council of Europe. The participation of Georgia's allies to reach the agreement and their outspoken support for all parties to ratify

the agreement was indispensable. Just two days ago, prior to the first reading, the facilitators issued a joint statement calling on all parties to “participate in the historic ballot and make full changes.”

The changes ratified by parliament will introduce a new parliamentary composition based on 120 proportional and 30 majoritarian seats, as well as a 1% threshold for parties, and a cap ensuring that no single party that garners less than 40% of votes may claim a majority. The passage of these amendments incorporates key OSCE/ODIHR recommendations.

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NOTE: These materials are distributed by DCI Group AZ, L.L.C. for Political Union of Citizens "Georgian Dream - Democratic Georgia," and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.