

Ukraine's Opposition Blocks Parliament's Doors

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KIEV — Opposition deputies in Ukraine's notoriously unruly parliament blocked access to the chamber in a second protest in a week against austerity measures, forcing Friday's session to be canceled altogether.

Clashes among lawmakers frequently go beyond rhetoric, and last week was no exception. On Tuesday, lawmakers kicked and punched one another as opposition deputies tried to seize control of the speaker's podium. Dissenters sometimes break the electronic vote-tallying machine, and in a session this spring, the parliament speaker stood shielded by umbrellas as opponents threw eggs and smoke bombs.

On Friday, opposition members used chairs to block the chamber doors, until the few lawmakers who were already inside the hall left. A new session will be held Tuesday.

The action was staged to protest moves by President Viktor Yanukovich's government to double household gas prices and raise women's retirement age from 55 to 60 — both conditions for a \$15 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund.

Those protesting included deputies in the bloc of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, who lost this year's presidential election to Yanukovych and claimed that it was rigged.

Parliament speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn accused Friday's protesters of trying to carry on that election dispute, saying the protest was "to a large extent ... a continuation of the presidential campaign," the Unian news agency reported.

Tymoshenko's parliamentary faction vowed that protests would continue.

"Our faction is very firm. The forms of protest will be various — from blocking parliament to other methods," bloc leader Ivan Kyrylenko said.

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