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Georgia Debates Power Shift

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Georgian lawmakers began debating a constitutional shakeup on Friday that opponents of President Mikheil Saakashvili say is designed to allow him to continue ruling as prime minister once his term ends in 2013.

The reform would shift Georgia from a strongly presidential to a "mixed" system with a strengthened prime minister and parliament.

The amendments passed the first of three readings on Friday in the parliament, where the ruling party commands the necessary two-thirds support. Debate could last several weeks.

(MT)

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