

საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



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The rule of distributing state funding for parties has still worsened

On April 18, with 77 votes to 1 Georgian Parliament approved amendments to the Organic Law on „Political Unions of Citizens” in accordance with the amendments a party will be granted with the status of qualified subject and consequently receive budgetary funding even then it will overcome the 3% threshold in the election thus if the majoritarian MP (s) submitted by the party create a parliamentary faction.

We believe that the amendments are absolutely unjustified, since they not only are consciously adjusted to one party, but also significantly reduce the standard of receiving state funding and increase risks for unreasonable use of state resources. Allocation of funding from the state budget for political unions must be provided due to the support of voters all across the country and not for the election of a single member of the party, who will then create the faction. As it is known for us, the parliamentary majority is currently working on the reform of the rule for adopting state funding, respectively, the circumstance makes fragmented, unreasonable and narrow party narrated amendments even more unjustified.

Prior to the amendment, the party was qualified in case if it would receive at least 3% of proportional votes from the previous parliamentary or local self-government elections. By the adopted amendments, criteria of being granted with the status of qualified subject became far more simplified and now, even a single elected deputy might be enough for ensuring budgetary funding, if they manage to create the party.

Correspondingly with the amendments the political union „Industry Will Save Georgia” which did not overcome the 3% threshold in the 2017 local self-government election (it did not participate in the election) and was abolished from the state funding, will be considered as qualified party and restored to the state funding, just because their only representative created the faction in parliament back then in 2016. It is noteworthy, besides the fact that „Industry Will Save Georgia,” did not participate in the 2017 local self-government election, in the 2016 parliamentary election it received 0.78% of votes. Owing to the new amendment, the party with such a low

legitimacy will receive more than 600,000 GEL annually from the state budget along with representatives' salaries for the next general election, up to 50 000 GEL to ensure the opportunity reimbursing advertising expenses and also a portion of free advertising time.

It should be noted that the problem originated in 2016, was regarded to the party mentioned; more specifically, despite the insolvency of the 3% threshold, according to CEC and the court decisions, the party was granted with 300 000 GEL for creating the faction and respectively the right of appointing a member in the election commission. Back then, the decision was considered by us as unfair.

It is important to note that problems regarding the funding of political parties have long been discussed, the amendments adopted will deepen problems even further, as we believe that the present rule of distributing the state funding contains several important shortcomings, among them one of the problematic issues is the funding for creating the faction. Generally, obtaining the state funding for creating the faction is profoundly wrong. The aim of the state funding is to promote the activities of those parties, enjoying with public support all across the country. Respectively, contributing further funding just for creating the parliamentary faction, while its operational expenses are already financed, is unjustified.

We call upon the parliamentary majority to accelerate working on the reform regulating frameworks of distributing funding to the parties, which will eliminate the unfair consequences of the new amendment, along with other problems. It is also essential for the working process to be maximally open and inclusive from its initial stage, in order to adopt amendments which will be the result of the maximum compromise of political parties, as well as, other interested sides.

Signatory Organizations:

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA)

Transparency International - Georgia

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED)

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