
SPAIN'S ACTING LEADER MARIANO RAJOY TO WAIT TWO MORE DAYS TO FORM GOVERNMENT

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Thursday's result, which saw Rajoy defeated by 180 to 170 votes, was expected because his ruling Popular Party (PP) lacks the support to win an absolute majority in the 350 seat parliament.

The confidence vote was largely symbolic after the leading opposition Socialist party agreed to abstain from a similar second vote planned for Saturday.

That abstention will likely see the Spanish leader able to form a government and bring to an end a 10-month period, following two inconclusive elections, where Spain has not had a fully-functioning government.

Socialists defend themselves

In parliament, the Socialists defended their decision to help unblock the political impasse, but they vowed they wouldn't go easy on the conservative premier once he re-takes power.

"You don't have our trust, nor do you have our support," Antonio Hernando, the Socialists' parliamentary spokesman, told Rajoy as he addressed lawmakers.

"Our abstention on Saturday will allow you to form a government, but it is not support for your government or your policies," he added.

[Madrid protest]

In Madrid, left-wing protesters tried to block Rajoy's re-election

Rajoy's PP won two national elections in December and June, but without achieving a majority in parliament.

Still not certain

With just 137 seats out of 350 in parliament, the PP still faces huge opposition, including from two new political parties on the left - Podemos and Ciudadanos. The ultra-left Podemos stormed out of the parliament chamber at one point on Thursday, saying they would fight Rajoy's continued austerity policies.

Going into Saturday's second vote, Rajoy has the support of 170 lawmakers, leaving him six seats

short of the 176 seats needed for a overall majority.

A new government must be in place by Monday, or else a third election will have to be called.

One of Rajoy's first jobs in office will be to find an agreement on the country's 2017 budget, as Spain faces EU pressure to reduce its deficit.

Kaynak/Source: