
UKRAINE: ZELENSKIY'S SERVANT OF THE PEOPLE PARTY VOWS 'RADICAL CHANGES'

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Ahead of Ukraine's parliamentary election, the party of newly elected President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has pledged to fight corruption and increase defense spending. Zelenskiy's new party is well ahead in polls.

In a wide-reaching election manifesto, Ukraine's Servant of the People party has promised to clamp down on corruption, move state services online and raise defense spending above 5% GDP as it prepares for its first ever parliamentary election.

The party is centered around comedian-turned-president Volodymyr Zelenskiy and named after the TV series he has starred in since 2015. The show tells the story of a history teacher who becomes president after his anti-corruption rant goes viral.

TV fame helped Zelenskiy score a resounding victory at the presidential election in April. However, his Servant of the People party was only formed in 2018 and has no lawmakers in parliament. The snap election on July 21, called by Zelenskiy shortly after he was sworn in late last month, would allow him to secure a parliamentary majority for his reforms.

On Sunday, the party published a platform that pledges to end immunity for lawmakers and make it mandatory to confiscate property from corruption offenders. It also seeks to sever the influence that the national police and secret services have on business. Another feature of the manifesto is a complete overhaul of the nation's prosecutors' office.

"Ukraine needs radical changes," the document says. "But the old political system, the system of corruption, lies and despotism, does not want to change."

"We will implement the course of President Zelenskiy with concrete legislation and political decisions," the party adds.

Internationally, the party promises to increase Ukraine's military spending from 3.4% in 2017 to 5%, as well as reform its armed forces based on NATO standards. It also pledges to push through the legislation needed to move closer to the European Union and to expand cooperation with NATO.

Not too long ago, Volodymyr Zelenskiy cracked jokes on screen in the popular Ukrainian TV show "Servant of the People," in which he plays a history teacher who becomes president of Ukraine. For Zelenskiy, the story has become reality – the actor won the country's presidential election in April. He isn't the only screen actor enter the political scene.

Broadband internet, funds for children

The party has also vowed to create a "system of informational reintegration" for people living in separatist regions, though did not provide further details.

Other features include an unspecified "people's veto on newly adopted laws" and an "economic passport" for Ukrainian children, which would see a percentage of funds earned from exploiting the country's natural resources paid to children's bank accounts.

The party also promises to cover 100% of Ukraine's territory with broadband internet and make illegal logging a criminal offense.

This week's polls showed Servant of the People polling at nearly 41%. The runner-up, pro-Kremlin Opposition Platform, is at 9.1%, while the European Solidarity party of former President Petro Poroshenko is third at 6.7%.

Kaynak/Source: