

Catalan Parliament Debates Inauguration of Regional President Artur Mas



Madrid, November 10 (RHC)-- The regional parliament of Catalonia met Tuesday to try to choose a new regional president, one day after the chamber approved a plan to set up a road map for independence from Spain by 2017.

Artur Mas, the head of the pro-secession group and acting regional president, was seeking majority support in the 135-seat chamber. But pro-independence allies have pledged to vote against him Tuesday because of his support for austerity measures and his party's links to corruption scandals.

Mas and the "Together for Yes" alliance won 62 seats in September elections, but need the leftist CUP party and its 10 seats for a majority. The two pushed through Monday's independence resolution with a 72-63 vote.

The Spanish government has pledged to halt the independence drive. Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy vowed to oppose the measure in court, saying: "Catalonia is not going anywhere."

The Constitutional Court is expected this week to suspend the secession plan while its legality is studied, but Monday's resolution specifically orders the regional Catalan government not to heed the decisions of Spain's highest court. However, under a new law, the court is empowered to suspend public officials who ignore its rulings.

The secession resolution gives the regional government formed by the newly-elected president 30 days to start working on a new Catalan constitution — which would later be voted on in a referendum by the summer of 2017 — and begin establishing a new tax office and social security administration.

In a first round of voting Tuesday, Mas needs an absolute majority. Failing this, there will be a second vote Thursday when he only needs a simple majority.

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