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Cable title: **UKRAINE: PRESIDENT SIGNS TWO OF THREE AMENDMENTS**

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SUBJECT: UKRAINE: PRESIDENT SIGNS TWO OF THREE AMENDMENTS TO ELECTION LAW

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1. (SBU) Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko signed into law March 17 two of the three bills passed by the Rada March 14, amending parliamentary and local election laws (reftel). The bills Yushchenko signed (now known as law No. 3519-IV) included provisions allowing District Election Commissions (DECs) to recruit more staff members to operate polling station commissions (PSCs), allows PSC commissioners to vote at the polling station they are working at, and calls on the CEC to increase voter education efforts and to encourage voters to check their names on the voter list. The law also amended the State Budget of UKRAINE to increase funding for the election by 137 million UAH (\$27 million), primarily to increase PSC workers' salaries.

2. (SBU) Yushchenko did not sign, and is not expected to sign, the third bill passed by the Rada on March 14, amending the parliamentary election law to allow citizens to be added to the voter list by court order on election day. The current cut-off for inclusion on the voter list by court order is three days before election day.

3. (SBU) Note: As reported reftel, Yushchenko and Our UKRAINE bloc representatives argued that allowing this provision to become law would create possibilities for abuse by courts in cahoots with local authorities -- whatever the party affiliation. Plus, they added, the Rada decision was made contrary to procedure. Opposition representatives argued that inoperational PSCs made the provision necessary, if voters were to be able to get their names added to or fixed on inaccurate voter lists. As of March 20, according to the Central Election Commission, 96 out of some 33,000 PSCs still had not been formed, 86 of them in one Kirovohrad oblast electoral district.

4. (U) Visit Embassy Kiev's classified website:



www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/kyiv.
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