



U.S. Urges Iraq to Pass Election Law

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WASHINGTON (UPI) -- Washington is encouraging the Iraqi government to break its impasse on deliberations over amendments to its election laws as the debate in Baghdad lingers.

The Iraqi Parliament passed the process of amending a 2005 election law onto a special security council for deliberations.

Lawmakers had sparred over whether to hold January parliamentary elections using a closed system, which lists only political parties, or an open system, which lists the names of candidates. Recent talks hit a snag over how to govern the elections in the disputed oil-rich city of Kirkuk.

The council, which consists of the heads of main political parties and key ministers, will move to attempt to pass the measure by the end of the month. The Iraqi Constitution says the measure should have passed by Oct. 15.

Ian Kelly, a spokesman for the U.S. State Department, welcomed the lively debate in Baghdad but stressed time was running out.

"We see the elections in January as a real milestone in the development of Iraqi democracy," he said. "And we would like to see this law passed and the elections carried out in a fair and open way."

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