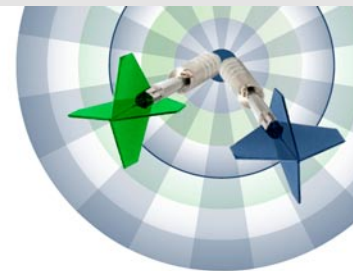


## Referendum



ČSSD desperately wants this weekend's regional elections to be considered a referendum on the national government. PM Mirek Topolánek rejects this notion but gladly accepts the upside potential by claiming that a positive outcome would be confirmation of his cabinet's accomplishments. ČSSD Chair Paroubek wants a "more-competent" government, without the direct participation of ČSSD, to be quickly appointed. He said in *Právo* today that he's shocked by the way the Topolánek team is ignoring the financial crisis. What Paroubek isn't saying, in effect, is that these elections are also a referendum on whether President Václav Klaus should be given the reins. Any technocratic government that is hand-picked or vetted by Klaus would become an extension of the Castle. Not only would Klaus be at center stage during the rotating EU presidency, but he and his unelected government would also enjoy far-reaching authorities if a real crisis hit the CR. After two years of Topolánek, perhaps this is what voters want.



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